

In his own time, following the great time of trouble, God will humble the world. Meantime the elect saints will be glorified, and with Messiah, as his bride, constitute the long-promised kingdom of God for the blessing of humanity. Then Satan shall be bound and all the good influences of righteousness and truth and knowledge shall be let loose for the blessing of the world.

#### "HELL HATH ENLARGED HERSELF"

The Lord tells us that because of these conditions his people are in captivity, not knowing how to help themselves, lacking knowledge, and their honorable men are famished, weak, perplexed, ignorant of the proper course; and the multitude who

rely upon them are also thirsty. This is the famine elsewhere mentioned, not for bread, nor for water, but for a hearing of the message of the Lord, the Gospel of Messiah's kingdom, which is the very message that all need to hear.

On account of the same condition, "Hell hath enlarged herself and opened her mouth without measure; and their glory and their multitude and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth shall descend into it." Not the hell of eternal torment taught in our various creeds is here meant, but the Bible hell, the grave, the state of death. The time of trouble approaching will mean the loss of much life; as Jesus said, "Unless those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved."—Matt. 24:22.

## THE WHITE STONE GIVEN THE OVERCOMERS

*"To him that overcometh will I give . . . a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth save he that receiveth it."*—Rev. 2:17.

In ancient times the Greeks and the Romans had a custom of noting and perpetuating friendship by means of a white stone. This stone was divided into halves, and each person inscribed his name on the flat surface, after which the parts of the stone were exchanged. The production of either half was sufficient to insure friendly aid, even from the descendants of those who first divided the stone. A similar custom was sometimes observed by a king, who would break a white stone into two parts, one of which he would retain and the other part give to a special ambassador. That part could be sent to the king at any time and would insure aid. Thus the divided stone became a mark of identification.

Rev. 2:17 seems to refer to this ancient custom. The white stone signifies a precious token of the Lord's love, and the new name written in the stone suggests the Bridegroom's name. The statement indicates a special acquaintance with the great

King of kings' secret between himself and the individual. The overcomers are not to be recognized merely as a class—the bride class—but each will have the personal favor of the Lord. Of this no one will know save himself and the King. There is an individual and personal friendship between the Lord and the overcomers, who may be said to receive the mark of identification—the antitypical white stone—now, in this life.

This mark is the sealing of the holy Spirit by which the Lord identifies the overcomers. While this is said to be a part of the final reward of the church, yet from the very beginning of our experience we have this personal acquaintance with the Lord. The full seal of the holy Spirit will be given in the resurrection, when we receive the new body. Then we shall have the complete knowledge of the name by which we shall be known to the Lord and he to us forever.

## "THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH"

I came and saw, and hoped to conquer,  
As the great Roman once had done;  
His was the one hour's torrent shock of battle,  
My field was harder to be won.  
I came and saw, but did not conquer,  
The foes were fierce, their weapons strong;  
I came and saw, but yet I did not conquer,  
For me the fight was sore and long.  
They said the war was brief and easy,  
A word, a look, would crush the throng;  
To some it may have been a moment's conflict,  
To me it has been sore and long.  
They said the threats were coward bluster,  
To brave men they could work no wrong;

So some may boast of swift and easy battle,  
To me it has been sore and long.  
And yet I know that I shall conquer,  
Though sore and hard the fight may be;  
I know, I know I shall be more than victor  
Through Him who won the fight for me.  
I fight, not fearful of the issue,  
My victory is sure and near;  
Yet not the less with hand and eye all watchful,  
Grasp I my buckler and my spear.  
For I must fight, if I would conquer,  
'Tis not by flight that fields are won;  
And I must conquer, if I would inherit  
The victor's joy and crown and throne

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## SELF-ESTEEM'S ADVANTAGES AND DRAWBACKS

Whoever will carefully study the matter we believe will agree that a moderate amount of self-esteem is a great aid to success in the present life. It gives a self-confidence in respect to all of life's affairs, great and small. It impels its possessor to do and to dare to the full extent of his ability—if caution be lacking it may lead on to disastrous folly. But the lack of self-confidence, self-esteem, has held back thousands who otherwise might have been brilliant leaders in the path of progress.

Having pointed out some of the advantages of reasonable self-confidence we should point out some of the disadvantages of over-confidence—too great self-esteem. Its arrogance, its pride, its snobbishness, are disgusting and continually interfere with the progress of the unfortunate possessor. He never learns except by bitter experiences, because he always thinks he knows, and exposes his ignorance.

Some of the best people, the saintly, have small self-esteem, depreciate their own talents and exaggerate their own blemishes. Their humbleness of mind is a blessing when it leads them to God—to the throne of heavenly grace for forgiveness and for grace to help in every time of need. As between too much and too little self-esteem, therefore, our choice should be the latter.

#### "LET A MAN THINK SOBERLY"

Whether born with too much or with too little self-esteem, those who come into God's family are put into the school of Christ to be taught, corrected—made right, in harmony with divine standards. Those naturally self-conceited must learn

meekness—by instructions if they will—otherwise by experiences. And they should learn to rejoice even in humiliating experiences. They are evidences that God's providence is supervising their affairs and preparing them for the kingdom; for without meekness and humility none will be fit for it.

As the self-conceited must learn humbly to trust God and not rely on themselves and thus secure balance, so the naturally self-depreciative must learn a lesson of confidence. Not self-confidence, not self-reliance is the most desirable, but rather confidence in God and reliance upon His promised "grace to help in every time of need." This maintains the desirable humility and meekness, yet gives the courage and force suggested by the Apostle's words: "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me." (Phil. 4:13) As St. Paul again declares, "Our sufficiency is of God!"

Thus inspired by faith in God and in his promises those "taught of God" become marvelously "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." (Eph. 6:10) The righteous is strong as a lion, saying, "I will not fear what man may do unto me." (Psa. 118:6) I will not heed what man may say of me or do to me. So long as I have the Almighty Creator for my Father and the Redeemer for my elder Brother I shall be content, relying on their "exceeding great and precious promises."

Thus, whether by nature self-conceited or humble, God's Word and providences in Christ tend to bring all followers of Christ to oneness of heart and mind. The one is humbled,

the other exalted. Both learn not to trust in self or the arm of flesh, but in him who is able to do for them exceedingly, abundantly, more than they could ask or think, according to the riches of his grace in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Here note the Apostle's exhortation that a man "think of himself not more highly than he ought, but think soberly," according to the measure of God's grace bestowed on him. (Rom. 12:3) If any man has received none of God's grace, favor, mercy, forgiveness, surely it is not because he did not need it. Let him therefore feel his poverty without it. If any man has received much of God's grace it was because he needed it. He therefore may boast, but not of himself. His boast may well be in God who is thus working in him "to will and to do of his good pleasure."—Phil. 2:13.

#### LACK OF SELF-APPRECIATION

This deficiency operates in many ways not generally suspected. Many a man is a beggar or a thief simply because of a lack of self-appreciation. He thinks, I am nobody—and everybody knows it. He hangs his head in self-shame. He has a guilty look without having committed crime. He is treated according to his estimate of himself as expressed in his acts and looks, all of which reflect unconsciously his mental picture of himself.

When some, measuring him by his looks, declare: You are a mean man, a rascal, a thief, a scoundrel; I can see it—I can read you through and through! the effect is to thoroughly discourage him. Accepting the rating of his own brain and its reflection in the words of others he becomes rascal, scoundrel, thief. Few there are of benevolent heart to see the trouble of this class and sympathetically to give an encouraging word—to turn the scale and help bring forward the better qualities of the mind and heart.

It is here that the Gospel of Jesus does for such what nothing else could do. The Master's voice rings out in contrast with all other voices saying: Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden and discouraged; I will give you rest. Ye shall find rest unto your souls!

