

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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*“This one thing I do,
forgetting those things that
are behind, and reaching
forth unto those things that
are before, I press toward
the mark for the prize of
the high calling of God in
Christ Jesus.”*

(Phil. 3:13-14)



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BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

FOUNDED 1924

The Bible Study Monthly, published to promote knowledge of the Bible, sees the Scriptures as a true record of God's dealings with the human race, needing to be understood in our generation. It stands for the pre-millennial advent of our Lord, and His reign of peace and justice on the earth.

"Speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ." (Ephesians 4:15 NRSV)

The Bible Study Monthly is sent free of charge on request to all who are genuinely interested. It should never be sold for money.

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THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

Paris hosts this year's Olympic Games from 26 July. There will be teams from countries all over the world. Sportspeople will compete in many sports with different skills to win a medal, even a gold medal. Since the modern Games began in 1896 in Athens it has grown larger and larger and standards have increased over the years with many Olympic and World Records. These athletes are considered the best in the world and aim to be at their peak for performance at the games.

These Olympic Games were initiated to imitate the ancient Olympic Games in ancient Greece. The athletes in ancient times who competed were in regular exercise to ensure they were fit and strong enough to go to battle and win against their enemies in military campaigns.

There were two types of races which Paul refers to in his epistles: the first was a speed test where the aim was to finish first and the second was an endurance test the aim being to finish the course, rather like the London marathon now.

In Tudor times jousting had become a sport for young knights. It was a match between two men on horseback with a lance in one hand while wearing armour including a helmet and breastplate. They would gallop and attempt to dislodge the other knight. It enabled the young knights to practice for real life battles between two armies. The thick armour was very important as it was a dangerous event one in which Henry II of France died in 1559. It shows a link between sport and warfare.

Paul's military metaphors using the whole armour of God relate very well. Paul used the language of military defense weapons such as the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit. (Eph. 6:10-18)

Battles and military campaigns feature in a lot of the Old Testament books. Daniel saw the battles in the Middle East which first led to his being taken captive to Babylon and then later witnessed the overthrow of Babylon by Cyrus of Persia. Daniel showed great faith in that alien land and passed every test of faith including being placed in a lions' den.

After his baptism Jesus was tested in the wilderness by Satan. During his three and a half years ministry he was tested and persecuted by the religious leaders of Israel, which led to his sacrificial death close by Jerusalem. It is not surprising that Jesus' followers have trials and tests in the years following consecration, hence the need to prepare ourselves for tests too by wearing the armour of God.

The Day of the LORD or Day of God's wrath sweeps away the systems of this world. The conclusion of this day is often figured in God striking dead 185,000 of Sennacherib's troops the night before the battle showing God as the victor, not the might of men of war. It showed His power to deliver which provides comfort in these troublesome times.



THE RACE

Hebrews 12:1

Let us cast off every weight now,
As we run to gain the prize;
Looking to our head and Master,
We shall win it, if we're wise.

God has now conferred the Kingship,
On the shoulders of his Son;
May we follow him forever,
Jesus Christ—beloved one.

The race it does require endurance,
So great a number did begin;
But how many gain the vict'ry,
Sacrificing, every-thing.

For overcomers, all must be now,
Yes, the pressure has been great;
But soon the Master'll say, "Well
done,"
He'll call on time—we won't be late.

How we remember, our example,
That great man—Apostle Paul;
He threw off every sin and weight,
He truly heard the Master's call.

So many blessings on life's race
course,
Our loving Master, he does send;
So, full of joy, lets run together,
For the great race nears its end.

*Rosemary Page
Where Eagles Gather*

AN INCORRUPTIBLE CROWN

An encouragement to endeavour

“Hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown.” (Rev. 3:11 RV)

The possibility of losing the crown of life, even though that crown seems to be almost within one’s grasp, is a very real one. Whenever the New Testament speaks of the award that awaits faithful disciples the conditional nature of that award is stressed. It is not the one who enters into a covenant with God, and is accepted by him in the High Calling, who is to receive an abundant entrance into the Kingdom, but the one who wins his Lord’s approval by patient continuance in well-doing. He is the one who eventually receives the crown of life which the Lord has promised to them that love him. In the meantime, during the span of the lifetime, be it short or long, during which that consecration is being worked out, there is always the possibility of the promised crown being lost. Not that God is ever unfaithful or that He will change his mind or vary the terms of the offer. His unchangeable Plan ever stands and so far as He is concerned the acceptance of a disciple into the race for the prize is as good as saying that the prize is already won. What He has promised He is abundantly able to perform. The decision rests with us. If we continue, He abideth faithful; He cannot deny himself. (2 Tim. 2:13) But if we deny him, then He cannot do other than deny us, for He ever respects our free will and if we deliberately take ourselves out of his love and care by repudiating the terms of our covenant with him there is really nothing He can do about it—not in this present Age anyway.

The loss of a crown is rarely so simple a matter as this. The responsibility for the change of mind or loss of faith which involves such disaster is all too often to be laid at the door of others, and in the last analysis, the great Adversary of God and man, Satan himself. That is why the risen Christ in his message to the Church at Philadelphia, and through that message to all Christians everywhere, beseeches us earnestly to *take heed that no man take thy crown*. There are so many in this world who can, wittingly or unwittingly, become the means of robbing the unwary disciple of his promised crown. It is not that they win it or even desire it for themselves but their influence on that life can be such that they have taken the crown from the one who might otherwise have had it, and destroyed his hopes of joint heirship with Jesus the Lord.

It is a very appropriate symbol of the Christian life, this metaphor used so much by the Apostle Paul. It was taken from his knowledge of the Greek

games of his day. All the early Christians were familiar with the games. They occupied as prominent a place in the life of the people as does organised sport in the world's social life today. In one respect they differed. The competitors were required to go into very strict training long before the day and encouraged to lay aside every other interest in order to be as fit as possible for the event; when then the great day came they were expected to manifest much more than usual physical prowess in order to gain the approval of the judges.

In the great national annual games of the Greeks—the Olympic games, revived in 1896, was one such event—preparations began ten months beforehand, and those chosen to compete in the actual contest were already known to be fit men and measurably prepared for the trials of strength and endurance they would be called upon to undergo. In like manner, we are told, no man can come to Jesus except the Father, who is overseeing the interests of his work in the world of this Age, draw him. Who does the Father draw? Quite obviously those whose hearts are already turned toward him to some extent or who are seen by him to possess those qualities and that disposition which will make them amenable to his leading and his instruction when once they have been brought face to face with Christ and have accepted him. Right at the outset we have to accept the fact that God, who knows every one of his creatures so well, is busy, through the medium of his Holy Spirit, ceaselessly working in the world, selecting those whose hearts are likely to be responsive and bringing them into touch with his truth. That is where the work of his ambassadors, his witnesses, comes in. They are agents of the Holy Spirit, sharing in this search for likely candidates for the great contest.

Now here is a candidate who has heard the call, and answered it, and has progressed through the successive stages of repentance, belief in and acceptance of Jesus and his redemptive death, justification through faith in him, and consecration of life to be dead with him. Not all who are led by the Spirit of Jesus, who are “drawn” of God, progress even to this point. Many are called, but not so many accept the call. Some there are, like the rich young ruler, who come within measurable distance of the High Calling and appreciate something of its glories, but turn away at the last moment, unwilling to pay the price that is asked. But here is a candidate who has done all these things and has been entered for participation in the race. He is accepted by the Father as a member of the Church in the flesh—he has come “into Christ”—he has been buried with him by baptism into his death and has risen to walk with him in newness of life—old

things have passed away and all things have become new, for he is now a “new creature in Christ Jesus”—and as he walks on to the course and crosses the starting line he squares his shoulders for the effort and hears the judges’ assuring admonition “*Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.*” (1 Thess. 5:24) In his own zealous and hopeful condition of mind the prize is already his, for he fully intends to complete the course and win the crown.

Now there were two kinds of races to which allusion is made in the New Testament and the peculiarities of each should be kept in mind if we are to draw right conclusions. There was first of all the short foot races, in which a number of competitors ran to determine who could reach the finishing line first, and the first one to do so was acclaimed victor and crowned with the laurel or parsley wreath (the “crown” which is referred to in the New Testament). The other was the much longer course, usually of many miles in length, in which the object was to show how many of the competitors could summon sufficient endurance to run the whole distance. In this case each one who “finished the course” received a laurel wreath as victor; those who dropped out by the wayside through inability to finish the course were losers, and received no wreath.

