

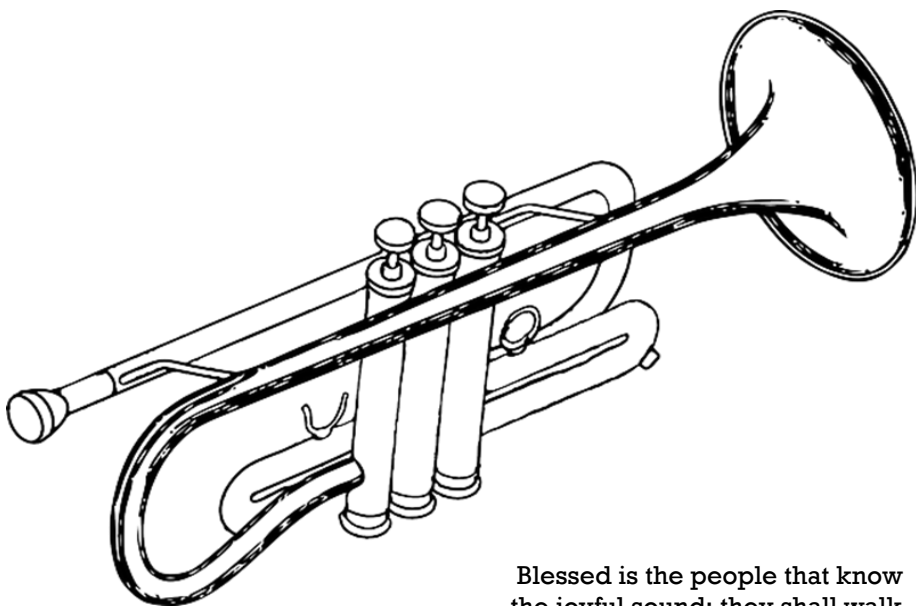
BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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Blessed is the people that know
the joyful sound: they shall walk,
O LORD, in the light of thy
countenance.

Psa. 89:15

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)

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FEAST OF TRUMPETS

All references NKJV unless otherwise shown

Today trumpets are most associated with music either in brass bands or orchestras. They act as heralds like those used to proclaim Charles The King in this country, following the death of The Queen two years ago. The "last post" is often played on a bugle or cavalry trumpet at remembrance services for the war dead but were initially used to indicate that the camp of soldiers was secure for the night. Bugle sounds were also used to begin to move all or some of the troops.

We are familiar with the three feasts of Israel: Passover and the feast of Unleavened bread, Shavuot and the final one the feast of Tabernacles. But when is the feast of trumpets and what is it for?

The use of trumpets

The first mention of the word trumpet comes in Exodus 19:13-19 two months after the exit from Egypt when God came and revealed Himself to Israel at Sinai. It was a serious and important time for the Hebrews as the Ten Commandments were given to them after Moses went up the mount. With the trumpet call there were thunders, lightnings, smoke and fires. In this case it was the sound of a ram's horn which in the Hebrew is "*shofar*." The trumpet call was made again afterwards. (Exod. 20:18)

There is another sort of trumpet that was made according to God's

instruction to Moses. He was given the instruction to make two silver trumpets out of one piece each of silver. This is quite a different Hebrew word “*chatsotsrah*” and it would have made a much different sound.

These silver trumpets were used to assemble the Hebrews and to move camp. The use of one sounding of a trumpet was to assemble the princes or leaders of the 12 tribes. A short trumpet sound was used to move those tribes: the first to move those on the East, the second for those tribes on the South and so on.

The silver trumpets were used to make an alarm call to warn of an enemy attack. But also afterwards for gladness and thankfulness too, and in acknowledgment of God. In addition it was for the feast days or festivals appointed by God and for a new lunar month. (Num. 10:1-10)

At the dedication of the Temple, 120 priests blew trumpets. It says it was in the feast of the seventh month, so it was probably not the feast of trumpets when the Temple was dedicated. (2 Chron. 5:12) It was though an important event and the glory of God filled the Temple.

Date of the feast of trumpets

“Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to the children of Israel, saying: “In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a sabbath-rest, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work on it; and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD.”’” (Lev. 23:23-25) Therefore the feast of trumpets was set in the autumn.

What were the offerings?

“For you it is a day of blowing the trumpets. You shall offer a burnt offering as a sweet aroma to the LORD: one young bull, one ram, and seven lambs in their first year, without blemish. Their grain offering shall be fine flour mixed with oil: three-tenths of an ephah for the bull, two-tenths for the ram, and one-tenth for each of the seven lambs; also one kid of the goats as a sin offering, to make atonement for you; besides the burnt offering with its grain offering for the New Moon, the regular burnt offering with its grain offering, and their drink offerings, according to their ordinance, as a sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the LORD.” (Num. 29:1-6)

The Second Temple and the reading of the Law

After the 70 years of captivity in Babylon and following the decree of

Cyrus the Israelites returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the Temple. It was 445 BC and they assembled at the Water Gate in Jerusalem. One important part was the reading of the law was undertaken. It was read on the first day of the seventh month—the feast of trumpets. *“Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly of men and women and all who could hear with understanding on the first day of the seventh month.”* (Neh. 8:2) This was an important part; it’s necessary to know what is important for those capable of understanding and putting it into action.

“How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Rom. 10:14) The New Testament shows how important the dissemination of information is. How do any of us believe if we are not informed by someone else or by reading the Bible. It will be a significant part of the Messianic age, the knowledge of God and his plan and purposes. “God...will have all men...to come unto the knowledge of the truth...in due time” (1 Tim. 2:3-6 KJV) “For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.” (Hab. 2:14) As the promise to Israel was “No more shall every man teach his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD.” (Jer. 31:34)

New Year Celebration

Ezekiel (40:1) mentions a new year in the seventh month. One understanding of this is that it is the commencement of the civil year. Today it is known as Rosh Hashanah. In 2023 it was on 15 September from sunset and it is 2 October in 2024.

It was not the only feast in the seventh month. Yom Kippur also known as the day of atonement was on the tenth day of the seventh month. Then the feast of tabernacles or booths was a week-long feast from the 15th of the month. It was to remember the time when they lived in tents for forty years in the wilderness and coincided with the end of the harvest at the end of the agricultural year. Zechariah (14:16) mentions that after the final deliverance at the culmination of this age at the feast of tabernacles of the time the people of all nations would go up to Jerusalem for the feast of tabernacles. This brings to mind the blessings and events of the age coming. Therefore this new year celebration could picture all nations in the Millennial or Messianic age.