Ah, the change! The discouraged one says, Then I am not beyond hope; not so mean, not so degraded that Jesus would pass me by. The very suggestion inspires new hope. If followed, it leads on and on to the riches of God's grace provided in Christ for the penitent, the willing, the obedient.

By the time such a man receives the begetting of the holy Spirit and is able to cry, "Abba, Father!" old things pass away and all things become new. However, his fleshly weaknesses and unworthiness may still continually cry, You are unworthy; however, still in humility, he may acknowledge this with groans and tears, he is not cast down! He has God's assurance that he is a new creature in Christ, whose perfect spirit body awaits him in the first resurrection. He has the assurance that God knows of his fleshly weaknesses, and has made provision for his forgiveness through Christ, the Advocate. He has the assurance that it is not the flesh that God expects to perfect, but the new creature, the heart, the will. He has the assurance that he is a son of God and a joint-heir with Christ in His great Messianic kingdom,

which soon is to bless the world. He has the assurance that all present trials of faith and patience and loyalty to God, to the truth and to the brethren are permitted to test his heart-loyalty, without which he could not be a joint-heir in Messiah's kingdom. These divine assurances make strong the weak and give courage not only in respect to the future life, but also in the affairs of the present. No wonder the Bible speaks of the followers of Christ as transformed and mind-renewed!—Rom. 12:2.

#### IN RESPECT TO PHYSICAL HEALTH

It may surprise some to learn that lack of self-confidence affects physical health as well as morals. Physiologists are agreed that the mind has much to do with the operation of all the human functions. The man deficient in self-esteem not only feels mean in respect to other affairs of life, but he lacks physical tone, snap, energy, so necessary to our best successes in any avenue of life. How hope, joy, peace, content can affect the liver, spleen and stomach none can explain; but the fact is conceded. How despair and hopelessness can and do affect not only the various functions of the brain but the heart, stomach, liver, gall, etc., we cannot explain; but the fact is conceded.

The person lacking self-esteem is disgusted with himself and ready to imagine any disease, and is proportionately predisposed to diseases.

Wisely, therefore, physicians and philosophers are advising people to hold up their heads; not to become discouraged; not to imagine every sensation a symptom of a dangerous disease. The salutary advice is good for such: to look on the brighter side of life; to think of being strong—to imagine themselves strong, healthy, happy, and to feel and to be as nearly perfect as their imperfect minds and bodies will permit. This anti-bilious view of life is sure to bring encouragement and blessing to some.

But nothing will so thoroughly offset the burdens of life as the grace of God. Whoever receives the "wedding garment" no longer is so overwhelmed by the appearance of the filthy rags of his own unrighteousness. Whoever realizes that as a son of God and follower of the Savior he is an ambassador for God has no time specially to pamper and coddle his flesh, nor to make its care his paramount thought. He must be about his Heavenly Father's business! He must make use of his ambassadorship! He must "show forth the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light!"

The effect of these new ambitions, hopes, aims, upon his physical health is often marvelous. It serves as a spiritual nerve-tonic. It stimulates the mortal to service divine. The new mind does not suggest carelessness of the mortal body—nor yet carefulness, except to the extent that necessary care may obtain the larger results to God's glory from the consumption of the human energies. Hence, as St. Paul says, "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is as well as of that which is to come."—1 Tim. 4:8.

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF FAITH THROUGH FIERY TRIALS

*"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."—1 Pet. 1:7.*

Faith may be said to have in it the two elements of intellectual assurance and heart-reliance. Both the head and the heart—the intellect and the affections—are necessary to the faith without which it is impossible to please God. With some, faith is all emotion; with others, it is all intellectuality. But neither of these elements alone can withstand the fiery tests to which faith is subjected. Both must be present and remain, if our faith be that which will endure to the end and be found unto praise, honor and glory at the appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The trial of our faith to which our Lord and the apostles refer is a trial, not only of our intellectual knowledge of divine truth, but also of our heart-reliance upon God. In both respects, the true child of God will find himself severely tried. Let him see to it that he has a "Thus saith the Lord" for every item of his belief. Let him study the doctrine and get a clear understanding of every element of the truth. Let him become rooted, grounded, settled and established in the doctrines of God, and give earnest heed lest at any time he let them slip.—Heb. 2:1.

When he has his faith well grounded in the fundamental principles of divine truth, let every consecrated child of God

see to it that he also continue to cultivate heart-reliance in the "great and precious promises." St. Peter tells us that a faith which has stood the tests of fiery ordeal and has come off victorious is very precious in the sight of the Heavenly Father. Whenever we pass through a fiery trial and still retain, not only our faith in the doctrines, but also our confidence in God, our reliance in his promises, our integrity of heart and purpose, and our zeal for truth and righteousness, then our characters have grown more Christ-like and hence more pleasing to God, who subjects us to discipline for this very purpose.

St. Peter intimates in our text that the faith of those called throughout the Gospel age will receive a severe testing. He says, "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." In the present time, when gold is comparatively a rare metal, it has a special value. Therefore, the Apostle compares it to the faith of the little flock, to whom alone, of all humanity, will be given the glory, honor and immortality promised to those who overcome.

Hence the trial of the faith of this class is very important. None will be admitted to membership in the body of Christ who has not been tested and proved by the Lord. But let us remember that our testing is not to see whether we are perfect according to the flesh. On the contrary, God knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.—Psa. 103:14.

What God is seeking in us is the development and perfection of faith. We are tested to see whether we believe in him as a faithful, wise, loving and true God; and in his Son as our Redeemer, who purchased us with his own precious blood, and as our Advocate, who now covers our blemishes, past, present and future, with the robe of his imputed righteousness. These are the elements of faith which he will test thoroughly and which must grow stronger as time goes by. Without strong, well-tested faith in God and his promises, we cannot please him and become members of the elect class which he is now selecting.

#### THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH FAITH IS TRIED

The trial of our faith is not left to chance. It is supervised by our Lord Jesus Christ himself, who is represented by the Prophet Malachi as a refiner and purifier of gold and silver, that he may purify the antitypical House of Levi, and separate the dross from the precious metal. (Mal. 3:3) In one sense of the word, he came as that refiner at the first advent. During the entire Gospel age, he has been doing the refining work in his people, that the offering to the Father might be an acceptable one.

First of all, our Lord laid down his life in fulfilment of the types of the law, thus demonstrating his absolute trust, loyalty, and faith in God. The church of Christ must be similarly tested and proved in respect to their obedience, trust, loyalty to the Father. They must be willing, not only to trust God when things are favorable, but to trust in his providences when they cannot see the outcome. To attain this degree of faith, they must pass through manifold trials and testings, that they may demonstrate their faith and loyalty.

During the Gospel age a peculiar, special and called-out class is being dealt with. We can see that God is not dealing with the world, but allows it to "lie in the wicked one." (1 John 5:19, Diaglott) St. Paul tells us that during those times when the people were in ignorance, God paid no particular attention to their conduct except when it went to an extreme. (Acts 17:30) But during the next age, whoever does not repent when he hears the Gospel will make no advancement; but will, in conjunction with the divine plan, have punishments, stripes, for anything that he knowingly does that is wrong. This Gospel age, however, is for the development of a specially called-out class—a people for a purpose—the church of Christ.

The question naturally arises, Why should God test faith rather than works? The answer is that all kinds of works are dependent upon the ability of the worker, and that the whole race of Adam has become unable to do perfect works, on account of the fall of their first parents. None can be perfectly just, perfectly wise, perfectly loving; to be so in our present imperfect condition is impossible.