The first, the short race, is the one mentioned in 1 Cor. 9:24 “*Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.*” Now this must not be interpreted to mean that of all who enter the race for the prize of the High Calling only *one* disciple will eventually win that prize; such a thought is an obvious absurdity. The Apostle’s meaning is that just as in a worldly race each competitor, knowing that the first past the tape will receive the prize, puts forth every possible endeavour to run his best, hoping thus to outdistance his rivals, just so, says Paul, should the Christian run, putting forth every endeavour. As he says in another place “*this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*” (Phil. 3:13-14) “So run, that ye may obtain.” The other type of contest, an example of which was the well-known Marathon, in which all the contestants sought to stay the course and all who did so received crowns, is a much closer analogy to the life of the Christian and this is the one alluded to by Paul in 2 Tim. 4:7-8 when at the end of his life he looked back and said “I have fought a good fight, *I have finished my course*, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteousness Judge, shall give me at that day.” He knew that he was close to death; he knew that he must stand

before the judgment-seat of Christ and that decision would then be pronounced as to his worthiness or unworthiness of the crown of life, he knew that now, so late in his Christian life, so near to its end, the things that now lay in the past must determine the issue, and looking back over the way he had come he exulted in the knowledge that his faith had held firm, his integrity before God was inviolate, he had finished the course and come to the end of the way still trusting in Christ, and therefore without any doubt the wreath of victory was his even although its actual bestowal must wait for the end. Paul had once referred to the possibility of his becoming a castaway (1 Cor. 9:27) and that knowledge was always with him through life as it must be with us; but now that he realised within himself the end was at hand, he rejoiced in the knowledge that he had finished the course without falling out by the wayside and so losing his crown, or giving heed to men who might seduce him from the course and so in that way rob him of his crown. *Take heed, that no man take thy crown.*

We are in the same position as Paul. While we are yet in the running of the race, still on the course, there is always the possibility of our turning aside and failing to finish. It is only when we arrive at its end that we can say as did Paul "I have finished the course and now the crown is mine." We do well to remember that the judgment is given, not on account of the work which we have done or the knowledge which we have gained, but purely on account of our loyalty to our Lord, our faithfulness to our covenant, and our sincerity of purpose. Whilst we retain these things we are still on the course and must eventually reach its end and win the promised crown. But until then the snares and delusions of the world, the flesh and the Devil, the effects of disillusionment and discouragement and unbelief, will always be seeking to destroy our faith and draw us away from God and that means becoming unfit for his purposes, and unworthy of his Kingdom, and in the end involves the loss of the crown. It is only he that endureth to the end who is to be saved. "*Blessed is the man that endureth temptation*" (or proving) says the beloved James "*for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.*" (Jas. 1:12) Note well that the crown is bestowed *after* the man has been tried (tested, proven worthy) and the plain implication is that if he does not stand the proving and the trying process, then he loses the crown. Exhorting the elders of the Church to faithfulness in the discharge of their duties, Peter says (1 Pet. 5:4) "*When the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.*" That is conditional upon faithfulness to their charge. And to seal all these words with his own approval, our Lord says to all his Church and each member

thereof *“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”* (Rev. 2:10)

In the clear light of so many Scriptures how plain it is that our whole Christian calling is altogether and completely conditional, and that we have it within our own power to make or mar our future, to win or to lose the crown of life. To be sure, there is room in the “Church of the Firstborn” (Heb. 12:23) beyond the Vail for all who may be drawn of the Father, hear the call, accept same, and enter into the Narrow Way that leads to life. It is quite unthinkable and quite out of accord with the fundamental principles of the Divine Plan to consider that the Father would call any who remain faithful and yet could not at the end be awarded the prize for which they had run and which they have merited. Whatever may be the truth regarding any question of a predetermined limit to the number of the “Elect” or of God’s foreknowledge regarding the number who will eventually be faithful, we must hold as an essential article of faith that all who are called, who enter, and are faithful, will receive the promise. There can be no shadow of doubt about that.

On the other hand, we should not interpret the Scriptures to teach that each one who receives the call and is accepted by God as a member of the New Creation must inevitably progress the whole length of the course and receive the crown. That is equally a violation of fundamental Scriptural principle. So far as the Father is concerned, it could well be said that the entry into the race is as good as the end of the race, for having once accepted a human heart in his covenant the Lord guarantees that He, on his part, will abide faithful. His power will bring us through “more than conquerors” (Rom. 8:37) if we allow him. But this is an agreement between two parties, both having free-will. God can guarantee his own part; He cannot guarantee ours. He abideth faithful and bestows upon us the inestimable blessing of his Holy Spirit to be a guide and a counsellor through life, but with that the issue rests with us. It is only if we abide faithful also that the end of the course can be attained. To what end God does or can see that end before we have reached it, and know the result of our race before that result is attained, is not really of consequence so far as we are concerned. What we do know and what the Scriptures constantly warn us against is the possibility of our falling away from the faith we have accepted, by so doing demonstrating our unworthiness for the purpose for which God is calling us, and so, inevitably, losing the crown which otherwise we might have had. *“No man”* said Jesus *“having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God.”* (Luke 9:62) He knew, only too well, the danger that would confront

all his followers in after days, of setting out with high hopes, and then, for one reason or another rejecting the High Calling into which they had entered, and losing everything. The Father requires of us faith, belief, sincerity. These are the essential factors which will carry us safely through all the besetments of life and bring us at last into the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, at that right hand where there are pleasures forevermore.

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NEARING THE GOAL

WITH eyes aflame, with panting breath,
they come,—
The runners,—every nerve and muscle
tense,—
Urged forward by a thousand deafening
cries,
On, on, they rush, when one, close to the
goal,
For but one moment glances back in pride
To note how far he hath outrun the rest.
Alas! tripped by a pebble on the course,
He stumbles, falls, arises, but too late,—
Another sweeps ahead with blood-flecked
lips
And bursting heart! One final, awful strain,
With superhuman effort, grand, supreme,
He leaps into the air,—and falls in death
Across the line,—*a victor*, but at what
A fearful cost!—*he gave his life, his all!*

I ponder o'er this tragedy of days
When Greece was mistress of the world,
and say,
"Hast not thou also entered on a race,
My soul, in contest for a 'Crown of life,'
A prize thou canst not win except thine *all*
Thou givest! Then, be wise, and *watch and*
pray,
Turn not thine eyes one instant from '*the*
mark,'

For fear thou dash thy foot against some
small,
Well-rounded truth, which in thy pride thou
hast
O'erlooked, and thus thou stumble, fall, and
though
Thou shouldst arise, 'twould be *too late*
to win!"

"Ah, then, consider thy 'forerunner,' Christ,
Yea, call to mind the 'cloud of witnesses'
Around,—those noble, faithful ones of
old,—
And strip thyself, my soul, of every weight;
Gird up thy loins, make straight paths for
thy feet;
Breathe deeply of the Spirit's conquering
power,
And run with patient, meek, enduring zeal!
Almost thou hast attained, my soul, my
soul!
Shall angels, principalities, or powers,
Or height, or depth, or *other creature*, draw
Thee from the goal so near? Ah! Yes, *so*
near,
The glory-light streams through the parting
veil;
Have faith, press on, one effort, grand su-
preme,—
And thou hast won in death Love's blood-
bought crown!"

Poems of the Way
Gertude W. Seibert

THE SHIELD OF FAITH

“Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.” (Eph. 6:16)

It is seen in verse 11 that the whole armour is essential for protection of the Christian in the evil day, but the Apostle urges that above all the shield of faith must be taken. This is so because it is able to quench *all* fiery darts. It is the first arm of defence for all parts of the body; and is an extra defence for the already protected head (helmet) and heart (breastplate). The shield is worn on the arm of the warrior, and therefore could easily be laid aside, as it is not fastened to the person like the helmet or breastplate. The warrior could think within himself “there is no foe in sight today, and in any case I am protected by my other armour,” and lay the shield aside and be taken by surprise.

The shield is for defence, not offence, it quenches all the darts. Darts! Quite small things are liable to overthrow the warrior. The picture is not a short, sharp, stand-up fight against a visible foe. (At times one wishes it were so!) The possibility of defeat is not depicted as in battle, but in ambush.

The all-protecting shield is *faith*. It is not *hope*—hope concerns the future. It is not *love*—love concerns our position before others. The picture is one of protection for ourselves, now. The shield is not *works*—if it were works the Adversary would soon defeat us. He would not need to take us by surprise if that were the case. He would tell us that we were not performing the true works, or that we were not doing enough works, or not doing them efficiently.

What, then, are the darts? Instead of darts, let us read it as “doubts;” for small darts, little doubts, may easily wear down the resistance of the soldier and cause him to give up the fray. (The soldier might say to himself that he would he were doing real fighting, real campaigning, rather than having to defend against these trivial things.) If the Christian war were of this kind there would be numerous soldiers of the cross, but, because the weapon that may defeat them is so small, the Christian army is a small one.

The Psalmist says: *“His truth shall be thy shield and buckler.”* (Psa. 91:4) What is the connection between faith as a shield and truth as a shield? The link between the two is seen in Paul’s reasoning in Rom. 10:16-17: *“Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”* First the hearing of the word, and then faith in it. In Hebrews he tells of those to whom the word preached did not

profit, *“not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.”* (Heb. 4:2) Faith, then, is useless except it be exercised in truth, and truth is profitless unless it be accepted in faith.

What are the doubts or darts against which the shield of faith is so complete protection? Our doubts are not those which disturb the agnostic mind, or such doctrines as the mortality of the soul, or resurrection, or those mentioned in Heb. 6:1-2. The doubts which assail the member of Christ are about those truths concerning the church which Paul is in this Ephesian epistle including in his description of the *“hope of his calling.”* (Eph. 1:18) Paul is writing to a church which is well acquainted with the first principles of Christian doctrine, and he writes that they may better comprehend the glories which are reserved for the sons of God. These are the truths of which doubts dart at us. *The Adversary does not concern himself about the Church’s beliefs, providing he can induce them to misunderstand or undervalue their standing in Christ.*

How does the dart come? Should you lay aside the shield of faith the Adversary will suggest to you that the riches of Ephesians are not written to you; or, that although you may believe them as promises to you, there is a very big *“if”* to remember (and he will give you chapter and verse for the *“if”*); or that the promises of Ephesians are overstatements, and that to get the Apostle’s true idea one must reduce those promises to proper proportions; or that to assume that the promises of future glory are for you is an unworthy ambition. So the dart flies at us if we forget or neglect the shield. The true Church’s trial of faith is to ardently believe that the Ephesian glories *are* for them.