An eschatological trumpet for Israel

Zech. 9:14-16 “The LORD will be seen over them, and His arrow will go forth like lightning. The Lord GOD will blow the trumpet, (*shofar*) and go with whirlwinds from the south. The LORD of hosts will defend them; they shall devour and subdue with slingstones. They shall drink and roar as if with wine; they shall be filled with blood like basins, like the corners of the altar. The LORD their God will save them in that day, as the flock of His people. For they shall be like the jewels of a crown, lifted like a banner over His land—” The trumpet blowing here announces God taking action to defend his people Israel in full faith and loyalty shown in the abundance of the animal sacrifices on the altar.

New Testament trumpets

The New Testament has one word for trumpet it is “*salpingi*.” Matt 24:31 says “He (the Son of Man) will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” The trumpet is for the gathering of the elect—the Church.

“Behold, I tell you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” (1 Cor. 15:51-52) The trumpet precedes the raising of the church incorruptible.

“We believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the presence of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.” (1 Thes. 4:14-16 RVIC) This trumpet also precedes the raising of the Church who will be raised first and before all others, like, in the general resurrection.

“But in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets.” (Rev. 10:7) This is the announcement of seventh, and last, period of the church during this Gospel age. It will be that after that time there would be no more messengers and the time of sacred secrets would be over and people would see and know not wonder and hope?

“The seventh angel sounded; and there came to be great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever.” (Rev. 11:15 RVIC) Another announcement at the time of the seventh angel. This time it is to announce the kingdom. This may mean it is future because the kingdoms of this world still exist although it may mean its proclaimed as going to happen before it happens with a period of time before it appears a reality here.

Could these New Testament trumpets be aligned with the feast of trumpets coming prior to the Day of Atonement and Feast of Tabernacles at the start of a new year?

Gideon’s trumpets

Judges 7 recounts the victory of the judge Gideon and his band over the multitudes of the Midianite army which were so many they were as “the sand by the seashore.” (v.12) Gideon reduced his army, as directed by God firstly from 32,000 to 10,000 and then to 300 by testing their preparedness for the task at hand. Gideon gives each soldier a trumpet, in this case though a ram’s horn or shofar rather than a silver trumpet. At the appointed time they blew their trumpets, broke their pots, and held their torches which were like sticks of fire. There was so much alarm the Midianites reacted suddenly and began to fight each other. So without one sword of Gideon or the 300 soldiers with trumpets being used in anger to kill the Midianite army in Israel the battle was won and the victory was God’s.

If Gideon pictures our Lord Jesus then the 300 with the shofars could be the “little flock” (Luke 12:32) or the bride of Christ at the battle of Armageddon at the very end of the Gospel age allowing the kingdom to be fully established. Could this be aligned with the feast of trumpets?

Joseph and the trumpet

“Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day. For this was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob. This he ordained in Joseph for a testimony, when he went out through the land of Egypt.” (Psa. 81:3-5 KJV) It was decreed for a testimony in Joseph. How so? There was a worldwide or regionwide famine, like today in several ways to the famine of the word of God. Pharaoh and Joseph bought all the land of Egypt in exchange for the food they gave the farmers and landowners. The plan to save grain in the seven years of plenty meant there was food for Egypt, although not forgetting

neighbouring lands like Canaan. The only group who did not need to sell their land were the priests who got their food direct from Pharaoh. Hence the world was saved with Joseph picturing Jesus, who is saviour of the world while the priestly class were fed. Like today the church is still being fed from above by God.

Jubilee trumpet

Another aspect of the Day of Atonement in the seventh month was that every 50th year, the year of Jubilee all lands were restored back to their original owners and all servants were given back their freedom from their masters. A trumpet was sounded throughout all the land of Israel to announce that day. (Lev. 25:9) This pictures the restitution or restoration of all things that will occur when Christ's kingdom is established and the resurrection of the dead begins on earth. It was also a time of rest for the land that pictures the rest the world will get from such present hardships as they now experience.

Conclusion

In the old arrangement in Israel the feast of trumpets was the start of the new civil year in the autumn. That month was a special month as it had the day of atonement when the sins of the nation were cleared allowing a fresh start. There was also the feast of tabernacles to remember how God had directed the nation in the wilderness and also marking the end of the agricultural year and the final harvests prior to winter.

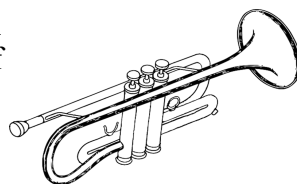
It is suggested that the use of trumpets is to sound for a new age and new arrangement in the Divine Plan. They indicate the end of the old age and a new order beginning, the raising of the bride of Christ to immortality and to announce a time of education of the world to God's ways, unpolluted, no longer to be hidden in any way.

Our responsibility

At this time the message is to prepare ourselves for the end of the age. A time for self-examination and reflection of our readiness and preparedness for the culmination of the age and making our calling and election sure.

“Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance.” (Psa. 89:15 KJV)

NAC



THE GOLDEN FUTURE

Part 5 A NEW SOCIAL ORDER

There is much in the Bible to guide enquirers into the outstanding features of that still future—although imminent—day when God will “speak peace to the nations.” (Zech. 9:10 ESV) It is possible to build up a tolerably clear picture from its foundation principles, illuminated by the prophetic vision and inspired revelations of Hebrew seers and Christian apostles. Both the Old and the New Testaments contribute their quota to this preview of the coming social order which is now the happy lot of Christians to perceive.

That the sin and selfishness of man is to culminate in the utter and final breakdown of all human forms of self-government is certain and definite; and this catastrophic ending to the “kingdoms of this world” is predicted by our Lord and by many of the sacred writers, purely because of their knowledge that no other ending was at all possible. Those same men also declared that in this time of human extremity the alternative system of government—a Divine theocracy based on righteousness—would immediately come into operation.

“It shall come to pass” says Isaiah (2:2-3) “that the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains...and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD...and He will teach us of His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.” “For then,” declares the Infinite Himself, “will I turn to the peoples a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve Him with one consent.” (Zeph. 3:9) Again He declares, “I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts...for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them...and I will remember their sin no more.” (Jer. 31:33-34)

These declarations imply a paternal administration dealing with fallen humanity along educational lines; and just as with children in school, so will it be true that whilst liberty to do right will be the prerogative of all, liberty to hurt, destroy, or injure will not be permitted to any. The Book of Revelation (chapter 20) speaks of a mighty angel descending from heaven with a great chain in his hand; binding the Devil, and casting him into the abyss “*that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years...be fulfilled.*” (v.3) Thus is pictured in metaphorical language the forcible restraint of evil during the time of Messiah’s kingdom, until such a time as all men are sufficiently restored in mind and body to face the

issue for themselves.