Therefore, in his wisdom and love, God avoids making his test along those lines in which we are absolutely incompetent, and makes it along the line of faith—in his wisdom, his love and his promises. To doubt any of these would be to weaken the basis of our hope. We realize that we are in a fallen condition, that we are dying like the remainder of the race. We have heard through the Word of God that he has provided a Savior, but we see that things continue much as they were, despite all that God and Christ have done. Our faith, however, assures us that God, who knows the end from the beginning, is working all things according to the counsel of his own will and that in due time he will establish righteousness in the earth.—Eph. 1:11; Psa. 72:1-7.

The language of one without faith would be, "I cannot see that God or Christ is accomplishing anything for the world. Man now learns to control himself better than did his ancestors and so he does not fight as did the savages of old, but uses more modern weapons. He builds hospitals and insane asylums; in this way he gets the sick and insane off his hands and so has more time to devote to business." Present conditions have a strong influence upon the world. Very much depends upon how we look at a matter.

#### TRUTH AND RIGHTEOUSNESS INTEGRAL PARTS OF CHARACTER

From the standpoint of faith we see that Christ has come into the world and during the Gospel age has been carrying on the work of selecting the Church, which is his

body, and that from these a light has shone out into the surrounding darkness, which has been more or less dispelled by it. The light of the holy Spirit, shed abroad by the example of many Christian lives, exerts an influence today; and many have a veneer of politeness which may be mistaken for the fruits of the Spirit of God. But the outward conduct alone is not evidence of acceptable heart condition. God desires that truth and righteousness shall become integral parts of our characters and that the principle of Love shall dominate in everything. This development of character we do not find among all who profess the name of Christ.

Our faith, looking out into the world, asks of the Lord, "When will the promised time come in which Thy will shall be done on earth as in heaven?" The Scriptures reply that the glorious time for the blessing of the world will not come until the church shall have passed into glory; that Messiah will then reign for a thousand years in order to put down sin and opposition to divine arrangements and to uplift those who desire to come into harmony with God; and that in order to accomplish this work he will establish a government based upon the principles of righteousness. By faith we accept this answer, and await God's due time for the blessing of all mankind.

Meantime, we will not permit ourselves to drift into unbelief while we delude ourselves with the thought that we or others are accomplishing something through "social uplift." We are glad to see efforts put forth to help the unfortunate; but we perceive that there is a force at work in the world that prevents success along this line. Present methods will not eradicate selfishness from the human heart; and until this is accomplished, God's will cannot be done on earth as it is in Heaven.

To bring about this desired result, the kingdom of heaven is soon to be established, according to the Word of God. If, while waiting for his due time to arrive, we participate in worldly ambitions and endeavors, our faith will become vague and perhaps die. Although the good that we may do will be in conflict with the darkness around us, nevertheless, it should always be shining forth in our words and in our conduct as the result of the glorious hopes that inspire our lives.

Faith is a quality possessed by all whom God is calling to membership in the body of Christ, and the appeal of the Scriptures is only to those who have some faith and who are determined to increase it. When we begin our course as Christians, we have comparatively little faith, and it must be developed; our Christian experience is for the purpose of faith development. As St. Peter suggests, our faith, which is on trial, is much more precious than gold, although the gold be tried by fire. The exercise of faith tends to its development, and so our Father gives us numerous trials to test its strength.

#### THE FAITH OF THE ANGELS SEVERELY TESTED

God purposely permits us to be subject to manifold temptations for the testing of our faith, which is necessary because of the outcome of the trial. We may suppose that prior to the existence of man the angels had no such trials of faith and patience as the church has had, for the angels saw God and knew of His works. Nevertheless, God has been pleased to give them a test of faith, which has continued during all of man's experience.

The primary cause of Satan's defection, which resulted in his rebellion, was that he lost his faith in God. He formed the idea that he could manage the Universe better than could the Almighty, and thought to secure to himself a little corner where he could show how affairs should be carried on. He succeeded in getting control of our first parents, only to find that, instead of bringing a blessing, he had brought upon the human family the curse of death—the penalty of sin—and all the misery and crime now on the pages of history.

Satan's career became a very important test to the angels. Believing that God had all power, they did not understand why he should permit Satan to pursue so evil a course. They would have restrained the adversary altogether. So when they saw evil going on unrestrained for centuries, some of them evidently lost their faith. Thus came about the conditions mentioned in the sixth chapter of Genesis, when some of the angels preferred to materialize and live in human conditions. This was in violation of the divine arrangement, and was the result of their loss of faith in God's wisdom and power. They had seen what Satan had done, although he had not succeeded in doing anything great; and their sentiment was, "Apparently God does not control affairs so completely as we have thought."—Gen. 6:1-4; 2 Pet. 2:4, 5; Jude 6, 7.

Thus we see that God tested the faith of the holy angels,

especially when we understand that the evil conditions prevailing before the flood have continued to some extent. The holy angels had occasion to doubt, to fear respecting God's wisdom, love and power. Thus they were all thoroughly tested—more so than humanity; for they saw all that there was to be seen. We admit that there are a great many things that we do not know and cannot see, but the angels have apparently a much wider scope of knowledge. Thus the test of their faith was much greater than is ours.

God tested the faith of the angels because he wished to know which of them had that absolute confidence which would enable them to trust him, whether it seemed that he had or had not the power to control affairs. The lesson of the exceeding sinfulness of sin was both wise and necessary. Had the fall of man resulted in the everlasting torture of even a small proportion of the human family, we could not think that God was either wise or just in permitting this test to come upon his creatures.

For more than four thousand years God permitted mankind to go down into death. Then came a manifestation of his love when he provided for their redemption; and a still further manifestation of his power will be given in the next age, when they will be raised from the dead. Furthermore, in the bride class he is making a special illustration, both to angels and to men, of his love for those who manifest heart-loyalty to him, and of his willingness to lift those faithful few far above the angels and even to make them "partakers of the divine nature." We see, then, that in God's dealings with the angels he had respect to their faith.

#### FAITH PROPORTIONATE TO KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S CHARACTER

The Scriptures say that "without faith it is impossible to please God." (Heb. 11:6) If one lose his faith there is no telling whither he may wander. The Apostle Peter's argument is that this special class who are being selected for exaltation to the divine nature, must expect to have their faith tested, and that this testing is most important from the divine point of view. If they have faith, it will control all of their affairs.—Compare Heb. 11:1, 6.

Our faith will be in proportion to our knowledge of the character of God. We shall find, upon observation, that in proportion to our faith we can endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Since our test is for so brief a time—a few years—it must of necessity be a very severe, a crucial one. God is subjecting our faith to a great heat in order to separate the dross. If we had not the faith, we might fear to take the steps which would bring us into this crucial position. Fear would lead us to decline to take the course that God indicates to be his will. Without faith we would shrink from the fiery trials, the heated furnace. If we have not the faith to stand the trials, then we are not of the kind whom God is at the present time looking.

If we appreciate this matter, we shall see that "without faith it is impossible to please God;" and that confidence in him will lead us to weigh his words of precious promise. These promises will make clear to us the reason why these testings are upon us, and will enable us to appreciate our testings as marks of his love for us. The Lord would have us be "a peculiar people," tried and tested, "zealous of good works," a people for a purpose; and so he develops us through suffering.

When the world is on trial during the Millennial age, knowledge will have come in, and there will be less opportunity for the exercise of faith. Mankind will be in much the same condition as that in which the angels now are. For a thousand years, the world will be assisted upward, and at the same time they will have opportunities of cultivating faith—heart-reliance—in God. What we now see by faith, they will actually know—that the permission of sin has been working out a great divine test for both men and angels. Thus gradually, throughout the thousand years, their faith will be established in practically the same way that the faith of the angels is now being established. They will see and will walk by sight, while we believe the promises and walk by faith.