Read Eph. 1:7; *“in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.”* No dart assails us in this, for we believe that we have this free salvation. But when we read verses 4 and 5: *“according as He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,”* our doubts may come. Do we believe verses 4 and 5 as truly as we believe verse 7? The truth that God foreknew his people, that we were chosen in him before we had done ill or good is so staggering that it is clearly beyond the mind of man to concoct; and what an answer to him who says that our standing in the body of Christ is largely a matter of works. No salvation-by-works mind ever dreamed of foreknowledge! But the Adversary will suggest that only pride will assume that we are chosen in

him so long ago. And if you reply in the words of faith, “It is written,” he may then say that the words may refer to so-and-so, but not you—you could not reach to that great height! Again the answer is “It is written.” Is this great truth a shield? It is; many doubts are shattered by this.

Also reading the words of Eph. 2:1-3, we feel like writing our own names against these verses in the margin, because they so aptly describe what we know of ourselves. We would not dispute them; but when we read further to the end of the chapter doubts arise in our minds. The temple, the habitation of God, the citizenship, the equal standing we have even with Paul himself causes us to wonder. The doubt may say to us “You cannot raise yourself to that level, the Apostle’s pen has run away with him, and to get the proper view you must reduce it to your own plane.” The question is: Do we as heartily believe the standing we now have in Christ as the position we had in Adam? The defence against these doubts of mind is simply faith. We are asked to accept this wonderful grace of God. That is all. Therefore, take the shield of faith and quench the darts.

But, we may reason, surely we must do something to attain or merit this great grace. Be careful! That is also a dart! This “doing” is a well-trying and often successful device of the Adversary. He has always said to all the saints—“earn it, earn it.” Thus, unbelief is one dart and works is another. (As though these heights of glory could ever be *earned!*) Let us realise that the acceptance of these promises and present standing in wholehearted faith is a far greater deed than all works.

How is the shield to be used to ward off the fiery dart? The princely leader of faith gives us, by example, the only right means of defence. The first recorded use by our Lord of the shield of faith was immediately after his baptism at the temptation. He used it by saying to the tempter “It is written;” and three times He so used it, and the Devil left him. He saw that our Lord made no attempt to reason with him, or in any way to argue the pros and cons of the temptation, but relied solely upon what was already written in the Word of God. In our Lord’s closing moments on the cross He is still found quoting Scripture to himself for his own defence. The written word is the only defence we have, and is also the only reply to Satan. Let us not attempt to fight the foe—all we need do is defend ourselves in faith, for there is an appointed day for his removal.

After the Apostle has detailed the armour in Eph. 6 he urges praying always for oneself and one’s fellows. Surely the prayer should be “*Lord, increase our faith.*” (Luke 17:5) That prayer answered will mean that we shall secure the victory that overcometh the world, *our faith.* BJD

DANIEL IN BABYLON

16. At the End of the Days

The old man's task was done. He sat, quietly scanning the little pile of tablets the writing upon which he had just completed. There would be no more to put on record. The revealing angel had said his last word, and departed. The story had been told, ranging far into futurity, into that dim time when God, rising up in judgment, would have abolished evil and brought in everlasting righteousness. Daniel was old, too old to take in anymore, too old to do any more writing. He began to realise that now. He had to accept the fact that his life's work was finished and he must lay down the responsibility and wait for the call. What was it the angel had said? *"Thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days."* (Dan. 12:13) He began to feel that what he needed was—rest. He had led a full and busy life; survived hazards and dangers; administered great tasks and discharged heavy responsibilities; manifested sterling allegiance to God in the face of opposition and persecution. Now he was ready to yield himself to the care of God whom he had served so faithfully. He prepared himself for the rest of death knowing of a surety that at the end of the days he would stand in the resurrection of the just and see with his own eyes the reality of the visions he had just now recorded. With that he was content.

Daniel's final revelation led him far beyond the political events and foreshadowings of his own time. It spoke, not only of kings following kings, and empires following empires, but also of the gradual emergence, on the stage of world history, of a determined and calculated enemy of all righteousness and goodness, an enemy that would at the last stand up to oppose the power of God to come forth to win the world for himself, and be utterly destroyed before that power. It spoke of the kingdom which will never pass away, the world in which God's will shall be done as it is done in heaven; of the resurrection of the dead and the triumph of the righteous; of all those glorious themes which coloured the words of the prophets and inspired their hearers. It set the seal on his work of sixty years and constituted him instructor for the coming twenty-five centuries of prophetic study.

It is probably true that Daniel never understood much of the detailed prophetic meaning inherent in that angelic revelation of world history which constitutes chapters 11 and 12 of his book. Even today there is considerable uncertainty and difference of opinion as to the right interpretation of much of these passages. Admittedly the opening verses of chapter 11 deal with matters which would have been plain enough; he

had already learned, eleven years earlier, in the third year of King Belshazzar (Dan. 8) that the Persian power would one day give way to that of Greece. Although that event was still two centuries away the influence of Greece was already being felt in Daniel's time and he would not find it difficult to interpret that part of Chapter 11. But after that the story went into details which must have been completely incomprehensible to the aged prophet. He could only have come to the conclusion which Jesus at a later date had to impress upon his own disciples, that there would be "wars and rumours of wars:" that "nation would rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom...but the end is not yet." (Matt. 24:6-7) After a lifetime of studious and devoted waiting upon God to know when the golden time of blessing was destined to break upon the world, he eventually had to accept the Divine decree, which those other disciples had in their day and turn also to accept. "*Of that day and hour knoweth no man...but my Father only.*" (Matt. 24:36) There is a lesson in that for all Christian students of prophecy. We must reconcile ourselves to the fact that, no matter how closely imminent the words of the Book and the signs of the times make the Day of Deliverance appear to be, the day and hour is locked up in the counsels of the Most High. It may be an age hence; it may be tomorrow night. We have to be ready for either eventuality.

Although Daniel would not be able to anticipate the detailed outworking in history of the strange story he had written on the tablets, there were certain embedded principles which he would be able to follow. He was of course by no means the first Hebrew prophet to be used by the Holy Spirit of God to transmit knowledge of God's designs for the end of time. Joel, Isaiah, Habakkuk, Obadiah, Ezekiel, all had spoken and written of those things in previous years and Daniel would assuredly have possessed and been familiar with their writings. He was by no means a stranger to the general tenor of Divine revelation concerning happenings of the End. This crowning revelation, coming to him at the end of his life, was in considerable degree supplementary to what he already knew from his studies in the books of the earlier prophets. He must have been familiar with the prospect of a day to come when the hosts of the north, the enemies of Israel, would come out of their place to invade and destroy the chosen people, and God would intervene with the powers of heaven to destroy those forces of unrighteousness and deliver them. The factor which was new to Daniel in his own revelation was the delineation on the one hand of a personal figure who would be the Divine Leader and champion in this battle—one like the Son of Man; Michael the archangel—and on the other hand the crystallisation of all those world forces allied against God, the Antichrist, into one figure.

It is to Daniel that we owe the first shadowy silhouette of that dark, dread figure which has so intrigued—one might almost say obsessed—Christian thought through the centuries. *“He as God, sitteth in the Temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”* (2 Thess. 2:4) That was Paul’s definition to the Thessalonians. Who or what is he; man demon, or world system? On what stage does he appear; Greek, Roman, or yet to be: Rome, Babylon, Jerusalem? Christians have bandied these questions to and fro for centuries; only in a planned prophetic study can they be properly discussed, and certainly Daniel had no consciousness of the developments of thought into which his dim picture of a godless and all-conquering king who met his doom at last on the sword of Michael would lead.

Perhaps, though, these last two chapters of Daniel’s prophecy do sow the seeds of a prophetic distinction which only comes to full flower in the New Testament, the slow but inexorable heading up of all the various and mutually antagonistic forces of evil in the world into one iron spearhead of resistance which as a single unit meets the powers of righteousness and by them is utterly broken. Daniel saw the development of earthly empires and the rising arrogance of man and the lining up of those powers into two camps—the king of the north and the king of the south. Whether we do or do not understand the extremely detailed narrative of the continuing conflict between these two powers does not alter the fact that quite evidently a long period of time is indicated. But when we come to the end of chapter 11 and the time when Michael stands up to wage final war, there is only one enemy. How it comes about, and when, may or may not be certainly apparent, but here in Daniel, as in the New Testament, God rises up in judgment at the time of his kingdom to find one united enemy, and one only, standing against him. Perhaps the vision of Revelation 19 where the Rider on the white horse comes forth from heaven to do battle, is more lucid. In that scene the powers of earth are clearly seen united as they have never yet been united in history *“to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.”* (Rev. 19:19)

It might be, then, that Daniel at the end of his life did see, in shadowy outline, a far future day when all the world and every power in the world save that of the relative few who have retained their allegiance to God, has coalesced into one single, well-disciplined, determined fighting force, drawn up in solid phalanx to resist the coming of the Kingdom of God. That must mean that individual jealousies and national rivalries have been laid aside in the face of what all can see is a greater threat. No longer will it be a question of which type of man-made government is to rule in the earth, but whether man-made government is to survive at all. The standing

up of Michael, the opening of the heavens and the emergence therefrom of the Rider on the white horse, is the answer.

From that time onward affairs in the world will take a different course. *“At that time thy people shall be delivered.” “Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake.” “They that be wise shall shine as the brightest of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.”* (Dan. 12:1-3) The Rider on the white horse; Michael who stands up; these are none other than our Lord Jesus Christ at his Second Advent, come to overthrow the power of evil and establish the Kingdom of God upon earth under which all men and nations will be instructed and led in the ways of God, and the message of repentance, justification and reconciliation preached as never before.