There will then dawn a day when despairing mankind realises that a new power has taken control of earth's affairs. The politicians and statesmen, weary and dispirited at the failure of all their efforts, may at first pay little heed to the new voice which is raised. Certain allusions scattered throughout the Bible seem to indicate that the men to take control will be certain stalwart heroes of old, returned from the grave; men who walked with God and understood those principles of Divine Government which are so much discounted today. The experiences of a number of such are recapitulated in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. In any case the histories of Moses the founder of a nation, Daniel the Babylonian statesmen, Nehemiah the patriot, and others too numerous to mention, are sufficient to carry assurance that if men like these were alive today to administer affairs of state, then peace upon an honourable basis would speedily come to this war-wracked world.

And these are the men who will rise from the grave to do this very thing.

Is it too fantastic to believe? "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you," cries Paul before Agrippa, "that God should raise the dead?" (Acts 26:8) The whole foundation of Christian expectation is built upon the belief that Christ died, was raised from the dead and became the first fruits of "them that slept." (1 Cor. 15:20) Why then should it be thought a fantastic thing that in the fulness of time and in man's extremity God will restore to earthly life men who have already demonstrated their fitness for the stupendous task of administering affairs of state in the earthly phase of the Kingdom of God? (Isa. 1:26)

The shattering impact of this clarion call to righteousness and equity resounding through the civilised world will awaken all to a realization that some strange new power has taken control of earth's affairs. Many there will be, men and women of goodwill, who will at once hail this proclamation with eagerness and range themselves upon the side of these new "princes in all the earth." (Psa. 45:16) Some there will be who will stand aloof, suspicious, sullen, not willing that the searching light of Truth shall reveal the darkness of their own lives. Those who are by nature degraded and brutalised, and have lost the finer instincts of humanity, will cry out that they want none of this new life; whilst without any doubt at all some whose lives have been spent in preying upon their fellows and in gratifying their own pleasures and desires at the expense of others will fiercely oppose this threatened invasion of vested interests. Yet this first

reaction in favour of the new administration, even if confined to a relative few, will produce an immediate effect throughout the world such as no revolution or reformation in all past history has ever approached.

The next development will be even more startling for people will begin to discover that vice and abuse of right principles no longer escape retribution; moreover that the very attempt to injure or destroy another will be frustrated at the outset. The psychological atmosphere created by the strangeness of such events, the missionary zeal of teachers who will already be at work amongst the people, but above all the evident operation of Divine power in a totally inexplicable manner will begin to render it literally true that "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain." (Isa. 65:25) The maliciously-minded and the evil-doer may injure themselves, others they cannot injure, and when this realisation sinks into the minds of men that dread the enemy, fear which holds all men in thrall, and shadows almost every life, will be swept away. "My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places." (Isa. 32:18) In such an atmosphere of confidence there will be possibilities of rapid development in the knowledge of the Eternal laws, and the writing of those laws in the hearts of each person.

In proportion as men and women sympathise with and desire the accomplishment of God's ultimate purpose, so will they come into harmony with His precepts. Every individual in turn will become a teacher, assisting less fortunate ones along the pathway on which they themselves are progressing. Opportunities for every form of Christian endeavour and social service will abound, and the sincerity of every man's heart will be demonstrated by the eagerness with which he throws himself into the work of helping others. Under such conditions it is easy to comprehend that humankind will become one great family, men consulting with each other for the wise and effective utilisation of the common blessings, and for the undertaking of those enterprises which will be necessary for the continued welfare of the human race. The present evils of competitive enterprise and international antagonism will cease to be, and so will the word be fulfilled which declares, "He maketh wars to cease unto the end(s) of the earth." "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." (Psa. 46:9; Isa.2:4) Social service will be the keynote, and the "Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of man" will become a reality in a sense more stupendous by far than has ever been dreamed by the most ardent of political reformers. The order of the day will be reconstruction. No longer

shall the brevity of human life discourage and dissuade men from setting their hands to enterprises which may require centuries for their full accomplishment. The pulling down of all that is drab and ugly in the dwelling-places of men and the painstaking erection of edifices beautiful to the eye and sumptuous in the amenities will provide occupations of the most pleasant kind. Agriculture will come into its own, for the earth itself is to be restored and made beautiful and to bring forth in abundance. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose...for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert." (Isa. 35:1-7) Stupendous irrigation schemes will transform the world's deserts into fertile plains; hitherto inaccessible regions will become a playground; and in every possible sense of the word it shall be true that "then shall the earth yield her increase." (Psa. 67:6)

Nor is the new social order to content itself with the external aids to human happiness. The arts and sciences, the pursuit of which is so often restricted to the leisured classes among humanity, will then be open to all. Knowledge will be pursued for its own sake, and the fruits of scientific research applied to worthy objects for the increase of human comfort and happiness. The music festivals and philosophical debates of that day will surpass by far the loftiest attainments of man in the present or the past.

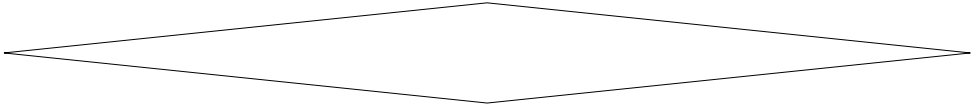
Thus will be the inspired words of John Addington Symonds be literally fulfilled:

*"New arts shall bloom of loftier mould,
And mightier music fill the skies,
And every life shall be a song,
When all the earth is paradise."*

There is a crowning glory to this sublime picture. These glories are not for the living nations only. Not just for those who chance to be alive when the day of Christ's Kingdom bursts upon an unbelieving world. For the Word of God lays down a teaching as definite as it is certain of fulfilment—that all who are in their graves shall come forth to re-creation of physical form to share in the glories of that Messianic kingdom.

"I believe in the resurrection of the dead!" The creeds of Christendom have re-echoed the solemnity of those pregnant words for centuries. A day will dawn when the returning millions, gazing upon a fairer earth than ever they have seen before, will with one accord break into that expression of rapture born of the eloquence of the statesman-prophet of Israel:

“And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” (Isa. 35:10)



NOTE ON THE SUNDIAL OF AHAZ

“So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down.” (Isa. 38:8)

The story of the sun’s shadow going backwards on the “sun dial of Ahaz” in the days of Hezekiah is well known and the most likely explanation—that the phenomenon was caused by the emergence of the Shekinah light from the Temple, “brighter than the sun at noon-day,” has already been published in these columns. An alternative possibility was suggested a century ago by one Benjamin Scott, F.R.A.S. in the words *“The going back of the shadow on the dial has repeatedly been noticed, even in the present (19th) century. It is dependent, not on astronomical, but on meteorological causes. The shadow is not invariably dependent upon the position of the sun, but upon the brightest point of light in the sky. If when the sun nears the western horizon a dark impenetrable cloud covers the orb, the shadow will be cast by the bright silver lining of the cloud, which may be near the zenith, and the shadow will repeat nearly a quarter of the circle. In the present (19th) century an instance is recorded by the Canon of Metz Cathedral. In the case under consideration, the object was the satisfaction of Hezekiah that the promise made to him was from God. The prophet is accordingly directed to foretell, as a sign, a natural phenomenon which was about to occur.”*

It might be remarked that this is likely to be of comparatively frequent occurrence and so unlikely to constitute a “sign” to the observers; the cause of the phenomenon would be discernible by anyone and there would be nothing remarkable about it. Something quite out of the usual was required, a happening only explainable as an instance of Divine intervention; the sudden shining of the Shekinah from the Temple, its brilliance temporarily eclipsing the sun and blotting out the shadow on the “steps of Ahaz,” would well explain the occurrence.