There is a difference between intellectual belief and heart-reliance. The person who knows God best will trust him most. Our Lord Jesus in his glorified position trusts the Father most perfectly at all times. But with us, whose trust is imperfect, it is different. Not until the first resurrection shall we have perfect trust. The greater the knowledge of God's character, the greater will be the heart-reliance upon him.

During the Millennium, as intellectual belief gives place to knowledge, the heart reliance of those who are loyal to the principles of righteousness will increase proportionately. It will always be in order to trust in God. The Great Creator is the Great Upholder of the Universe; and all of his creatures will ever be recipients of his bounty. If we understand the Scriptures, the only ones who will have deathlessness will be the Lord Jesus and the church, which is his body. (1 Cor. 15:53) All others will have dependent lives, and so will be objects of divine care. In order to have everlasting life, they will need to have a heart-reliance upon their Creator. The more they learn of the unchangeableness of the divine promises and character, the greater will be their trust.

The faith of the church will be of a higher character than is that of the angels or than will be that of the world restored. The faith of the church will have been wrought out amidst the darkness and obscurity of this age, which are being permitted for the very purpose of developing that faith; for the church is called to occupy a place much higher than that of angels or men—called to be partakers of the divine nature.—2 Pet. 1:3, 4.

When, during the Millennial age, the world shall have learned their lessons along the lines of knowledge, God does not purpose to receive them everlastingly without a thorough test of their heart-reliance. In Rev. 20:3, 7-10, we read that at the close of the thousand years, Satan shall be loosed for a little season. Mankind will then know what is right and what is wrong, for the principles of righteousness will have been implanted in their hearts. The experience with Satan will be a test of heart-reliance, of loyalty, in that God will apparently not be in control.

Then all those not in the fullest sympathy with God and his divine plan will be misled by this test of faith. Thus they will demonstrate their true character. Those who prove disobedient will be destroyed in the second death. God tells us that in the consummation every knee shall bow and every tongue confess to the glory of his Name, and that every creature in heaven and in earth shall give honor and praise to the Son.—Rev. 5:13.

## PERSECUTION AND FIERY TRIALS THE CHRISTIAN'S EXPERIENCE

*"All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."*—2 Tim. 3:12.

Godliness implies a character which is actuated by principles of righteousness. In all our dealings we are either just or unjust, kind or unkind, not according to what some people may think of us, but according to the standard of righteousness found in the Scriptures. Therefore, in order to develop that character which is pleasing to God, we should in every detail of life consider carefully what is right and what is wrong, according to that standard. This course is Scripturally termed meditating in God's law. When we reach that development of character in which thought, word and deed are measured by the principles of righteousness, we shall have attained godlikeness.—Psa. 119:97.

What the Lord desires to see in his people is not merely an outward manifestation of devotion to him and to his brethren, but a development of love in our hearts and our dispositions. If we profess to love one another and yet pursue a course of self-seeking, wherein do we manifest love? So St. John admonishes to love not in word only, but in deed and in truth.—1 John 3:18.

Primarily, the godly are those who are in Christ Jesus, members of his mystical body, having presented their human bodies living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God through the merit of the great Advocate. Secondly, the term godly includes those who live righteously, in sympathy with Christ Jesus, even though they may not live up to the full standard which the Lord has set, because they shrink from the suffering that results from godly living. Thirdly, the term godly includes some in the remote past, who, believing in the promise of the Lord that the "Seed" shall some day come, separated themselves from the rest of the world and, having obtained new aims, new ideas, were out of touch with the remainder of the race because of having a different standard.—Heb. 11:13-16.

The ancient worthies composed this third class, who had a share in the suffering of the godly and a participation also in the blessing. Moses, for example, preferred to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than to participate in the honors of the Egyptian Government. Although adopted

into the family of Pharaoh, he had respect to the promise that the Messiah would come. Hence he suffered on account of his faith in the promise. So all the patriarchs desired to be in harmony with God, in accordance with His promise made to Abraham, and because of belief in that promise they suffered more or less persecution.—Heb. 11:24-26; 36-38.

Some one may ask, "Why should the godly suffer?" The Bible answers that sin has brought the world into opposition with God. Whoever, then, would have all men speak in commendation of him would not be in harmony with the divine arrangement, for the masses of the world are pursuing a course that the Lord does not approve. We are not saying that everything which the world does is sinful, but that the standards of God are so high that because of their fallen condition the masses of the world are not subject to the law of God, neither, indeed, can they be, for they are carnal, sold under sin. (Rom. 8:7; 7:14, 15) Those who wish to have influence with him would must cater to popular prejudices. On the contrary, those who would be God's people must be loyal to the principles of righteousness and consequently must go in the opposite direction to that of the world. Hence they are opposed by the world.

From the standpoint of God the course of the world is sinful. There is a tendency in our flesh to go with the world, who are laboring under false views of various kinds, because that course is in sympathy with the desires of our own fallen flesh. Hence to live godly is to live in opposition to the course of the world and of our own flesh. This would include not only living uprightly and avoiding sin, etc., but also the making of sacrifices as well, where principles are not involved. We are to beware, however, lest we be deceived along this line. Not only are we contending with the world, but we are wrestling with wicked spirits in high positions.—Eph. 6:12.

#### ILLUSTRATION OF SATAN'S DEVICES

Sometimes Satan's arts seem to be employed to get those who are trying to live godly into contention with each other. One of his devices is to make unimportant things seem important, and in this way to make people think that they are contending for righteousness' sake, and that the sufferings that they bring on themselves in this manner are for righteousness' sake. Another device is to deceive people into "busy-bodilying in other men's matters."—1 Peter 4:15.

Our influence upon each other should be uplifting; we should not cause others to grieve, except where suffering is absolutely necessary. Hence the Lord's people should cultivate the fruits of the Spirit increasingly—meekness, gentleness, patience, brotherly kindness, love. The cultivation of these fruits of the Spirit is a law in respect to the Lord's people. All who would live godly in Christ Jesus are to see to it that they are not the cause of suffering to others—especially to those of the household of faith.

#### SUFFERING AS A CHRISTIAN

While it is true that all who will live godly in this world will suffer to the extent to which they are out of harmony with the present evil conditions, yet the promised blessings of the Scriptures are to those who live godly in Jesus Christ, those who are Christians. Of these St. Peter says, "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed."—1 Peter 4:16.

A Christian is a follower of Christ, one who has cast in his lot to suffer with Christ, that he may be also glorified with the Lord. (2 Tim. 2:12) From the Apostle's standpoint, therefore, no one could suffer as a Christian unless he had become a Christian.

Every painful experience which our Lord had was suffering for righteousness' sake—not only the great sufferings, not only the great fight against sin, but also all the little, unpleasant experiences common to the world. Being "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Heb. 7:26), there was no reason why he should suffer. We do not understand that the Heavenly Father has provided sufferings, trials and difficulties for the angels who are in harmony with him. Nor do we think that Jesus, being a Son in full accord with the Father, would have suffered were it not for his covenant of self-sacrifice. All of his sufferings were because He had come into the world to be man's Redeemer. They were all parts of his necessary experience.

The sufferings which our Lord endured were the result of his activity in the service of the Father. These were his weariness, his weakness after giving out his vitality to heal others, his bloody sweat, his ignominious buffetings, and all the reproaches, the sneers and the bitter words incurred on account of his faithfulness, to all of which he meekly and quietly submitted until his suffering on Calvary terminated his human existence.

#### SUFFERINGS RESULTING FROM HEREDITY, NOT SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST

There is no question that suffering in general is not suffering with Christ, but with Adam. Our physical infirmities which are of heredity, are not sufferings of Christ. Rather we should speak of the sufferings of Christ as being voluntary and not involuntary. When the Apostle says that if we suffer with the Lord we shall also reign with him (2 Tim. 2:12), he means the suffering which we bring on ourselves through faithfulness to our covenant. St. Paul speaks of filling up that which is behind the afflictions of Christ for his body's sake, which is the church. (Col. 1:24) These experiences are not for Adam's sake.