So the old man closed his eyes in complete confidence that it would surely come. He knew and had proved throughout a long life the faithfulness of God. He knew that, like Peter in a time yet to come, he had not followed “cunningly devised fables,” (2 Pet. 1:16) but had been an eyewitness of God’s majesty. What was it that the saintly Polycarp said when exhorted by the pagan magistrate to save his life by forswearing Christ? *“Eighty and six years have I served him, and He has never failed me. How can I deny him now!”* Daniel must have felt like that. Perhaps his mind went back to the early days of boyhood, when he first learned of God and his plans for eventual world deliverance, at the feet of his mentor, Jeremiah the prophet. Maybe he recalled dimly, because it was a long time ago, the journey to Babylon as a youth of eighteen or so, and his companions Azariah, Hananiah and Mishael, who together with him had refused the rich foods of the palace and because of their abstemiousness had eventually found the king’s favour and attained high office in the State. That would have brought before his failing eyes the picture of the arrogant king whom he had been able to serve so faithfully, and the king’s family which he had known so well, the gentle Queen Amytis, and Nitocris the king’s daughter who had remained so staunch a friend through all the vicissitudes of a lifetime and into old age. They were all dead now and only he was left. He remembered the king’s dream of the image, and how God had given him the interpretation and the understanding that four great empires were to rule on earth and then the kingdom of God come. The leaping flames of the fiery furnace flickered before his eyes, and again he heard the awed voice of the king *“I see four men loose...and the form of the fourth is like a son of the gods.”* (Dan. 3:25 AV/RV) The thin hands moved restlessly; again he was in spirit endeavouring with Queen Amytis to restrain the mad king as he sought to

emulate the beasts of the earth, and once more he knew the thrill of hearing the voice of Nebuchadnezzar, restored to sanity, professing allegiance to the God of heaven. The days of dreams and visions passed across his mind, the visits of the revealing angel, the years of study and reflection when he lived as a private citizen, waiting in patience for the revelation of God from heaven. The shadows in the room gathered and he entered again into the darkness of Babylon's last night, when the Persians besieged the city; the blaze of light at the palace banquet, the writing on the wall, the end of the empire, his brief time of service under the Median King Darius, his deliverance from the lion's den. Rapidly the pictures passed before his mental vision and at the end of them all, a golden glory in the background, he saw the fair beauty of the world that is yet to be, the world in which he himself was to stand, in his lot, at the end of the days.

He could see them more plainly now, those his friends and companions of days so long ago. They had all gone in front of him; he had not seen them for a long time. They were there, waiting for him. In the land yet to be, in the end of the days, he would take up his task with renewed strength and ability, and once more serve God to whom he had been faithful, and who had been so faithful to him; serve him in that glory transcendent that will never pass away.

The room was getting very dark now, and it was quiet, quieter than Daniel had ever known it. The golden visions flickered on, beckoning him...He was going to rest now, as the angel had promised...but he would stand in his lot...at the end of the days.

The End
AOH

“MANY SHALL RUN TO AND FRO”

Daniel 12:4

Many running to and fro
People, people on the go.
Hurrying, scurrying, to and fro,
All intense and can't go slow
Masses, masses, on the go.

God told what He did foreknow
“Many shall run to and fro.”
Summer, Winter, sun or rain,
By the bus or on the train,
Ceaselessly, they're on the go.

By the auto, subway, plane,
Thrown for loss or showing gain,
Back and forth, to and fro,
Via boat, or sub or jet,
Always even faster yet.

How well God described our day
When he had good Daniel say,
“Many shall run to and fro.”
Multitudes are on the go;
Many *do* “run to and fro.”

Poems of the Way
Martin C. Mitchell

“TO FULFIL ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS”

Some thoughts on baptism

John lifted up his eyes from the water in which he stood and beheld his cousin Jesus stepping into the stream to be baptised by him, and his whole being rebelled within him at the very thought. “*I have need to be baptized of thee,*” he protested “and comest *thou to me?*” (Matt. 3:14) He knew, perhaps better than any other man, the spotless life of this One standing before him. Whether or no he had realised prior to this moment that the firstborn son of Mary was indeed the Messiah that he had been proclaiming for six months past, he knew well that of all men in Jewry this One least needed his baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Therefore he demurred, and in his idea of what was fitting would not lift his hand to baptise his cousin, until the quiet, compelling voice of Jesus broke down his resistance and induced compliance with the request. “*Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.*” (Matt. 3:15) So Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, led the way and set the example in the performance of a ceremonial symbol which his disciples, with but few exceptions, have followed ever since.

What is the significance of this act which has occupied so prominent a place in Christian thought and practice through the centuries? Is it nothing more than a ritual cleansing, a sign that the believer has been purified and made acceptable in God’s sight and accepted into his Church, or does it indicate some deeper and more far-reaching truth? The fact that the Apostles and the Early Church attached so much importance to the ceremony—no less than thirteen instances are recorded in Acts—surely justifies at the very least some serious consideration of this subject.

Jesus himself needed no “baptism of repentance for the remission of sins,” which was the avowed purpose of John’s baptism. (Mark 1:4) Neither did He dispute or deny John’s implied assertion that He needed no baptism of that nature. Quietly, nevertheless, He insisted upon going through the ceremony. That it marked some very definite change in his life and work is shown very clearly in the fact that at this time He began his ministry, a ministry that culminated three and a half years later in his death on the cross.

The word translated “righteousness” in this text is used in the New Testament for “righteousness” ninety-four times. It is the word that in a slightly different form is used for “justification,” and its primary meaning is that of being right with God or doing the thing that is right with God.

Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott translates "*it is becoming us to establish Every Ordinance*" and this may express something of the thought, although the true meaning is undoubtedly that of "filling full," or fulfilling, the thing that is right with God. In other words, this is an instance of "Lo, I come to do *thy* will, O God." (Heb. 10:9) And in so coming to Jordan and sinking beneath the waters, then rising again and going forth into a new life, Jesus was assuredly doing something that had a significance far greater than that of mere cleansing, a significance that touches things of the future life and the next world, penetrating into Ages which as yet have not dawned. What He did must have been for his followers' sakes as well as his own, that they might understand the relation of this simple act to their own lives and standing before God, when in their turn they too came, as Jesus did when He was thirty years of age, to enter upon a life of consecration unto death for the salvation of the world.

It is usual to go back to the Old Testament for light on the rituals and the doctrines of the New Testament. In the case of baptism the Old Testament very nearly fails us, but not quite. There is no such thing as baptism in the Old Testament; the word is not mentioned and the children of Israel at no time in their history practised baptism. When John the Baptist waded into Jordan and commenced baptising repentant Jews for the remission of their sins he was instituting something entirely new. The idea of repentance was not new but this expressing of repentance by an outward act was. But John's baptism did have a basis and something of that basis is found in the Old Testament. The Law provided that those who came to the Lord with offerings and sacrifices must first be ceremonially clean by washing in water. The priest before being inducted into office was first washed in the great "Laver" in the Court of the Tabernacle. In that simple act and the consecration ceremony which succeeded it we have the principles upon which acceptance with God is achieved. *Cleansing—Anointing—Sacrifice*; that was the order of things in the duty of priests in Israel and the same order prevails among Christians now. Repentance and belief in Christ brings justification by faith. That is the first step. That is cleansing. That is the truth lying behind Paul's word to the Ephesians when he declares that Christ gave himself for his followers, the Church, "*that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word*" (Eph. 5:26) and his declaration to Titus that Jesus saves us "*by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit.*" (Titus 3:5) The washing must come before the renewing.

That is only one aspect of the true baptism that lies behind the symbol, the

ceremonial. The second aspect is that which follows the initial justification, and is best expressed in the words of Paul to the Romans (Rom. 6:4-5) "*we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death...*" Here is a theme that has nothing to do with cleansing but everything to do with the dedication of life to death that out of death there might come eternal life. It has to do with the going into death of the few, following the One Who first went into death alone, that out of that death all might be received into life. And that in turn harks back to a truth that was first enunciated in New Testament days by Peter on the Day of Pentecost itself, that this coming of man into eternal life is really a restoration of that which existed at the first. "Times of Restitution of all things" (Acts 3:21) he calls the day when this new life is to be extended to all men, for there was a day at the very beginning when man, newly created by the hand of God, had eternal life within his grasp.

It is because the surviving records of those far-off days are so scanty that we are not able completely to trace this aspect of the doctrine of baptism back to its probable origin in the days of the promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. (Gen. 3:15) The Apostle Paul, whose knowledge of ancient lore was almost certainly far more profound than we today can easily realise, referred to something of this when he wrote in 1 Cor. 10:2 of Israel, passing through the Red Sea, being "*baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.*" That was not a baptism of cleansing; it was a baptism of separation, of dedication to the purposes of God that they might be a chosen people, a Royal Priesthood, ultimately to become an instrument in God's hand for the reconciliation of fallen man to himself and the accomplishment of his purposes with them. To accomplish that end they must of necessity pass through the waters that separate between fallen man in a sinful world and the eternal life that can only be achieved in God's world.