AOH

SHADOW OF THE CROSS

“If I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” (John 12:32)

The shadow of The Cross has lain across the history of mankind since that mysterious forecast made in Eden of the bruising of the serpent. The stage was there set for the fight between the opposing forces of good and evil. Enmity, rivalry, animosity, antagonism, intolerance, deception, persecution, betrayal and suffering have dogged the footsteps of man from that day to this. However great the effort to stem the tide, the vulnerable heel of man has been stabbed with the fiery dart of wickedness. The best have had their weak spot in which they have been conscious of failure if not defeat.

The verdict of the past has been that all have gone astray at some time, like lost sheep in need of rescue. The present gives no reason to change that verdict. When to be good is considered dull: to do good, officious busy-bodying, when virtue is despised and sin extolled as sensational and exciting, it is plain that humanity has strayed from a safe road into the dangers of the wilderness.

It was in the wilderness that Moses lifted up a serpent of brass for the benefit of those who had been bitten by serpents, many of them fatally. Those who could and would look upon the brazen image set upon a pole recovered from the effects of the poisonous bite. Jesus referred to this incident as an advanced picture of his own lifting up on the cross for the same purpose, to heal those suffering from the fiery bite of sin. *“Look to Jesus, look and live. There is life in a look at the crucified one”* is no fallacy of the hymn writers but a basic fact of man’s condition and need of salvation.

The drawing power of the Cross from the day of Calvary until today has been strong: a magnetic pulling of men and women toward the ideals of the Christian life as exemplified by the man who was its chief victim. By its means people have been gathered out of every nation, kindred and tongue to become the first fruits of love, of life given, that through its generosity the straying and the smitten might be “ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,” inspired with high hope of better things to come, of life abundant, flowing to all who believe in him.

“For God so loved the world that He gave....” (John 3:16)

The gifts of God are everywhere apparent in the earth He created to be the home of the human race but his greatest gift is that of a Saviour. The Cross has become the outward symbol of faith. It stands on mountain slopes, on the pinnacles of churches, adorns the vestments of priests and is worn by some adherents of the various factions of the Christian religion as the badge of their belief. Gatherers of relics claim to be custodians of pieces of the true Cross but there is no merit in the Cross even if the original is still in existence. It is the man upon the Cross who holds the power to draw all men unto him.

“Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.” (Isa. 45:22)

The human race, increasing in size, scattered abroad in every corner of the earth, needed then and still needs the offices of a just God and a Saviour, a bruiser of the monstrous head of evil by which they have been kept in various stages of subjection to cruelty, poverty, ignorance and death. In Jesus, God mounted a gigantic rescue operation. Jesus came declaring himself *“the way, the truth, and the life.”* (John 14:6) No healing, restoration or harmony with God except through him; no other name known under heaven by which people may be saved from the perils of sin.

Much theological ink has been spilt over Christian doctrine, causing divisions and rifts, the splintering of the faith into a thousand fragments, but theories fade before the facts. The world without God is a dark place. Knowledge of a more scientific sort has tended to eclipse salvation, to cloud the once bright vision of the Saviour’s face, to dim assurance in the lifegiving words that *“whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”* (John 3:16) The Cross has lost its drawing power. All have a tendency to look in other directions, seeking satisfaction in the treasures and pleasures of this world, amazed not by grace but by the wonders produced by a skilful, materialistic age which presents itself like the Laodicean, rich, increased with goods and in need of nothing. Even where there is not a cold indifference to spiritual things and higher needs than bread and supermarkets, there is a lukewarm support, an outward lip service, a superficial knowledge, a greater concern for the crumbling places of worship than for the One to whom all worship is due.

When Jesus hung upon the Cross it is recorded that darkness lay over the whole land from the sixth to the ninth hour, prefiguring the darkness of the latter days of this age of which He spoke. The clouded sun, the failing moon, set for signs and symbols of life rejected, of law flouted and defied, of a reeling earth and a bewildered people, are not too strong figures of

speech when applied to the declining current century. Joel and Isaiah saw it as a time when “darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people.” (Isa. 60:2) The Cross can scarcely be discerned and the figure of Christ grows dim before the oncoming clouds of world wide strife, of the struggle for power and supremacy, of the last throw for possession of the mind of man. In such an extremity the prophets saw the rescuing hand of God in operation, inflicting the devastating blow to the kingdoms of this world, setting in the midst of his enemies his king. Crowned, not with thorns, but with glory and honour, reigning not from a Cross but from a throne of judgment and justice. He takes up his great power and authority, to conquer sin and opposition, to bring light and life to a desperate situation, to save to the uttermost all who will come to his side. So startling will be the benefits of his reign in contrast to the fears, the falsity and the deprivations which have for so long existed, that people will weep for joy and relief as those snatched from shipwreck and death. Heads will be turned and hearts drawn toward their great Deliverer.

To those who count time by days and hours by seconds, the time from the Cross to the crown has been long. From the place of sacrifice to the place of power, where He will put down all evils which separate each from their Maker, has been a long period of strife, doubt and scepticism. Yet to him who sees the end from the beginning, from whom nothing is hid, it has been but a little while, an interval; the whole history of man written and enacted in less than the travelling time of light from some far-flung sun of less importance than the planet designed to be the meeting place of God and man formed in his own image.

The drawing of all men by all-conquering love will be a spectacular work, but it will be done. For “*God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name...above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...that every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*” (Phil. 2:9-11)

September / October 1984

THERE is life in a look at the Crucified One;
 O yes, there is life there for thee:
 Simply look unto Christ and by faith be thou saved—
 Unto Him who was nailed to the tree.