In St. Paul's own case he had, we believe, weak eyes as a result of his wrong course in persecuting the church; and that wrong course was, no doubt, largely the result of heredity. When the Apostle speaks of the sufferings he endured on account of his eyes, he does not speak of them as the sufferings of Christ, but says that his affliction was a messenger of Satan to buffet him. (2 Cor. 12:7) We might then say that all physical sufferings resulting from heredity are ministers of Satan opposing us, causing us much difficulty. However, we believe that the Lord is pleased with us if we resist these ministers of Satan.

If we should think of all our physical pains and aches as sufferings for Christ, then we should be obliged to think of our mental defects also as sufferings for Christ. For instance, a man who had a disabled hand might have a comparatively even temper; another might have a perverse temper, leading him into trouble, leading him to busybody in other men's affairs, etc. Thus his disposition causes him to suffer as a busybody and not for Christ. Paul tells us that our defects in character are works of the fallen flesh. (Gal. 5:19-21) If the sufferings that come to us because of imperfect mental conditions are sufferings of heredity, the physical sufferings which result from imperfect physical conditions, cannot be counted as sufferings for Christ.

In the case of a Christian, inherited weaknesses and those brought upon himself by the violation of the laws of God previous to his entrance into the family of God as a son, while not sufferings with Christ, will be made advantageous to him. These weaknesses our Father sees fit to leave with us, but assures us that his grace will be sufficient for us. (2 Cor. 12:9) While the realization of such care for our interests is humiliating in that it forces conviction of our weakness, yet it is refreshing and inspiring in that it proves our Father's love for us. "The Father himself loveth you."—John 16:27.

#### SUFFERING TURNED TO THE ADVANTAGE OF THE NEW CREATURE

But when one has undertaken to follow in the footsteps of Christ and has been begotten as a new creature, whatever affliction that new creature undergoes because of following the Lord, is suffering as a Christian; and whatever our experiences in suffering may be, these are not necessarily the portion of the sons of God, for the angels do not suffer; but he permits the church to have them in order to develop and crystallize character. If we rejoice that we are found worthy to share in the sufferings of the present time, every trial will be turned to advantage as a part of our Christian experience. "They are not of the world." (John 17:16) Therefore all of our experiences must be regarded as Christian, for correction in righteousness and for educational purposes.

But this is taking a broader, deeper view than ordinary. Certainly a Christian is not ashamed of what he may suffer because of his loyalty to the Lord, to the truth and to the brethren. In these sufferings he is to glorify God and to be thankful for them. He is to be glad for the opportunity of enduring something, to show not only the Lord, but himself also that he has endured something for Christ's sake. Every sacrifice that we make is for the purpose of suffering as a Christian, and we are not to be ashamed so to suffer.—1 Peter 4:16.

#### SUFFERING FOR CONSCIENCE NOT ALWAYS SUFFERING FOR CHRIST

There are others who suffer more or less as Christians suffer, but they are suffering from a worldly standpoint. People sometimes say, "This worldly man has his trials and sufferings, and shows such patience, such resignation, that surely he is suffering as a Christian." But we do not understand that anyone can suffer as a Christian unless he takes the steps necessary to make him a Christian. We are to view matters from God's standpoint. Doubtless many have suffered as Christians from a human viewpoint who were not Christians. In the dark ages many were put to death for the sake of principle. In our own day there are people who



give no evidence of being Christians, but who would rather die than have the Bible taken out of the public schools. Although they do not understand the Bible, yet if these were times of persecution, many would die at the stake in order to keep the Bible in the public schools.

We cannot always tell whether suffering is for Christ's sake. But where people have suffered for conscience' sake, they have thus cultivated character, and will get a blessing in the next age for that suffering. At present there is only the one door into membership in the body of Christ—obedience even unto death. Suffering with Christ, as we have seen, is not the ordinary suffering common to all in the fallen state, but only such experiences as are the result, more directly, of following Christ's example in advocating unpopular truths and in exposing popular errors. Such were the causes of the sufferings of Christ; and such will be the causes of suffering, persecution and loss to all who follow in his footsteps. Such will have fellowship in his sufferings now, and in the end will be counted worthy to share in the reward given for faithfulness to principle.

Throughout the Gospel age this course has meant self-sacrificing labor and endurance of reproach in the sowing and watering of Christ's doctrines. Now, in the end of the age, it means a similar fidelity and endurance in the harvest work now in progress—faithfulness even to the laying down of life itself, whether it be required by the gradual process of working it out in the Master's service, a dying daily, or by being brought more abruptly to a martyr's death.

#### SHRINKING BACK FROM SUFFERING

Our Lord forewarns us that in the end of the Gospel age, many who have a love for Christ will allow their love to grow cold because of the iniquity and sin in the world. (Matt. 24:12) It will be a test for such to decide whether they will partake of the worldly spirit. We see this test in operation now. A great many people who name the name of Christ, who really love the Lord, who appreciate much of his character, who would like to see the right prosper, nevertheless have no thought of making a spectacle of themselves before men. They would like to do right, to walk honorably, and to have the favor of men as good citizens. But as to being warm and faithful followers of the Lord—through “evil report and good report” (2 Cor. 6:8)—their faith and zeal are not sufficient to endure the test.

The Lord Jesus gives us the invitation to become joint-heirs with him. He has very clearly informed us that to follow in his steps will mean trials and difficulties in the flesh. He says, “In the world ye shall have tribulation.” (John 16:33) St. Paul repeats the sentiment, saying, “We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God”; and again in our text he emphasizes the thought, saying, “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” (Acts 14:22; 2 Tim. 3:12) There is no other way to enter the kingdom than by self-sacrifice, deadening of the flesh, mortifying it. In proportion as the new creature grows, the old creature perishes, until the sacrifice shall have been completed in death.

The Lord's people should thoroughly understand the terms and conditions upon which they have been called. They should therefore not think it strange when trials come upon them, no matter how fiery, no matter how severe. The Apostle Peter lovingly counsels the church: “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you; on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.” (1 Peter 4:12-14) The Lord is to be not only the Instructor, but also the Refiner to purge out the dross, that we may be made ready to share with Christ in the kingdom of “glory, honor and immortality.”—Rom. 2:7.

#### TRIALS FROM FALSE BRETHREN

The Scriptures plainly teach that special trials may be expected in the church, amongst the brethren. And we find it to be true that our severest trials come not from without, but, as the Apostle in substance says, “From among yourselves shall arise false brethren,” to injure the flock in general through personal ambition. (Acts 20:30) This becomes a test not only to the church, but to all those who are in contact with us, for if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it.—1 Cor. 12:26.

We are not, therefore, to think it strange if there are trials and difficulties, and if more or less dispute arise in the church. We are to cultivate gentleness, meekness, patience,

loving-kindness toward all. Nevertheless, if a dispute arise amongst the Lord's people, we are to recognize that such things are unavoidable amongst those who have the truth. Our heads are imperfect, and consequently it requires some time to come into line with the teachings of the Lord's Word. Even disputation makes life an activity, and is better than a dead condition—not to care what is spoken or not spoken. Nevertheless, those who have zeal should be careful that they manifest the Spirit of the Lord, as above indicated—gentleness, patience, meekness, brotherly kindness, love, humility.