Peter must have seen something of that when he likened Christian baptism to the historical incident of the Flood. In the days of the Ark, he says, a few were saved by water—were carried through the water and saved when all others perished—"*the like figure whereunto baptism doth also now save us...by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*" (1 Pet. 3:21) He meant something very much akin to Paul's words about Israel's baptism in the Red Sea. Noah and his family were forever separated from an evil world, where sin reigned, by the waters of the Deluge, and they came forth into a new world which to them was a world of new and Divine life, a world

where the Spirit of God could have full scope for the exercise of beneficent power and the righteous live according to the dictates of their own pious hearts with none to make them afraid. The fact that in after days the world relapsed again into evil does not spoil the picture of the new, renovated world into which Noah and his family entered when they emerged from the Ark, nor of the fact that we who by baptism are separated just as surely from a doomed and dying world come forth to a new order of things which is ultimately to become the “desire of all nations.” (Hag. 2:7)

In ancient mythologies the present sinful world was considered to be separated from the original perfect and sinless world by water—a sea that was impassable to ordinary human beings and could only be crossed by the favour of the gods. What dim memory of some great historical fact is enshrined in that idea we shall probably never know, at least this side the Vail, but the vague outline of the belief remains and it has some bearing upon our subject. In the Babylonian story of the Flood the patriarch Noah, for his piety, was carried across the sea and given a dwelling-place among the gods. Only the pure in heart and righteous of life could hope thus to traverse the waters and enter into eternal life. The evil spirits could not cross them, but must forever remain with men in the world of sin. (This is the belief that gave rise to the idea that the demons are unable to cross running water, a popular belief to which our Lord referred in Luke 11:24 when he said that the unclean spirit, cast out of a man, “walketh through *dry* places, seeking rest; and finding none.”) In order to symbolise this separation between the worlds of evil and good there was, in the great Temple of Marduk at Babylon, a huge basin or tank of water, known as the “*apsu*” or “sea,” and a ceremony very similar to the later washing of the Levitical priests was conducted there. As showing the similarity of ideas it is interesting again to note that the great Laver in Solomon’s Temple is called in the Old Testament by this very name of “sea.” (1 Kings 7:23-44; 2 Chron. 4:2-15). One of the oldest of Sumerian traditions tells how at the birth of Marduk, the god of Babylon, he was baptised in that “sea” and thereupon became the Redeemer of mankind. Sometimes those legends and mythologies have been dismissed as inventions of the Devil; what is far more likely is that they represent distorted memories of what were once, in dim antediluvian days, a tolerably clear understanding of the Divine purposes. It might well be that our first parents, during the centuries in which they lived and learned about God, were given some understanding that the promised Seed of whom God had spoken in the Garden must one day plunge beneath the waters of separation and of death that He might rise again in newness of life for the salvation of the world.

There is some reason to believe that man's separation from Eden was brought about by the submersion of the Garden by the waters of the sea. That theme cannot be enlarged upon here, but if such should actually have been the case it becomes easier to understand why subsequent generations, as the world grew steadily older in sin and death, should look longingly back to that former golden age and wondrous garden from which the relentless sea had forever separated them, until the memory passed into a legend growing ever more dim with the passage of years. Logically, then, the only way back to the lost Paradise would be by a passage through the sea, and that in turn would lead to the realisation that the One Who was at the end to be man's Redeemer must himself pass through that sea, alone, and emerge triumphant on the other side.

There we have what may be the foundation of this second and so much more important aspect of baptism. We who are buried *with* Christ by baptism into his death are forever separated from the world and its aims and interests; we have elected to follow Christ whithersoever He may lead—and He leads into those symbolic waters and beneath those waters and then out of those waters into a new life. Like as Christ was raised from the dead, so we also rise to walk in newness of life. That new life is lived in this world, here and now, but because of that new life we are no longer of this world. We have become citizens of the perfect world, the Paradise of Righteousness which lies beyond the waters, the Paradise to which all men will attain when at last the waters are done away—they in the earthly phase of that Paradise, and those who went through the waters in the spiritual, heavenly phase.

That then is the vision before us as we go down into the symbolic baptismal waters, when by the One Spirit we, individually, are baptised into the One Body. (1 Cor. 12:13) We, here, are still in the world of death and suffering and all manner of evil. Over there, on the other side of the water, there is the glorious world of the future, Eden restored, the River of Life and the Trees of Life, and the Holy City, New Jerusalem, waiting to come down from God to man. But Eden cannot be restored to man, much as man needs it and, maybe, longs for it, until Christ's consecrated followers have followed him into those waters and been planted together in the likeness of his death. Only then can they emerge also in the likeness of his resurrection. (Rom. 6:5) The world must wait until that has become an accomplished fact and the consecration of earthly life which is the real baptism has been consummated in actual death of the human frame and a glorious resurrection to spiritual being. "*We shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*" (1 John 3:2) Until then "the earnest expectation of the

creature (creation) *waiteth* for the manifestation of the sons of God.” (Rom. 8:19) The measure of our desire to see evil brought to an end and all humankind ushered into everlasting happiness, and God’s will done on earth as in heaven, will be revealed by the whole-heartedness with which we present our own selves in absolute dedication of self and consecration of life to our Heavenly Father, willingly accepting whatever in his providence is to be our experience in life, and seeking in every possible manner to be so fashioned and moulded by the all-powerful Holy Spirit of God that we shall ultimately become vessels fitted for his future purposes.

It is after consecration has become an established thing with us that we enter into the third aspect of baptism. The true baptism is not only cleansing; it is not only separation to holy things; it is also an entry into suffering. Suffering is an essential factor in the Divine Plan. We may not know—we do not know—just why that is so and just what redemptive or reformatory power is inherent in suffering, but the Scriptures show clearly that it is so. Our Lord’s death on the Cross provided the Ransom for man, but his life of suffering was the offering for sin by means of which man will ultimately be reconciled to God. Both are necessary in the Divine Plan. With those who are Christ’s consecrated followers, seeking to become joint-heirs with him of the Kingdom and associated with him as his “Bride” in the glory of all future ages, the fact that they are dead to the world and are ready to lay down life itself for the Lord and the Truth is not the only fruit of their lives that God can use for the salvation of all. He can, and will, also use the fruit of every act of sacrifice and every pang of suffering that there has been throughout those consecrated lives. We realise, and say, at times, that suffering and sacrifice plays an important part in the development of character. Perhaps we could never approach conformity to the Divine likeness without it. We do know that our Lord was made perfect through suffering, and the disciple is not greater than his Lord. Therefore our baptism is, beside a baptism of cleansing and a baptism of separation, a baptism of suffering. It was so with Jesus. “*I have a baptism to be baptized with*” He said “*and how am I straitened till it be accomplished.*” (Luke 12:50) When the mother of Zebedee’s children, John and James, asked that her sons be given the chief places of honour in the Kingdom, Jesus asked them if they were able to be baptised with the baptism that He was baptised with. They assured him that they were able. What innocent confidence they had, knowing not what the future held for them of suffering and persecution and death! Jesus knew. “*Ye shall... indeed...be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with.*” (Matt. 20:23) Perhaps He knew also that they would be faithful and come through triumphant at the end. In after days they must often have thought

of their early joyous ignorance.

So it is with us. We enter the Narrow Way full of confidence—perhaps we think of our baptism principally as a cleansing; that it is also going to mean separation we see to some extent: that it will additionally involve suffering we see not at all. The revelation comes later, when we are becoming progressively stronger and more able to bear it. If then, when the trials of the way are more than usually oppressive, and affliction more than usually difficult to bear, the darkness seems to have overcome the light, and the things of this world to be overpowering the things of the Spirit, then is the time to remember that we who have entered the waters of baptism are half-way through to the glory land on the other side. We are in process of being buried with him by baptism into his death, and the process in its working out may be a painful one at times—but we shall rise again, and when we do rise again it will be in the likeness, of his resurrection; *“I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.”* (Psa. 17:15)

Cleansing—separation—suffering; thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. How can we hold back longer from yielding “our reasonable service”? *“I beseech you, therefore, brethren,”* pleads the great Apostle *“that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind...”* (Rom. 12:1-2) Will we not answer his plea with a joyous assent and a willing coming to God in full surrender?

What of the symbol? What of the simple, eloquent ceremony in which the believer, heart full of love to his Lord, testifies before his brethren of the decision that has already been taken and the consecration of life that has already been made, it may have been, a considerable time ago, within the privacy of the heart and mind? Our Master surely knew that some great value lies in this joyful ritual, some great blessing for the one thus symbolising his or her consecration. The fact that He himself insisted upon leading the way for all his disciples in going down into the literal waters is surely evidence enough for that! So too, when about to leave them, He bade them go forth and teach all nations, baptising in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. (Matt. 28:19-20) The Book of Acts offers abundant testimony that the Apostles interpreted that instruction very literally and obeyed it very wholeheartedly, and the Church throughout all subsequent ages has done the same. Whatever may be our feelings as to the value and usefulness of ceremony and ritual, or

whatever the reason that may tend to deter from the outward symbolic performance of a rite that testifies to the inward surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ that has already taken place, do not let us allow them to silence the gentle, compelling tones of the One we love and serve. Nevertheless “*suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.*” He knows, better than we can ever hope to do, what source of strength, what stabilising and sustaining influence, the memory of that little ceremony may become to us in some dark or stressful experience of life that may still lie ahead of us, in the unknown future.

“*See, here is water*” said the Ethiopian eunuch after Philip had expounded the words of life and opened his eyes. “*What doth hinder me to be baptized?*” (Acts 8:36)

“*If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.*” (v.37)

“*And he went on his way rejoicing!*” (v.39)

So may we, having understood and experienced the true baptism of consecration to God and burial into the death of Christ, follow that surrender with an outward testimony to our brethren—and to our Lord—in the fashion hallowed by Jesus himself, thus setting our feet firmly and straightly on the road that leads to the Kingdom, and going on our way...rejoicing!

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VICTORY

My tired eyes look up to Thee
And then the vision which I see,
Sustains, upholds and comforts me
Along this narrow way.

Lord, I would always see Thy face
Wilt grant me then sufficient grace—
As onward thru this barren waste
I tread my weary way—

I would not lay my armour down
'Til I receive the victor's crown,
Then with the noise of battle o'er
I'll view my Saviour evermore.