*Look! look! look and live!
 O! look now, by faith, to the Crucified One;
 There's a full pledge of life there for thee.*

*Bible Students Hymnal
 Amelia M. Hull*

BY WAY OF REMEMBRANCE

A two-part consideration of 2 Pet. 1. Part 1

“This voice...we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.” (2 Pet. 1:18)

How many of you have heard this voice? How many of you know him upon whom you have believed, and know his Truth, his creative purpose, the power of his mighty Spirit, and have so built that knowledge into the structure of your life that it will never leave you? Here in this chapter the Apostle Peter talks about being established in the present truth and so at the last experiencing an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. How many of you are so established and how many of you will remain established throughout life and so at the end participate in the glory of that abundant entrance? Have you so heard his voice that you can do naught else but leave all and follow him and his Truth to the end of time?

Peter was in no doubt about this. Like his brother—the Apostle Paul, he knew him whom he had believed, and had confidence that his trust and faith was not misplaced. Like Paul too, he exhorted the brethren to whom he was writing to hold fast the form of sound words which he had committed to them, to remain always and for ever established in the truth. So in this first chapter of his second Epistle he is at pains to stress the necessity of building into one’s structure of faith that positive knowledge of the Divine purpose in creation which alone can make us acceptable workers together with God, “scribe(s)...instructed unto the Kingdom of Heaven...things new and old” as Jesus called them. (Matt. 13:52)

In this chapter Peter combines in a very wonderful manner the life of faith and devotion, which is the basic requirement of those who come to Christ, with the life of learning and understanding and witness which is incumbent upon those who would be his ambassadors and evangelists at this critical time in the end of the Age. For, make no mistake about it, we who now live are living at the most crucial period in the history of man, the time which Jesus called “the days of the Son of Man,” (Luke 17:22) the initial phase of his Advent when the kingdoms of this world are in turmoil and the fabric of society is being torn apart, when the Lord himself is supervising the breaking down of the power of evil and the Evil One preparatory to taking his own great power, and, in company with his resurrected and glorified Church, will in the next stage of his Advent be manifested to all the world for their salvation. For two thousand years the

Lord's followers have prayed and waited for this day and sometimes been grievously disappointed that it has not come in their own time. Today there is no longer any doubt; the signs of the days of the Son of Man are all but completely fulfilled before our eyes and in our generations. When ye see these things begin to come to pass, said Jesus, then know that the time is at hand.

This is why Peter is so insistent in this chapter upon the necessity, first of being diligent to give heed, secondly to hold the things learned in constant remembrance, and thirdly to remain established in them. First of all comes instruction in these things from Peter himself, their Apostle and Mentor in the things of the Spirit. But one day Peter must come to the end of the way and they be left with only the remembrance of the things he had taught them and this is where they must continue in the remembrance of those things whilst their own life lasted and so demonstrate that they were indeed grounded and established in the present truth. But at his passing away they would not be left destitute, for there would be a voice from heaven which he and they had heard before, to be their constant guide in the Truth. Jesus spoke of that; I will send you the Holy Spirit, He said, and that Holy Spirit will guide you into all truth and show you things to come, and so you will be sustained throughout life. And thirdly there would be something that is of increasing importance the farther away the believers are from those early days and the nearer to these latter days of the end of the world. They, with us, have the "sure word" of prophecy, the written word, that which reveals an increasingly up-to-date understanding of the developing purpose of God as the end of the Age draws on. So there is in this chapter vital instruction for we who live at this end of the Age of equal or even greater moment than for those to whom it was first written at the beginning.

But first of all there must come something else. Peter knew full well that the acquisition of the knowledge of the Divine Plan must be preceded by sincere devotion and consecration of life to the Lord. Learning and knowledge must be the servants of faith and devotion and not the masters. Faith, says Peter in verse 5, must come first of all. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them who diligently seek Him." (Heb. 11:6) "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." (1 John 5:4) But faith leads on to other characteristics, all of them of vital importance in the Christian life, and Peter goes on now to bring them forward, one after another. To your faith, he says, add fortitude. The Authorised Version says virtue, but the real meaning of the word is fortitude. Stability, firmness, determination, these are qualities

which must be brought to our aid right at the beginning of our Christian course. We are going to need them. “No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God” said Jesus. (Luke 9:62) The dictionary definition of fortitude is “mental strength to endure suffering or adversity with courage. Patient endurance.” “He that shall endure unto the End” said Jesus, “the same shall be saved.” (Matt. 24:13) Right at the outset, and until the end, the Christian needs fortitude.

“To fortitude, add knowledge.” Knowledge of what? Knowledge of the Lord, of his ways, of his teachings. Knowledge of his life, of his death, of his resurrection, of his coming again, and the purpose and outworking of all these things. Knowledge of our place in his purposes and his work, that we may be ready to serve and work with him in the right way at the right time. Positive knowledge is vital if we are not to be taken unawares at our Lord’s Advent. “*The excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it.*” (Eccl. 7:12) Said the Wise Man of the Old Testament “*Have not I written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge, that I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth; that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto (enquire of) thee?*” (Prov. 22:20-21) One is reminded of the words of the writer to the Hebrews when he said of some who had dropped back in this respect. “When, for the time [ye have known the truth] ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God.” (Heb. 5:12) There is an old jingle which is worth repeating in this connection:

“He who knows not, and knows not that he knows not, is a fool; shun him.

He who knows not, and knows that he knows not, is a child; teach him.

He who knows and knows not that he knows, is asleep; wake him.

He who knows, and knows that he knows, is a wise man; follow him.”

But here lurks a danger. The conscious possession of knowledge can lead to pride in achievement. When it is knowledge of the purposes of God and of the Word of God it can be spiritual pride and the whole benefit of the knowledge is lost. So Peter adds his third characteristic to be added to knowledge; self-control. The A.V. calls it temperance but that word has somewhat changed its meaning since the seventeenth century; our present term self-control best expresses the meaning. If we have knowledge, we must control its use for good; good to us and good to others. “What hast

thou that thou didst not receive?" (1 Cor. 4:7) All that we have learned has come from the Father through the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit and is given, as Paul said to Timothy, "*for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be... thoroughly furnished* (thoroughly instructed) *unto all good works.*" (2 Tim. 3:16-17) Unless the knowledge is used for the spiritual benefit and upbuilding of others it has failed in its intention and therefore discretion must be exercised in its use so that the other might be helped without being stumbled. Hence the need for self-control, to know when to speak and when to be silent. "*Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine*" was another of the admonitions to Timothy "*for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.*" (1 Tim. 4:16)

Peter has laid the basis. Faith, fortitude, knowledge, self-control. These are the practical characteristics for daily life. Now he proceeds to build upon these those other qualities which are necessary to the fully rounded out Christian life. To self-control, says Peter, add patience. Patience is going to be very necessary to one who intends to stay the course and come to a triumphant finish. Patience with all the disappointments and disillusionments that are sure to come, patience with brethren who fail to come up to the expected standard, patience when the time seems to be unduly delayed and expected events do not happen. There will be need for much patience in superabundant measure. So "let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." (James 1:4) "Ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise." (Heb. 10:36) The patience of Job has become proverbial; let ours be no less so.