Think it not strange that there are fiery trials amongst yourselves, arising from one cause or another, that will make it particularly severe for you. Those among whom you are thrown in contact will cause you suffering, because of your zeal and their misunderstanding, their imperfection, etc. All of these fiery trials will work out good for you. It is far better to be amongst those who are fervent in spirit than to take a place amongst those who are lukewarm and thus lose the privilege of being one of those who are footstep followers of Christ. Perhaps those who are lukewarm will, in the time of trouble, learn a lesson. But the little flock are to learn their lesson in the present time—allowing the experiences of life to work out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.—2 Cor. 4:17.

Our knowledge of God is limited; yet it is only what we should expect of the Heavenly Father, that any whom he accepts as his children will have divine love and care in the supervision of their affairs, which will make all things work for good to them. Since the Lord is our Shepherd, no one is able to pluck us out of his hands. (John 10:28, 29) We are as dear to him as the apple of his eye. He that began a good work in us is able to complete it in the day of Jesus Christ. (Phil. 1:6) So the more faith we have the more we appreciate the text, “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose.” (Rom. 8:28) This includes even the things that seem to be very contrary, very evil, very disadvantageous.

Our Lord said, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent.” (John 17:3) To know the Father means to be in fellowship with him, to have an intimate acquaintance with him. Experience corroborates this fact. The more obedient we are as children the more intimate is our acquaintance with him. And if we are unfaithful, even for a little space, we shall fail to make development along spiritual lines. But in proportion as we are seeking to walk in his ways, we become intimate with him in the particular sense in which a child knows his father. This knowledge gives us the trust that he cares for us as his children, and makes all things work together for good to us.—Rom. 8:28; 1 John 1:6, 7.

#### CO-OPERATION WITH GOD TO THE BEST OF OUR ABILITY

We note, however, that St. Paul says that all things work together for good, not for best. God has something to do in the way of his choice of his reward and of our possibilities. The angels of God, however, obedient to him, could not become archangels nor cherubim. Their obedience brings their highest welfare on their own plane. So with us. We cannot get the best for the reason that he has already given it to Jesus Christ, whom he has set next to himself at his right hand in power and glory and honor.—1 Peter 3:22.

Again, this promise is not a guarantee that all things in life will work together for the very best to us as though we had neither will nor choice in the matter. We should not say, “I positively resign myself; the Lord has said that all things will work together for the best, and if I miss opportunities in the service I shall say, ‘Oh, well, it is all for the best.’” Thus to think would be a mistake, for it is evidently not at all the thought.

After we have become new creatures in Christ and children of God, he leaves us with a certain amount of choice. It is very largely in our own control what we shall do, whether we shall make progress or stand still or go backward. We cannot say that if one had lost the high calling his experiences would be the very best possible; and that if he went into the second death, his fate was the best. But we can say that this Scripture means that God stands ready to give us the best that he may have under the terms and conditions of the covenant which he has made with us.

Ours is a covenant of sacrifice. There are certain laws and principles which are not to be broken. Along these lines the Lord Jesus tells us that the Father will appoint those next to the Lord who have demonstrated most of the Spirit of the Redeemer. He will not put anyone in such a position or into the kingdom arbitrarily. His character, his words,

stand pledged that he will make the best of us that he is able to do, while at the same time recognizing our wills as paramount.

Jehovah does not seek those as his children who need to be forced. Our Lord said that the Father seeketh such to worship him as worship him in spirit and in truth. (John 4:23) We are to work to the best of our ability. But with all of our stumbling the Lord stands pledged that he will

not leave us if we are faithful, and that he will make even our stumbling work out for good to us. Those who lose the crown may come up through great tribulation with the great company class. This is the best thing possible for them under the divine arrangement. For those who go into the second death, their fate will not be the best for them; but it will be best for the entire universe that those should be blotted out of existence who are out of harmony with righteousness.

## SPARED IN THE DAY OF TROUBLE

*"They shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his only son that serveth him."*—Mal. 3:17.

Like many other prophecies, the words of the Prophet Malachi seem to have a general application throughout the Gospel age and a particular one at the close of the age. Eighteen hundred years ago the Lord Jehovah began to make up his jewels. The first of these jewels was our Lord Jesus Christ, who was polished, perfected and taken up on high. Jehovah did not cease his work with the perfection of his Son, our Lord. He has arranged that other jewels be cut and polished after the similitude of his Son, that they may shine with him in the heavenly glory and kingdom; as it is written, "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works."—Eph. 2:10.

These gems must all be found by God, who is making up these jewels. But having been found of him, they are placed in the hands of the great Lapidarist, our Lord Jesus, that he may cut, polish and fit them for the glorious work of shining with him in the kingdom. Our Heavenly Father has appointed our Lord to be the great Master Workman in the preparation of the jewels.

In our text, the Lord Jehovah says that in that day of preparation of the jewels he will spare this class as a man spares his only son that serves him. He has not spared this class in the sense of relieving them from all suffering, for if they were thus spared they could not share the glory to follow this trial time. He did not spare Jesus, the head over the church, which is his body. But he will not permit them to be tempted above what they are able to bear. (1 Cor. 10:13) He has an interest in them and a sympathy for them, and delivers them from those things which would prove too weighty for them.

### THE MOUNTING OF THE JEWELS GOING ON

In a certain sense, then, God has been making up his jewels for more than eighteen hundred years—in the sense of preparing them. But there is still a final gathering, or assembling, of this class, which has not yet been completed. The gathering of these jewels must include the resurrection, not merely of those who have been sleeping as members of the body of Christ, but also of those who are alive and remain to the end of the age. These all experience a change from animal to spirit conditions—"changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." (1 Cor. 15:51, 52) In the assembling of this class—the mounting of the jewels, as it were—the Lord will show his own workmanship, what he has selected out of the filth and mire of the sinful race of mankind, and what he has made of them.

This gathering of the jewels is that to which the Prophet Malachi refers in the following quotation: "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in; behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap; and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness."—Mal. 3:1-3.

The Messenger of the Covenant is, primarily, our Lord Jesus, who came more than eighteen hundred years ago and presented himself to those who were heirs of the New Covenant—the Jews. The Apostle points out that this new arrangement meant, not only a new Mediator for them, but also better sacrifices and a new priesthood, who would be able to effect a satisfaction for the sins of the people, so that it

would not be necessary to render the typical sacrifices thereafter year by year.—Heb. 9:11-15.

This Messenger of the Covenant came unto his own, but his own received him not, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God"—to become associated with himself, to become identified with himself, as members of his body. They are begotten to a new nature, not of the will of the flesh, but only of God.—John 1:11-13.

### THE LORD'S WORDS A REFINING FIRE

In this sense of the word, our Lord sat as a refiner of gold and silver—discriminating, purifying. The words which he spoke were not only words of grace, of eternal life, but also words of purification, likened elsewhere to a sharp, two-edged sword. (Heb. 4:12) The Prophet Malachi compares them to fullers' soap, which would take out all stains and leave the garment pure and white; and he also says that our Lord will sit as a refiner of gold and silver, that the Levite class may offer to the Lord an acceptable sacrifice.

This prophecy refers, as we see, to the antitypical priesthood and includes both the royal priests and the great company. The work of this great Refiner is to purify the members of the church class—not only the little flock, but the great company as well.

This refining process takes place all through the Gospel age. As the individual members of the body of Christ grow in grace, they are put through not only the preliminary processes of the refining, but also the more trying ones. Gold represents the divine or higher order of spirit nature, and silver, the lower order. The gold represents the little flock, and the silver the great company.

None of these would be able to make an acceptable sacrifice of himself; but the great Advocate imputes His merit to each who offers himself in sacrifice and thus enables him to become such. The Father permits the Advocate to make of these acceptable sacrifices. They are his sacrifices, not their own. Then they are begotten to the new nature and adopted into the body of Christ. By this offering, our Lord, as the great Mediator, is getting ready for the institution of the New Covenant.