Poems of the Way

THE GOLDEN FUTURE

Part 4 Christ—A king

The greatest event of history since the Crucifixion is the coming again of Jesus Christ to complete the work He commenced two thousand years ago. From Pentecost onward the Christian Church has hoped and prayed for that day when the Lord will return to fulfil the promise He gave to His first disciples. The imminence of His return has been proclaimed and prophesied to almost every generation since that time, but the fact that so many lurid happenings have been associated with that coming has, in this matter-of-fact day, thrown the age-old expectation into disrepute. The frequent attempt of well-meaning Christians to fix upon a definite day for the visible appearance of Jesus in the clouds of heaven; and the equally frequent failure of these predictions, has disinclined a great many from paying any attention to such an apparently visionary subject.

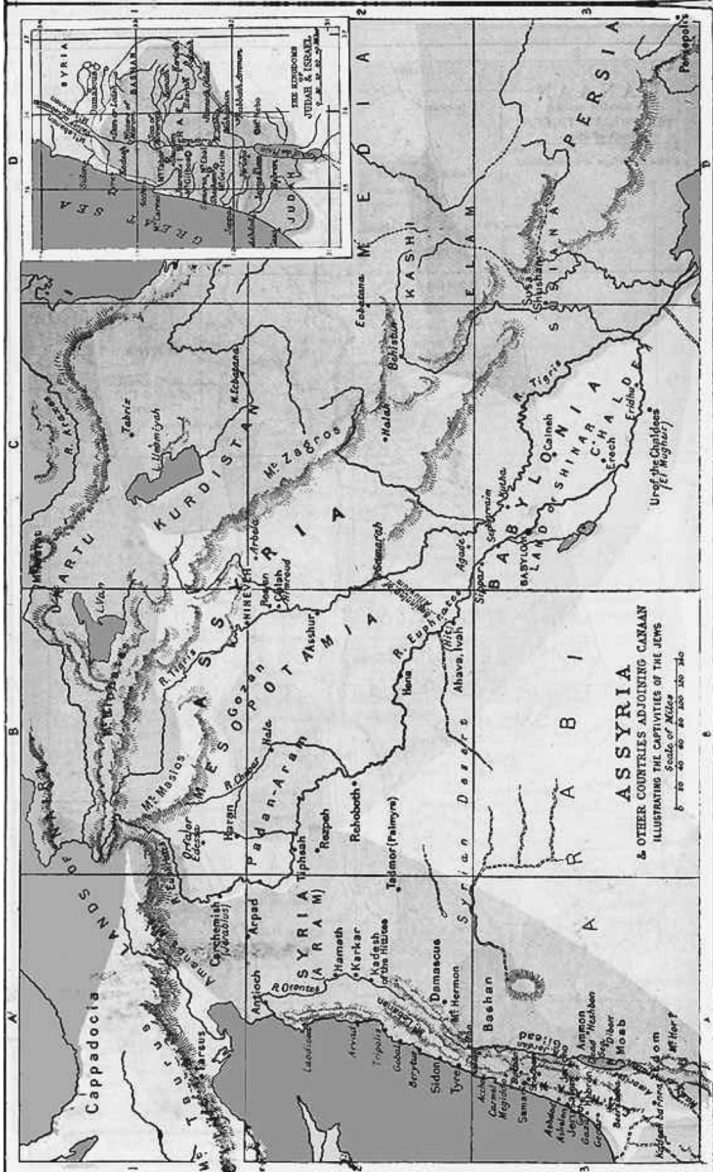
It is certainly true that many Christians still expect the coming of Christ to be accompanied by terrific convulsions in Nature—rending rocks and falling mountains, hosts of trembling sinners brought up from the grave to hear their sins rehearsed and be condemned to everlasting punishment, a few saintly ones caught away to heavenly glory and the world and all that it contains burned up. All this is an inheritance from the crude religion of medieval times and it dies hard. But die it must and die it will. The vivid symbols of scripture were never intended to be interpreted in any such wildly literal sense, and such beliefs are born, not of the reasoned teaching of Jesus, but of the dark and terrifying mythologies of paganism.

The return of Christ is to be a time of universal rejoicing. He comes to inaugurate a reign of righteousness over the earth which has as its object no less an end than the extermination of evil. The time of His return is marked by the downfall of those man-made institutions and systems which are founded upon unrighteousness. His lightnings which enlighten the earth (Psa. 97:4) reveal the inherent rights and privileges of every man and hence His return is the signal for a great clamour on behalf of liberty. The kingdoms and governments of this present order of things will crumble and vanish away, the “hills melting like wax at the presence of the LORD” and the “mountains being carried (cast) into the midst of the sea” (Psa. 97:5, and 46:2), and amidst the strife and confusion of this great Time of Trouble upon the nations (Matt. 24:21; Dan. 12:1) there will ring out, clear and commandingly, the voice of One having authority: “Peace, be still.” (Mark 4:39) And just as it was in that day when those words were first uttered during the storm on the Galilean lake, there will be a great calm.

The return of Jesus to this earth, and His revelation to all, therefore, is definitely an event to be expected. Our knowledge of the spiritual world makes it no longer necessary to insist that He must be seen with the physical eyesight, descending from the upper atmosphere, before the fact of His coming can be accepted, for the Lord's own words to Nicodemus make it clear that a spiritual being comes and goes "as the wind" and is not discerned as such by the natural sight. It is evident also that after dwelling among men in the days of His First Advent and propounding that teaching which will eventually save the world, He returned to His Father's throne to wait whilst that teaching had its effect. The world at the First Advent was not ready for the full revelation of all that the principles of Christianity can and will yet do for man; it was ready only for the germ of Christ's teaching, and it is that germ which for two thousand years has worked in the hearts of a relatively small proportion of earth's millions whilst the remainder have held to the laws of evil and reaped their bitter harvest.

Christ returns to establish a new order of society the spiritual administration of which will be in the hands of those who during the past two thousand years—the "Christian Age"—have come into heart-harmony with His teachings and by reason of a consecrated devotion to His message and service are thoroughly trained in every aspect of Divine Law. These faithful followers of Jesus Christ—called variously in Scripture the "Church," the "Bride of Christ," the "Little Flock," are those to whom the educational and uplift work of the next Age can be safely entrusted. Christian disciples who have learned well the foundation principles of their faith and have manifested their profession in daily life will have achieved a balance of judgment and a clear apprehension of right and wrong which is lacking in many of even the noblest of men and women today; and it is just these characteristics which will be needed in the administration of that coming day when all men will be required to hear the Word of God, and make choice of their eternal destiny. It follows therefore that the first work to be accomplished by Christ at His return is the gathering to Himself of His faithful "saints" who all through this Age have been "looking for...[His] glorious appearing." (Titus 2:13) To be made like their Lord, the definite promise of the New Testament, these must be "changed" from earthly to spiritual nature, thus becoming an exception to the purpose of God for mankind in general. Such passages as 1 Cor. 15:35-58, and 1 Thess. 4:14-18, describe this change to the spiritual world as the great hope and destiny of the Christian Church, and it is from their new environment in that spiritual world that these risen ones will administer the affairs of this new Kingdom.

Thus is the world, a groaning creation, traveling in pain together, *waiting* for the manifestation of the sons of God. (Rom. 8:19) In that day when the power of the Almighty Father is manifest in that new social order, which is the Kingdom of God upon earth, all people will look up into the heavens and will realise that, even as He promised, *Christ has come*.



Map showing Assyria in relation to Syria, Tyre, Sidon and other places in the times of Sennacherib

* RSV and likely author's own wording

SENNACHERIB IN PROPHECY

Recognition of the historical basis upon which most Old Testament prophecies of the “end of the Age” are framed is very necessary to their correct interpretation. It is a truism that history repeats itself; throughout the Bible similar causes produce similar effects; the principles and forces which will eventually lead the world into the final conflict have already, on a smaller scale and in a more limited area, resulted in similar conflicts in the past. Those events, recorded in Biblical history, have been used by the prophets as models on which to base their pen pictures of the things that shall be hereafter. *“That which is, already has been; that which is to be, already has been; and God inquires into that which follows after”* said Solomon. (Eccl. 3:15 RSV*) In those words he enshrined this principle. The visions of the prophets are best interpreted by discerning the model, and realising that it is by inspiration of the Holy Spirit that the prophet has used a particular historical event as background to his vision. On that basis similar aspects to those contained within that event, but on a greater scale, can be looked for in the fulfilment.

One of the most noteworthy examples of this principle in prophecy is the use made by Daniel and Zechariah of Sennacherib’s invasion of Judah in the days of Hezekiah. That invasion is famous in Old Testament history on account of its sequel; Hezekiah and his adviser, the statesman-prophet Isaiah, led the people of Jerusalem in reliance upon God for deliverance, and the Assyrian army was miraculously destroyed in the night and the threat lifted. This one prominent feature of the event is analogous to the Divine deliverance of the people of God in the end of this Age. It is when the details of Daniel’s and Zechariah’s visions are compared with the details of Sennacherib’s invasion that the force of their correspondence becomes obvious and clues to the interpretation of the prophecies are offered.

“Now it came to pass in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah” says Isaiah (36:1) *“that Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them.”* This was the start of the campaign. Isa. 36 and 37, 2 Kings 18 and 2 Chron. 32 record the details. These narratives are confirmed and amplified by Sennacherib’s own account, recorded on clay cylinders which have survived and now repose, one in the British Museum and one in America. Between the Biblical and the Assyrian records the story is fairly complete.