To patience add godliness, which in modern English means piety, reverence, the spirit of worship. In this there must be sincerity, utter sincerity allied with humility. There is a biting expression in the Book of Proverbs "*There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up.*" (Prov. 30:13) John the Baptist looked at one such generation and called them a generation of vipers. With their eyes raised to heaven in mock piety and the fringe of their garments raised from the ground to avoid defilement with the things of earth, they are in their arrogance an abomination in the sight of the Lord. Paul spoke scathingly of them as "having a form of godliness (piety), but denying the power thereof; from such turn away." (2 Tim. 3:5) The piety which must be added to our patience is that advocated to Timothy "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness (piety) and honesty," "godliness (piety) with contentment is great gain." (1 Tim. 2:2; 6:6). They who will

render acceptable worship to the Father must “worship him in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:24)

Finally, to these Christian graces Peter exhorts us to add love; love in its two manifestations, “brotherly kindness” (*philadelphia*) which defines love as between members of a family or brethren, one Christian and another, so often expressed in the well-known term “the love of the brethren,” and “charity” (*agape*) in its wider sense of love toward all and between God and men. Here is the crown and flower of Christian achievement, to “love one another; as I have loved you,” (John 15:12) to be ready to serve and spend on behalf of others, to “pour out life unto death” (Isa. 53:12) as did our Lord, that life may come to others who otherwise would never see life. “God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth...should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16) “Greater love hath no man than this” said Jesus “that a man should lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13) “Ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” (John 13:35) It is when this climax in the Christian life is reached that Peter can say, as he does say, “*If these things be in you, and abound...ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*” (vv.8-11)

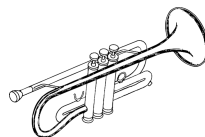
There are four superlatives in the final verses of this preliminary exhortation. They are “abound” (v.8) fruitful (v.8) “diligence” (v.10) and abundant entrance. (v.11) Three are superlatives of attainment and one is of action. “Diligence” occurs first in v.5 as the necessary pre-requisite and continuing force underlying all progress in the attainment of the successive qualities. “Giving all diligence, ADD to your faith, fortitude...” and so on. Now in v.10 it is a question of giving all diligence to make one’s calling and election sure, on the basis of “doing all these things.” “If these things be in you, and abound,” you will be “not unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (v.8) The consequence of all this, at the end of the way, is the ministration of “an abundant entrance” into the heavenly kingdom.

This is the foundation, well and truly laid by the Apostle Peter in the hearts and lives of his converts. But life has to be lived, and this high standard maintained to the end, and Peter knew now, after thirty-five years preaching the gospel of the resurrected Christ, that his own time to go was drawing near. So he turns now to the things that he must say whilst yet he was with them, that they might be sustained after his passing.

“Wherefore I will not be negligent”—this is diligence expressed the other way round—*“I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.”* (v.12) *“I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.”* (v.15) Another important word comes to the front here; “remembrance.” It is used three times in the course of four verses. It is not enough to receive the truth at the hands of a “father in the faith” as was Peter. Not enough to commence the work of building one Christian quality upon another, to create that Divine likeness which alone will render us acceptable to God at the last. All this must continue throughout life and the building must proceed in an orderly fashion, each brick laid upon its predecessor in line with the original plan and firmly seated upon the basic foundation which was laid at the first. So Peter exhorts them ever to keep in remembrance the basic truths they learned of him at the first and to build solidly thereon. *“If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things”* said Paul again to Timothy *“thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.”* (1 Tim. 4:6) In this he only but repeated the promise of Jesus, who told his disciples upon the eve of his departure from the world “the Holy Spirit...shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” (John 14:26) If we have been rightly taught in our early days, and if we have built rightly on that foundation, making onward progress in a constantly deepening and widening understanding of our Faith, then in after days we can only ignore or forget these things at our peril.

To be concluded
AOH

LET earth and heaven agree,
 Angels and men be joined,
 To celebrate with me
 The Saviour of mankind;
 To adore the all-atoning Lamb,
 And bless the sound of Jesus’ name.



Jesus! transporting sound!
 The joy of earth and heaven!
 No other help is found,
 No other name is given,
 By which we can salvation have;
 For Jesus came the world to save.

O! for a trumpet voice,
 On all the world to call!
 To bid their heart rejoice
 In Him who died for all!
 For all my Lord was crucified;
 For all the world my Saviour died.

Bible Students Hymnal
Charles Wesley

. AND GOD REPENTED

Enquiry into a perplexing subject

The assertion, some eight times repeated, that God “repented” of something that He had done has often given rise to the question what is implied. Common sense dictates that it is impossible for the Creator of all things, having all knowledge and foresight, to regret his action in some specific instance and wish it had not been so done. *“With whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning,”* is James’ comment on God’s ways. (James 1:17) The fact that we cannot think of this “repentance” of God in just the same way as we understand the term—which nowadays has for the most part a theological significance and signifies repentance for past sin—is evidenced by the words of Balaam in Num. 23:19 *“God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it?”* God is all-wise and omniscient; He is in full control of the creation He has brought into being. It is inconceivable that He can ever be in the position of wishing that He had not done something which He has done.

If this be conceded, it remains to consider what is implied by the several occasions on which it is said that God “repented.” The foremost example—and the first—is at the time of the Flood, when *“God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth...and it repented the LORD that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.”* (Gen. 6:5-6) The common view of this text is that God regretted having created mankind and resolved to destroy them as unfit for further life. That this view cannot possibly be true is evidenced by the fact that at a much earlier period, in the days of Eden, God had told the first human pair that He proposed eventually to undo the harm that had been done by the advent of sin, that there would be a saviour from among those yet to be born of their descendants. This presupposes that God envisaged the presence of mankind on the earth long after the Flood had come and gone.

In these circumstances, the first thing to do is look at the word for which the A.V. (and earlier) translators selected “repent” as the English equivalent. *“Nacham,”* like many Hebrew words, has a variety of meanings, largely determined by the grammatical class, whether passive, active, intensive, and so on, most of which is beyond the comprehension of any but competent Hebrew scholars and will not be enlarged upon here. Suffice to say that the general use of the word in all the Scriptures, with whatever English words it is translated, is the best guide. In this particular case the word is derived from the idea of drawing in the breath in order to contain one’s grief. Hence in the O.T. its meaning is to lament or grieve

over something that has happened, (48 times), to grieve on account of a person or persons—to pity (twice) to comfort others or oneself (45 times), to be comforted (8 times). Of all these the A.V. translates the word by “repent” 41 times and “comfort” 61 times, and on one occasion (Isa. 1:24) “I will *ease* me of mine adversaries.”