### THE PRESENT A WONDERFUL TIME

The closing scenes of the Gospel age will be the most remarkable of the world's history. The church will then be completed. We are not at liberty to guess when the end of the trouble will be. Whether all of the trouble will come in the next two or three years we do not know. But we think that the most serious part of the trouble will occupy a very short time.

Let us remember that we are living in most wonderful times. More can be accomplished in one month now than could have been done in years some time ago—more in one hour than in days formerly. We are still in the waiting attitude, so that the Lord can indicate his will in the matter to us. We believe that the year 1915 will be even more wonderful than the present. We fully believe that the year 1914 will see the end of the Gentile Times, for we cannot find even one flaw in our Bible chronology. But we do not claim infallibility. To err is human. If, therefore, the Father permits us to blunder in respect to his Word in this matter, nevertheless, he will undoubtedly have a great blessing for us. And if it should be that the year 1914 should not mark the close of the Gentile Times, we would still believe that the time could not be very far distant; for the nearer we come to that time, the nearer we see the fulfilment of the things which the Scriptures indicate will then occur.

There is never a sin or a sorrow,  
There is never a care or a loss,  
But that we may carry to Jesus,  
And leave at the foot of the cross.

Our Savior, our Friend and Redeemer,  
Our portion on earth and in heaven;  
For he who withheld not his own Son,  
Hath with him all things freely given

# THE GREAT QUESTION

MARK 8:27-9:1.—NOVEMBER 17.

*"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."*—Matt. 16:16.

For a considerable period of his ministry our Lord did not declare himself, even to his disciples, to be the Messiah. Undoubtedly he chose the wiser course. As the Great Teacher he instructed the people, until they said, "Never man spake like this man"; he healed the people, until they said, "Could Messiah do more than this?" It was better, undoubtedly, that the thought should gradually come upon the minds of his followers than that he should have started in with making that claim—better that the people should claim it for him than that he claim the honor for himself.

He did, however, wish his disciples to know, and he approached the question by asking, "Who do men say that I am?" He got a reply, that some thought him John the Baptist risen from the dead; that others considered him to be Elijah risen from the dead, and others thought of him as being perhaps one of the other prophets.

Then came the point of the question: "But who say ye that I am?" St. Peter answered and said, "Thou art The Christ, the Son of the Living God." Jesus admitted the correctness of this, saying, "Blessed art thou, Simon, son of Jonah, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."

Forthwith Jesus began to explain to the beloved twelve the experiences that lay before him—how the kingdom would be formerly proffered to the Jews, and how through their representatives, the elders, the chief priests, they would reject him; how he would be killed, and after three days rise again.

He made the statement about his death very emphatic, and the disciples clearly understood it. Judas, angrily disappointed, considered it a disgrace upon our Lord for him to take such a view of the future, and a disgrace also upon the Apostles, because if Jesus had such expectations it would modify and regulate his course, and soon disaster would come to him, and the dashing of all their hopes which he had inculcated—hopes of sitting with him in his throne, etc.

Doubtless all of the Apostles were disappointed, but only St. Peter had the courage to express himself, saying, "Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not happen." You will, we all know, as the Messiah, attain the throne of Israel and thus eventually the throne of the world, and bring blessing to the whole human race; and as you have promised, we shall be with you in your throne.

## "GET THEE BEHIND ME, SATAN!"

In this course St. Peter was opposing the divine will and plan, of which the death of Jesus was the very center or hub, from which would radiate all the fulfillments of all the various promises—to the church first, to Israel next, and finally to all nations, peoples, kindreds and tongues. Jesus perceived that these influences were striving to hinder his consummation of his sacrifice, even as Satan tried to do in the beginning of his consecration.

To make the matter very emphatic he said to St. Peter, "Get thee behind me, adversary," thy words savor not of the things of God's plan, but of the things of human judgment and preference. Then he began to make clear to his followers what had not been "meat in due season" to give them before, in such plain terms, namely, that whoever desired to be counted in with him in any part of his work must realize that it would cost him all that he possessed of an earthly kind; he must deny himself, take up his cross and follow in the footsteps of the Redeemer.

Anyone solicitous of maintaining his rights and holding on to the present life, and unwilling to sacrifice all, will lose the great "prize" of the divine nature, which will be given to those who do take up the cross and make a full sacrifice of earthly interests. And on the other hand, he who will faithfully lose his life for Jesus' sake will save it—will gain the reward of life on the spirit plane.

Moreover, the same principle that now thus operates will always operate, namely, that whoever is simply selfish, loving his own life and his own interests, will not be accounted worthy of everlasting life, but those who will sacrifice, if need be, in the interests of the Lord's cause will be the ones accounted worthy in character for eternal life.

## "WHAT SHALL IT PROFIT A MAN?"

God has provided a future life for every soul of man through the redemption accomplished by Jesus, but only the noble of heart, of character, of life, who will accept this great blessing through the divinely appointed way will get it. If they selfishly seek for the whole world, the selfishness thus developed will make them unfit for the eternal life. For what would a man take in exchange for the loss of his life? Would he consider wealth or fame or name for a few years

in the present time worthy of exchange at profit, if it were to cost him eternal glory and eternal life? Surely not. We are therefore to have in mind that character-building is absolutely essential to our attaining eternal life upon any plane, by the proposition that God has made us through his Son.

Whoever becomes a follower of the Lord and hopes to gain the prize of everlasting life and glory on the spirit plane must do so whole-heartedly, and not in an underhanded or secret manner. He must come out fully and courageously and properly acknowledge Jesus and acknowledge his words. And Jesus puts himself and his words on a parity—"whoever is ashamed of me and of my words." Jesus' words are Jesus' doctrines or teachings. To be ashamed of the truth, to be ashamed of the divine plan, to be ashamed of what we find to be the teachings of God's Word, because they are unpopular with men, is to offend the Lord and to prove ourselves unworthy of his favor.

All who are of his church will need Christ continually as their Advocate, down to the very last, when he shall present them blameless and unrepentable before the Father in love. (Col. 1:22) And if they would maintain him as their Advocate, they must also be advocating his cause amongst men, not ashamed of him and not ashamed of his doctrine, his words.

That the Lord addressed his words especially to the disciples is shown by his reference to others of that nation who had not made such a consecration as all of his disciples must make. The others were called "an adulterous and sinful generation." The followers of Christ must hold up the Light of Truth before the world, and so doing faithfully they will be acknowledged by the Lord Jesus in due time, when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels. He will not be ashamed to acknowledge them; he will present them to the Father and to the holy angels.

## THE GREAT QUESTION

The great question of eighteen centuries ago is the great question of today! Who is Jesus? If, as some claim, he was merely a good man, a most able Teacher, then he was not The Christ, for The Christ, although the embodiment of all these qualities, was more, much more. To be The Christ, he must have been "the Man Christ Jesus," who gave himself a ransom-price for all, to be testified in due time. (1 Tim. 2:5, 6) And this signifies that he must have been, not of ordinary birth, but extraordinary, born from above, because if born in the ordinary course of nature he would be like others of Adam's sons, subject to the sentence of death, and hence unable to save either himself or others. But if he was The Christ, the Sent of God, who left the glory of the Father and was made flesh that he might "taste death for every man," then we behold him as the great Redeemer of the world, whose death was necessary as a ransom, or corresponding price, to secure the release of mankind from the death sentence and to make possible the resurrection of Adam and his race.

More than this, the word Christ signifies The Anointed. The Bible declares that the Anointed Lord shall be the Great King, Prophet and Priest, whose kingdom shall be under the whole heavens—a kingdom which shall last for a thousand years; and shall destroy sin and all who love sin; and which shall lift up all humanity willing to return into harmony with God. According to the Scriptures, this Jesus is—the Messiah. And his present work is the gathering of a bride class, to be his joint-heir in his glorious kingdom, which will be set up soon after the elect church shall have been completed by the glorious change of the first resurrection.