The real quarrel was between Assyria and Egypt, Judah at the time being

allied with the latter. Sennacherib set out to subdue Egypt and Judah but first he had to secure his line of march by ensuring the loyalty of the Phoenician cities Tyre and Sidon on the seacoast, and the people of Syria. This he achieved by the simple expedient of siege and conquest. News of the ruthless invader spread rapidly through the land, and the kings of Edom, Moab and Ammon, in the south-east, hastened to the conqueror's camp with protestations of loyalty, in consequence of which these three nations escaped the horrors of warfare.

The Assyrian king next proceeded along the Palestinian coast, capturing the cities of the seaside plain, defeating the Egyptian army and laying siege to Lachish, the last important stronghold barring his road to Egypt. Whilst here he demanded tribute from Hezekiah as proof of allegiance, and Hezekiah complied. Sennacherib took a great deal of spoil—gold, silver, valuables of all kinds, and two hundred thousand captives, all of which he sent back to Assyria. Then news came to him of a fresh Egyptian attack and in his fury he sent one detachment against the Egyptians and with the other surrounded Jerusalem, calling upon Hezekiah to surrender the city. It was this second demand that Hezekiah laid before the Lord in the Temple and in consequence of which the Assyrian army surrounding Jerusalem was destroyed. Sennacherib called off his attack upon Egypt and with what was left of his forces in the country made his way back to Assyria, where his attention was urgently needed to deal with hostile action in Babylonia to the east and Armenia to the north. He came to a violent end, murdered by two of his sons.

Now the remarkable thing about this campaign is that it is almost completely mirrored by the prophetic vision of the latter part of Daniel's 11th chapter and certainly alluded to by Zechariah in his 14th chapter. It would seem as though the prophets were indicating that the events of the end of the Age are to bear a marked resemblance to the happenings of this memorable campaign. No attempt to suggest an interpretation is to be made here but the correspondence will be noted as an aid to the study and understanding of those chapters.

It is fairly obvious that Daniel 11 and 12 enshrines a synopsis of history, in rather veiled terms, from Daniel's own day to the introduction of the Messianic Kingdom. The latter event as the terminus is demanded by virtue of the fact that the resurrection of the dead is indicated in chapter 12:2. Ignoring differences of thought as to the precise application of much of chapter 11 it is generally agreed that verse 36 introduces the final conflict at the end of the Age under symbol of one usually known as the

“wilful king.” (Dan. 11:36) This part of the chapter, from verse 36 to the end very accurately reflects Sennacherib’s campaign but puts the fulfilment of the words into the future. Daniel, of course, wrote some hundred and sixty years after that campaign but he must have been very familiar with its details.

The description in verse 36, *“the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself...above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods,”* is well suited to Sennacherib, who was one of the most boastful and arrogant kings of antiquity. His commander-in-chief’s scornful words to the defenders of Jerusalem, *“Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria...that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?”* well illustrate his character. (Isa. 36:18,20) *“Let not thy God, in whom thou trustest, deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria”* (Isa. 37:10) was his last arrogant ultimatum before disaster came upon him. *“But in his place,”* says Daniel in verse 38, (RV) *“shall he honour the god of fortresses.”* Says one historian of Sennacherib *“Renowned over the earth in his days as the great destroyer, he knew no higher policy than force...lust of power, cruelty, pride and arrogance were developed in excess in his case.”* Daniel goes on in verse 39 *“He shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain.”* This is a true reflection of the Assyrian king’s policy. Each country or city he conquered was placed under the control of a puppet ruler selected for his loyalty and under pledge of exacting and sending an annual tribute of goods and slaves to Nineveh. Sennacherib’s destruction of Sidon at this time had the effect of diverting Phoenician commerce to Assyria; he controlled trade with Cyprus, and his victories in Media and Babylonia brought the commercial activity of the east and the south into his hands. This *“god of fortresses”* of verse 38 (RV) was truly honoured *“with gold, and silver, and precious stones, and pleasant (desirable) things.”*

Verse 40 introduces action. *“At the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him.”* The campaign which ended in disaster was undertaken in consequence of the Egyptian threat to Assyrian expansion, and Sennacherib marched south to render Egypt powerless. *“The king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over.”* This well describes the Assyrian advance into Syria and Phoenicia; his progress was marked by complete and utter conquest and devastation. The one item not mentioned either in the Bible

or the conqueror's own inscriptions is the use of ships. Assyria was an inland country and not accustomed to naval warfare. Sennacherib and his father Sargon, however, did make use of ships in their wars. Sargon had at his disposal sixty Phoenician galleys and eight thousand oarsmen for the siege of Tyre some twenty years earlier, and Sennacherib built a fleet for use in the Persian Gulf in his wars with the Elamites. It is quite likely therefore that part of his plan of attack upon Egypt involved the use of Phoenician ships.

“He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab and...Ammon.” (v.41) Here is well depicted the invader's onward progress into the land of Israel and Judah proper, and its neighbour state, the confederacy of Philistine cities on the coast, Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron and Joppa. Sennacherib himself says of this entry into Judah and the many overthrown *“I besieged Hezekiah of Judah who had not submitted to my yoke and I captured forty-six of his fenced cities and innumerable villages...I drove into captivity two hundred thousand one hundred and fifty people, young and old, male and female, and horses, mules, asses, camels, oxen and sheep, counted as spoil. Hezekiah himself, like a bird in a cage, I shut up in Jerusalem his royal city, and I took vengeance upon any man who came forth from the city...He...sent tribute and to make submission with...gold...silver, precious stones...ivory couches, ivory chairs...ebonywood, boxwood and all kinds of valuable treasures, together with his daughters, his wives and male and female musicians.”* He says nothing of his defeat and the destruction of his army; only of the spoil which by then was well on its way to Nineveh.

During these happenings and whilst Sennacherib was still dealing with the people of Sidon and Syria, three kings, Melech-ram of Edom, Chemosh-nadab of Moab, and Pedael* of Ammon, hastened to him with tribute and protestations of loyalty, in consequence of which their lands were saved from invasion. This is a remarkable parallel to verse 41 in Daniel 11, for these were the only three to escape devastation and plunder.

This same boastful account of the spoil Sennacherib took just before his signal defeat seems to find an echo in the words of Zechariah. This prophet's 14th chapter commences by describing the gathering of all nations to besiege Jerusalem at the end of the Age, and says that the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, the women ravished, and half the city go into exile. The Lord does not deliver until these things have taken place. The likeness of this to Sennacherib's experience is significant. *“The city*

shall be taken” (v.2) says Zechariah. “Taken” here does not mean “captured” but rather “surrounded.” It is a word meaning to enclose as in a net, derived from the snare or net used by fowlers. This is the very simile used by the Assyrian himself. “*Like a bird in a cage*” he says, “*I shut him up in Jerusalem his royal city.*” He never opened the cage. “*The houses rifled,*” goes on Zechariah. The list of spoil, largely consisting of treasures from the Temple, according to 2 Chron. 32, and obviously also from the houses of the well-to-do citizens, is a clear parallel to that. “*The women ravished;*” Sennacherib declares gloatingly that he took the daughters and wives of Hezekiah and sent them to Nineveh, evidently, as was the custom, to become inmates of his own harem, and the female musicians to be his slaves. For the rest of their lives these unfortunates were at the mercy of the Assyrians. “*And half of the city shall go forth into captivity.*” This does not necessarily mean that exactly fifty per cent of the citizens are to suffer this fate; the word rendered “half” means primarily a portion separated, from the root word meaning “to divide.” Whereas in the main a division into two portions is implied, quite a few instances in the Old Testament require three, four or more portions; all that need be stressed here is that part of the city will thus go forth. Since the background of Zech. 13 and 14 is the faith of the people in God and salvation in consequence, it is a logical conclusion that those who “*go forth into captivity*” are destitute of that saving faith. This at any rate was the case in the days of Hezekiah. Although most of the people shared Hezekiah’s and Isaiah’s faith and obeyed the injunction to ignore the Assyrian threats (Isa. 36:21), there was an element that did not have that faith. They endeavoured to escape from the besieged city and trust for mercy to the besiegers—a trust that was sadly misplaced. A terse sentence in Sennacherib’s account of the siege is eloquent enough; “*all who came outside the great gate of the city were captured and led off.*” They shared the fate of the other captives who had already been sent to Nineveh. Then Zechariah comes to the climax. “*The residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations.*” (vv.2-3) This is the climax which Sennacherib did not record in his account. The clay cylinders record Sennacherib’s seige of Jerusalem, and how the Jewish king was shut up like a bird in a cage. They do not say anything about the outcome, which was an unusual thing for Sennacherib—but then defeat, utter and overwhelming defeat, was also an unusual thing for him.

Daniel 11 is not so concerned with the activities around Jerusalem as with those on the larger country scene. Verses 42-43 say of the “*King of the North*” (v.40) that he will prevail over the Egyptians, the Libyans and the

Ethiopians and take great spoil of gold and silver and valuable treasures. This is true of Sennacherib. Egypt at the time was ruled by a powerful Ethiopian dynasty and the forces facing the Assyrian were from combined Egyptian and Ethiopian sources. (The Libyans were descended from the Egyptians and in active alliance with them). Sennacherib heavily defeated these two forces twice, once before the siege of Jerusalem and again whilst the siege was proceeding. His own account lists the spoil he took after the capture and destruction of the city of Lachish, which left Egypt open and defenceless before him.