That such divergent ideas as repentance and comfort can be presented as the meaning of the same Hebrew word only underlines the difficulties faced by translators. To some extent, of course, theological beliefs and human standards of conduct must have their influence. It could be very difficult to see how God could take comfort in the state of affairs before the Flood; much more understandable to think that God, in his grief, was sorry He had ever made man and wished He had not done so, which is how the N.E.B. puts it “*He was sorry that he had made man on earth....I am sorry that I ever made them.*” But when in the account of Isaac’s marriage to Rebekah, it is said (Gen. 24:67) that “Isaac was *comforted* after his mother’s death,” where “comforted” is the same word “*nacham*” it is obviously incongruous to suggest that he repented of his action in marrying Rebekah, so “comfort” was the English word used. Likewise Judah was “comforted” in Gen. 38:12, David in 2 Sam. 13:39, Rachel “refused to be comforted” for her lost children in Jer. 31:15. All these and other examples are in the same passive form of the verb as in Gen. 6:5-6. Many more in the active sense include Gen. 5:29 where Lamech says of Noah “this same shall *comfort* us concerning our work and toil...” which hardly includes the idea of repentance; Gen. 37:35 where Jacob’s sons “rose up to *comfort* him” at the loss of Joseph; Job 2:11, Job’s three friends came “to mourn with him and to *comfort* him”; Psa. 23:4 “thy rod and thy staff they *comfort* me:” Isa. 61:2 “to *comfort* all that mourn:” Zech. 1:17 “the LORD shall yet *comfort* Zion.” There are many more examples; these are sufficient.

From all this it would appear that the Divine “repentance” at the time of the Flood was a deep personal grief at the fact of human sin because He himself was man’s Creator and Father. God grieved at the consequence of his making man, not regretting that He had made man, but regretting the sorry state of affairs which had resulted. The Septuagint says that “God laid it to heart that he had made man on the earth, and he pondered it deeply.” There is a small grammatical point here; “*chay*” is a relative conjunction “that” and also a relative causal particle “because.” The translators have to choose which meaning best fits the sense. If, instead of “that” we say “God repented *because* he had made man...it repenteth me, *because* I made them” the emphasis changes. God grieved for the sinful

state of man because He had been responsible for their creation in the first place, and so, to bring in the New Testament, was in the position of the father in the parable of the prodigal son. There was no suggestion of reversing his plans for this earth and destroying it for ever, but there is the plain statement of what God would do to deal with the situation. He declared, in short, that He would alter the course of history, for man's own sake. The human society upon earth was altogether corrupt; if tradition be true, the terse words of Genesis 6 constitute a masterly understatement of the position. Violence and murder were the order of the day; in the expressive words of the Book of Enoch, "*as men perished, they cried, and their cry went up to heaven.*" (Enoch 8:4) So God determined to take away all that generation and make a new start.

It was a merciful decision. There is a future for all of them. They will come back in the resurrection to a far happier state of society than the one they knew, and be able to hear of the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Much later on, God acted similarly in the case of the perhaps equally corrupt people of Sodom and Gomorrah. "I took them away as I saw good (fit)" He said. (Ezek. 16:50)

On a subsequent occasion God told Samuel "It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me." (1 Sam. 15:11) The decision grieved Samuel "and he cried unto the LORD all night." Could it have been a matter of less grief to God himself? He had chosen Saul and presented him to the people, and Saul, at first so full of promise, had defected and shown himself unworthy. Here surely is another case where God was compelled to change the course of events but did so with grief.

A different aspect is presented by a number of texts in which God is said to repent "of the evil which he thought to do to his people." (Exod. 32:14) In each of these cases, about nine or ten in all, the position is that the people of Israel had violated their covenant and apostasised from God, and in accordance with the terms of that covenant they were due in consequence to reap trouble and disaster of all kinds—failure of crops, famine, invasion of enemies, and so on. But Israel repented and came back to God so that He lifted the threatened retribution. Perhaps the English word "relent" would be the best to employ in such cases. God relented, not capriciously in an irresponsible fashion, but because the people had fulfilled the conditions necessary for the lifting of the sentence. "It repented the LORD because of their groanings" says Judg. 2:18. "If that nation...turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I

thought to do unto them.” (Jer. 18:8) When the inhabitants of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah “God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.” (Jonah 3:10).

A rather striking usage of the word is found in Ezek. 5:13. The Lord is talking to Ezekiel about the grave unfaithfulness of Israel and warning of the consequences that must follow. After detailing with some of these consequences the Lord says “Thus shall mine anger be accomplished, and I will cause my fury to rest upon them, and I will be *comforted*.” The word *nacham*, here rendered “comforted,” has the implication that God is both sympathetic towards and solicitous for his erring people coupled with satisfaction that the right thing has been done. They have received the treatment which at the last will effect their final reconciliation with God. The same idea occurs in Isa. 40:1-2 “*Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her...that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received at the LORD’s hand double for all her sins.*” The same word, *nacham*, certainly not meaning repentance, for her iniquity is now pardoned, but a message of comfort and hope for the future, because God has turned from his chastening and is now commencing to bless.

It has been said that these references to God “repenting” should be understood as his changing his course of action in view of changed circumstances, but not his ultimate intention. Saint Augustine, commenting on Gen. 6:6-7, says that the Divine action was “an unchanged ordering of changeable things. For God repents not of anything He does, as man does” (“*City of God*” Bk. 15 chap. 23). The reverse of this idea, a change in the direction of action, is indicated in such expressions as Hos. 13:14 “O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: *repentance* shall be hid from mine eyes”: Psa. 110:4 “The LORD hath sworn, and will not *repent*, thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek”; Ezek. 24:14. “I the LORD have spoken...I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I *repent*.” In such instances the fixity of Divine intention is indicated and probably “relent” is the best word to use.

All in all, it seems that the repentance of God defines his concern at a condition of things existing out of harmony with his will, and his determination to change it, allied with feeling of pity or grief for those affected, yet combined with satisfaction or comfort in the knowledge that in the onward progress of his overall plan all things will yet be well.

THREE MISTAKES

The First King

Samuel was old and his sons were not good. The people were looking around in a fleshly way applying their own wisdom and wanted a king like other nations. Samuel was concerned but God said that he was not to take it personally, they were rejecting Him and not you Samuel.