What think ye of Messiah? What think ye of his invitation to become his associates in his glory and kingdom? What think ye of the cost of self-denial, self-sacrifice? What think ye of the great reward? Let those who have made the consecration review the terms; let those who have not made this consecration do as Jesus said: "Sit down and count the cost," before making a decision, so that if they become his disciples they will do so intelligently, and be loyal and faithful in their course.

Only those who appreciate the "High Calling of God in Christ," "The Heavenly calling"—only such will have the necessary incentive to run with patience the race upon which they started when making a consecration; and only those who run the race faithfully will win the prize; and only by the assistance of the Great Advocate can any hope to come off conqueror and "more than conqueror," through his precious blood.



# THE KINGDOM IN TABLEAU

MARK 9:2-13.—NOVEMBER 24.

*"A voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son; hear ye him. And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone."—Luke 9:35.*

Our studies continue to appertain to Messiah's kingdom of glory. Today's lesson tells of a tableau illustration given to His disciples respecting it. The lesson deeply impressed the three Apostles who witnessed the vision, namely, Peter, James and John. St. Peter referred to it afterward in his epistle (2 Pet. 1:16-19), saying, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye witnesses of his Majesty . . . when we were with him in the holy mount."

Jesus prepared his disciples for the transfiguration vision, saying, "There be some of them that stand here which shall not taste of death until they see God's Royal Majesty having come with power." The occasion will be remembered. Jesus had foretold his death, quite contrary to the previous expectations of the Apostles, and now he sought to draw their minds gradually to a realization that his death would not mean a repudiation of the promise of the kingdom and its glory but a fulfilment of their expectations on a higher plane. Jesus would formally offer himself to Israel as King riding upon the ass five days before his crucifixion; he would be despised and rejected and crucified; but his kingly office and work would thereby only be confirmed. His authority to be King of the earth, his authority to release mankind from the power of sin and death, his authority to uplift humanity and to bring the earth in general to Paradise conditions, would all be founded upon his sacrificial death at Calvary.

All this was presented to the three chosen disciples six days later. Jesus took them to the mountain-top and was transfigured before them. His flesh and his garments shone and glistened white, after the manner of angels, the vision thus representing the Lord after having experienced his resurrection change from earthly to heavenly conditions. Then with him "talked two men," says St. Luke, "who appeared in glory"—radiant, but less so than Jesus.

In some manner they recognized these two men of the vision as Moses and Elijah. They heard these discourse with Jesus respecting his decease, "which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem," says St. Luke. How long the vision lasted we are not told, but St. Peter, thinking that he should make some comment on the situation, and not knowing what to say, suggested the building of three tabernacles, one for Jesus, one for Moses, one for Elijah. He evidently thought that the Master would be rejoiced at such blessed fellowship, and he was willing to do anything for his aid.

## "THIS IS MY BELOVED SON"

Then came a voice from the overshadowing cloud, saying, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him!" And suddenly the vision vanished, and they saw only Jesus with them, and he no longer with radiant appearance. What could it all mean? It may be that several good lessons came out of this: (1) During the six days following the announcement of the Master's coming suffering, ignominy and death, we may assume that the Apostles were sad-hearted, bewildered. In this condition it would be a great refreshment, and be strengthening to their faith to witness this vision which testified of Jesus they knew not what, but which showed them that the death he had foretold was a certainty and known of God and of divine approval.

(2) The voice from the cloud would be a fresh encouragement to their faith. They had believed that Jesus was all that he claimed to be—the Son of the Highest. They had believed that he was not an ordinary member of the human family, born in sin, but that he had been particularly and specially born from above by divine power. They had believed his own testimony that he proceeded forth and came from God and that he would return to the Father, but now their faith was corroborated; God himself had testified in this miraculous manner that Jesus was his Son, his Well-Beloved, his Only One.

As the Apostles were coming down the mountainside with Jesus, wondering about the meaning of the vision they had seen, Jesus said to them, "See that ye tell no man the vision until after the Son of Man is risen from the dead." (Matt. 17:9) So "they kept the saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the Lord meant by the rising again

from the dead." Thus, little by little, the Great Teacher impressed upon his true disciples great truths which they could not otherwise have learned, seeing that they had not yet been begotten of the holy Spirit; for the holy Spirit was not yet given, the Pentecost blessing had not yet come, because Jesus had not yet suffered nor risen from the dead, nor ascended into the presence of God to make sin-atonement on their behalf.

The fact that Moses and Elijah appeared as real to the Apostles as though they were in life does not contradict the words of Jesus that what they saw was a vision. We are to remember the many visions given later on to one of these apostles, St. John, recorded in the Book of Revelation. In those visions St. John saw angels and men, horsemen, beasts, crowns, etc., and heard voices and singing and talking, etc., just as in this vision.

## THE MEANING OF THE VISION

We have St. Peter's words (2 Pet. 1:16) in corroboration of the text here, that what they saw on the mountain represented the royal majesty of Messiah—the kingdom of Messiah. Moses represented the faithful of natural Israel, the "house of servants"; "Moses as a servant, was faithful over all his house." Elijah represented the Christ in the flesh, the house of sons, which has been in process of development throughout this Gospel age. All of the consecrated, spirit-begotten people of God, during this age, are represented by Elijah, who, God promised, should come before Messiah would set up his kingdom. In other words, the Elijah class is composed of Jesus and all of his footstep followers throughout this Gospel age—in their earthly or fleshly condition, spirit-begotten, but not yet spirit-born.

This Elijah company as a whole must be developed and must do a work in the world before the real kingdom of Messiah can be established. The glorification of Jesus, following his death and resurrection, was due, but as the glorified One he stood between the Moses class, called previously, and the Elijah class, which had just begun to be called to be his joint-heirs in the kingdom. He was thus in their midst, and the crucifixion at Jerusalem was about to fulfil all the conditions necessary to the bringing about of the Messianic reign.

But the glorification of Jesus was not the only thing necessary; the entire church, the body, must suffer with him and be completed and then be joined with him beyond the veil before the kingdom glory can be fully established. This work of calling and preparing an Elijah class has been in progress for more than eighteen centuries and we believe is now nearly completed. As John the Baptist was the forerunner of Jesus in the flesh, so this greater Elijah, the church in the flesh, is the forerunner of the great Messiah on the spirit plane. We must suffer with him if we would share in his resurrection and share in his glory. This was the lesson of the transfiguration vision.

The disciples wondered and queried, saying, "Why do the Pharisees and Scribes tell us," according to the Scriptures, "that Elijah must first come." Jesus answered that, in a sense, to those who could receive it, John the Baptist had thus come, and had introduced Jesus as the Messiah, and that John the Baptist had in a sense fulfilled this prophecy when he introduced the Redeemer-King.

St. Peter's words, already referred to, fully satisfying us that the transfiguration scene was a vision of the coming glory of Christ—"We were eye-witnesses of his Majesty, . . . in the holy mount." Hence there is no doubt whatever, that the promised kingdom will eventually come. The vision on the mount confirms this to us. However, the prophecies of old, which foretold Messiah's coming and reign, are still more authentic, "more sure," they cannot fail; the kingdom merely awaits the sufferings of those who will be the members of the body of Christ. Then, at the second coming of Jesus, these will be blessed and glorified, and the class represented by Moses will also be blessed and used as instruments of the kingdom. Thus in the vision the entire kingdom was represented: first of all, by Jesus himself, second by Elijah, who represented the church class, and third by Moses, who represented the faithful on the earthly plane, through whom the heavenly blessings will pour out upon humanity.

## CAN YOU ASSIST IN THIS?

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