A strange and rather obscure word in verse 45 is illuminated by one of Sennacherib's boastful assertions. "*He shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain,*" says Daniel. "*Palatial tents*" is the RSV rendering. The word means the king's royal pavilion erected in the midst of his camp. The "*glorious holy mountain*" is obviously in reference to the kingdom of Judah in the Promised Land and "*between the seas*" can only mean between the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean. Now Sennacherib's own account says that he did set his pavilion at Lachish where his main army was gathered, and Lachish was geographically between the two seas. He did, in fact, boast that he would set that pavilion inside Jerusalem and profane its palace gardens but that boast was unfulfilled. He planted his pavilion at Lachish in the arrogant belief that Hezekiah would be brought before him there as captive, to be dealt with as he dealt with all his defeated enemies; "*yet,*" says Daniel, "*he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.*" His ornate pavilion was hurriedly taken down and packed for retreat; he himself, bereft of his army and perhaps with only a handful of personal attendants left to him, travelled the seven hundred miles back to Nineveh with the bitter knowledge of defeat in his heart, defeat at the hands of the God he had defied.

So far as Jerusalem and Judah was concerned, that was his end, for Sennacherib never returned. Whilst engaged on this campaign, tidings reached him of renewed rebellion in other parts of his far-flung empire, Babylon in the east and Armenia in the north. That is what Daniel said too. "*Tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy.*" (v.44) Immediately following his retreat from Jerusalem he fought a campaign in Babylonia which left the countryside devastated. For two years after that he warred in Armenia, reducing the hardy mountain tribes of that land to subjection, and then again another year against Babylon and Elam. Thirty thousand Babylonians and untold numbers of Armenian mountaineers were carried

off into slavery, their towns burned and their lands devastated. Daniel's words fitly mirror what the Assyrian king had done.

Sennacherib lived nineteen years after his defeat at Jerusalem, of which ten were spent in unremitting warfare against Babylon, Media, Elam, Armenia and Cilicia, but never again against Judah. In that time he more than earned his title of "the Destroyer." After his conquest of Cilicia he founded a city in that land which was to become famous in after years—Tarsus, the birthplace of the Apostle Paul. Then came the end; he was assassinated by two of his own sons, and a third son reigned in his stead. The might and the magnificence of Sennacherib, the fear and terror his name inspired amongst countless multitudes, vanished in an instant. Truly, as Daniel predicts of the greater oppressor whom he prefigured "*he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.*" (v.45)

Whatever be the interpretation of Daniel 11 and Zechariah 14 it would seem that the remarkable correspondence between those prophecies and this historical record of the seventh century BC is intended to provide a guide to the detailed nature of the events which will terminate this Age and lead on to the time when Michael shall "*stand up*" to use Daniel's phrase (Dan. 12:1), or Zechariah's "*then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations.*" (Zech. 14:3) Sennacherib's campaign in Judah and his crushing defeat at Jerusalem by Divine intervention is a preview, in miniature, of "*things which must shortly come to pass.*" (Rev. 1:1)

AOH



Awake, our souls! away, our fears!
Let every trembling thought be gone!
Awake, and run the heavenly race,
And put a cheerful courage on.

True, 'tis a straight and thorny road,
And mortal spirits tire and faint!
But they forget the mighty God
Who feeds the strength of every saint.

O mighty God, Thy matchless power
Is ever new and ever young,
And firm endures, while endless years
Their everlasting circles run.

From Thee, the ever-flowing spring,
Our souls shall drink a fresh supply;
While such as trust their native
strength
Shall melt away, and droop, and die.

Swift as the eagle cleaves the air,
We'll mount aloft to Thine abode;
On wings of love our souls shall fly,
Nor tire along the heavenly road.

Bible Students Hymnal

FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT WITH ALL THY MIGHT—A HYMN

FIGHT the good fight with all thy might,
 Christ is thy strength, and Christ thy right;
 Lay hold on life, and it shall be
 Thy joy and crown eternally.



Run the straight race through God's good grace,
 Lift up thine eyes, and seek His face;
 Life with its way before us lies,
 Christ is the path and Christ the prize.



Cast care aside, lean on thy Guide
 His boundless mercy will provide;
 Lean, and thy trusting soul shall prove
 Christ is its life, and Christ its love.

Faint not nor fear, His arms are near,
 He changeth not, and Thou art dear;
 Only believe, and thou shalt see
 That Christ is all in all to thee.

John Samuel Bewley Monsell (1811-1875) who wrote these words was born in Northern Ireland. After being educated in Dublin, John entered the established church. Later he moved to Britain serving as a Rector in Egham and later in Guildford where he died.

He was a prolific hymn and poem writer and one of the few that remains popular now is "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."

In "Fight the good Fight" the following verses are thought to have been in the writer's mind when penning this popular hymn:

1 Tim. 6:12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

2 Tim. 4:6-8 For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

James 1:12 Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

1 Thessalonians 2:19 What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?

1 Corinthians 9:24-26 (Darby) They who run in [the] race-course run all, but one receives the prize? Thus run in order that ye may obtain. But every one that contends [for a prize] is temperate in all things: they then indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible. I therefore thus run, as not uncertainly; so I combat, as not beating the air.

Phil. 3:14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

John 14:6 (NKJV) Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through me."

1 Corinthians 15:57-58 (NKJV) Thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

2 Timothy 2:1-7 Therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus...therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.

1 Corinthians 16:13 (NKJV) Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.

Ephesians 6:10-11 (NKJV) Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Heb. 12:1-2 (NKJV) Therefore...since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

Philippians 4:19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

1 Peter 1:3 (NKJV) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Luke 8:50 But when Jesus heard it, he answered him, saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole.

Matthew 24:13 He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.
The commonly used tune Pentecost was composed by William Boyd. (1847-1928)

THIS THING IS FROM ME

When the ten tribes broke away from the house of David, king Rehoboam assembled an army in Judah with the object of fighting the rebel tribes and bringing them once again into subjection. God, however, sent Shemaiah the man of God to the king to prohibit this war-like attempt, commanded him to disband his forces, and added these illuminating words, “this thing is from me.” (1 Kings 12:24) While this revolt was obviously the outcome of Rehoboam’s obstinacy and folly, yet the disruption of the kingdom had already been pronounced by God to his father Solomon on account of his idolatry (1 Kings 11:11-13), and also it had been confirmed to Jeroboam. (1 Kings 11:31)

As in the case of so many events related in Scripture, there were personal, social and political causes for this the great revolution in the kingdom of Israel. The rashness of Rehoboam, the bold astuteness of Jeroboam, the despotism of a wealthy cultured civilisation, each gave occasion to rebellion now that Solomon was removed. Yet behind all these stood the great moral and spiritual cause—this thing was from the Lord. It was His righteous judgment on the idolatry, the pride, the despotic self-indulgence of the court of Solomon.

How difficult it often seems to trace the true cause of the calamities that come into our own lives. We may blame this or that, but at the back of everything else there stands One who says “this thing is from me.” If we are a precious people to God, and the eye of the Lord is over us, then all things are working together for our good, (Rom. 8:28) however much it may seem otherwise. The difficult and trying circumstances with which we are surrounded are not there by chance; these things are from God. There is a purpose in them that we may be quite unable to fathom, but that the purpose is for our highest welfare we should have not the slightest doubt at any time.

When the dark shadow falls across our life; when the road becomes rough and long; when the night is dark and sorrowful; when the struggle seems beyond our strength, to believe that “this thing is from me” will take the sting from our anguish, and bring light, comfort and rest to our weary souls. Besides this we find that the sorrows of life cause us to look upwards towards God, to exercise and develop our faith in Him, to value our hope for the eternal future, and to know and reciprocate the love that is watching over us with such jealous care.

NOTICES

Bible Students Seminar Day
 Saturday 13 July 2024
 Crick Village Hall, Bucknills Lane, Crick, Nr Rugby, NN6 7SX

Bible Students Fellowship Conference

High Leigh Conference Centre,
 Lord Street, Hoddesdon
 EN11 8SG, U.K.

Wednesday 14–Sunday 18 August 2024**Day visitors please book at once**

For a booking form and programme please contact
 Sr. Natasha Ciobra
 Email—natasha.rolston24@gmail.com

International Convention of Bible Students
 6-11 August 2024
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Gone from us

Charmaine Chandler (Lake District)
 Ann Padmore (Warrington)
 Chris Robins (Yeovil)

OUR COMFORT IN SORROW

There is no book like the Bible for the sorrowful. It tells of the Comforter; it points to the perfect plan according to which God is working out our blessedness: it insists that all things are working together for good; it opens the vista of the blessed future, where all the griefs and tears shall be put away for ever.

Let us seek then to accept God's will, for this is the highest form of faith, the greatest and most lofty achievement of the Christian. It is when we believe God and his Word in spite of the fact that appearances, circumstances and human reason all argue to the contrary, that our faith is truly triumphant. When the ship was in imminent danger of being wrecked, "when neither sun nor stars appeared for many days," (Acts 27:20 NIV) and all hope of being saved from the tempest had gone, then it was that Paul said, "Be of good cheer, *for I believe God*, that it shall be even as it was told me." (Acts 27:25)

May we have the faith, whatever comes into our life, to trust our God and Father who says "this thing is from me."

Forest Gate Bible Monthly



HE LEADS US ON

He leads us on, by paths we did not know,
 Upward He leads us, though our steps be slow,
 Though oft we faint and falter on the way,
 Though storms and darkness oft obscure the day,
 Yet when the clouds are gone
 We know He leads us on.

He leads us on through all the trialsome years;
 Past all our dreamland hopes, and doubts, and fears
 He guides our steps. Through all the tangled maze
 Of sin, of sorrow, and o'erclouded days
 We know His will is done;
 And still leads us on.

And then, at last, after the weary strife,
 After the restless fever we call life,
 After dreariness, the aching pain,
 The wayward struggles which have proved in vain,
 After our toils are past—
 He'll give us rest at last.

Poems of Dawn

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