“There was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power. And he had a son, whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people.” (1 Samuel 9:1-2) It shows Saul was tall and handsome.

Why did God let them have a king when Samuel was old?

What Manner of King

God wanted them to understand what would be the consequences if they had a king. “This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: he will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots. And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear (plough) his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants.” (1 Samuel 8:11-17) God clearly warned and informed them. Remember what went wrong with King David and Bathsheba; David did what he wanted.

Israel Rejected God

They wanted an instant fix like humans do when they should have waited on God because He knows best. Therefore, “ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day. Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us.” (1 Sam.

8:18-19) They had been looking at the world around them in surrounding nations and wanted to be like them. And they were stubborn. It shows if there appears to be an obstacle in your way one must still wait on the Lord.

Saul's First Meeting with Samuel

This is how Saul starts: "The asses of Kish Saul's father were lost. And Kish said to Saul his son, Take now one of the servants with thee, and arise, go seek the asses. And he passed through mount Ephraim, and passed through the land of Shalisha, but they found them not: then they passed through the land of Shalim, and there they were not: and he passed through the land of the Benjamites, but they found them not. And when they were come to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant that was with him, Come, and let us return; lest my father leave caring for the asses, and take thought for us. And he said unto him, Behold now, there is in this city a man of God, and he is an honourable man; all that he saith cometh surely to pass: now let us go thither; peradventure he can shew us our way that we should go." (1 Sam. 9:3-6)

Saul makes a good start. Out of the goodness of his heart he obediently went with his servant to look for his father's lost animals but after a while he wanted to give up looking for those animals. This reaction is a normal human weakness as it would take time and effort. It was a good opportunity to overcome this weakness. We need to get rid of this weakness and show we are progressing in faithfulness to God. Here his servant told him there was another option and he appears to have pushed Saul and told him he had some silver Saul could give as a gift.

"When Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said unto him, Behold the man whom I spake to thee of! this same shall reign over my people." (1 Sam. 9:17) Just like when John the Baptist was immersing Jesus, God revealed Jesus was the Lamb of God.

Samuel Revealed God's Plan for Saul

"As for thine asses that were lost three days ago, set not thy mind on them; for they are found. And on whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on thee, and on all thy father's house? And Saul answered and said, Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me?" (1 Sam. 9:20-21) God had a big commission for Saul. Saul's reply was not of his humbleness but of his weakness in the flesh. It was hard though because he had no experience of how to be a king.

Being Humble is Surrender to God

There are examples of humility in the Bible. One example is Mary in the days before the possibilities of IVF as written by Luke when “said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.” (Luke 1:34-38) Mary showed she was humble but understanding that nothing with God is impossible.

Samuel Anointed Saul

“Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the LORD hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?” (1 Sam. 10:1) Also he gave Saul signs after to show him God was with him.

Saul in his Weakness Hid Himself

“When Samuel had caused all the tribes of Israel to come near, the tribe of Benjamin was taken. When he had caused the tribe of Benjamin to come near by their families, the family of Matri was taken, and Saul the son of Kish was taken: and when they sought him, he could not be found. Therefore they enquired of the LORD further, if the man should yet come thither. And the LORD answered, Behold, he hath hid himself among the stuff. And they ran and fetched him thence: and when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward.” (1 Sam. 10:20-23)

God’s Commandment to Saul

God gave Saul his first opportunity to obey him completely. “Go down before me to Gilgal; and, behold, I will come down unto thee, to offer burnt offerings, and to sacrifice sacrifices of peace offerings: seven days shalt thou tarry, till I come to thee, and shew thee what thou shalt do.” (1 Sam. 10:8)

First Mistake

When the “Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which is on the sea shore in multitude: and they came up, and

pitched in Michmash, eastward from Bethaven. When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait, (for the people were distressed,) then the people did hide themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits. And some of the Hebrews went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he was yet in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling. And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed: but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him.” (1 Sam. 13:5-8)

“Saul said, Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering.” (1 Sam. 13:9) He had panicked and made the decision to make the offering himself and rather than the priest. This was not acceptable to God, it was more important to obey God. There is a lesson here to obey God and withstand external pressure and not to compromise or make an excuse.

Foolish Act

“Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash; therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering.

“And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee.” (1 Sam. 13:11-14) If we have a secret sin we must try and get rid of it.

The Next Opportunity for Saul

“Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.” (1 Sam. 15:3) This was a straightforward command of what to do and what not to do.

Second Mistake

“Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD. And Samuel

said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" (1 Sam. 15:13,14) He had been told all the animals must be killed.

Success Turned into Pride

Samuel again persists. "Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the LORD? Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites." King Saul tries to justify his actions and hide the sin. "But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal. Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." (1 Sam. 15:19-22)

It's a good point to note in public we are on our best behaviour but we also need to confront secret sins because in a sense they will be revealed and God sees and knows.

What is True Repentance?

Samuel explains what is more important. "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, He hath also rejected thee from being king. And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice. Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD...Then he said, I have sinned: yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD thy God." (1 Sam. 15:23-25,30) If we do anything wrong we have to repent in order to get forgiveness and keep the love of God.

Jesus gave us a beautiful example in the parable of the Prodigal Son. He repented, he wanted to go back to the love of his father realizing he did not deserve it. Here repentance was the key to his restoration. King Saul should have done so.

There may be challenges like the three Hebrews Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, in the book of Daniel, when the King of Babylon had an empire and they were told to worship the statue, which was idolatry. They were

keen to obey God's commandment as God is so mighty they completely surrendered to the Lord their God not expecting anything in return.

Saul wanted his son Jonathan to reign after him, but he was on the decline. Even when Saul had lost the kingship, and the spirit and saw David had the spirit, he still used his power to try and kill David.

Third Mistake

“Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and enquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor. And Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night: and he said, I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me him up, whom I shall name unto thee.” (1 Sam. 28:7-8) However it was against the command of God to consult a familiar spirit (medium).

Saul's Death

“So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, even against the word of the LORD, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to enquire of it.” (1 Chron. 10:13) “Then said Saul unto his armourbearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me. But his armourbearer would not; for he was sore afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon it.” (1 Sam. 31:4)

In summary Saul made a good start but its more important where you finish; King Saul had made the wrong decisions. It's a good lesson to wait on the Lord, be humble and be completely faithful to the word of God.

Saul Turned into Paul

These are the steps we must follow. The apostle Paul said, “*Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.*” (1 Corinthians 9:24-27 NIV) Paul who was first known as Saul did this not only with his words but with his actions to the end of his life.

AS

THE LITTLE SEASON

A study in the Book of Revelation

“And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations...” (Rev. 20:7-8).

Of all revealed prophecy of things to come, this event, at the end of the Millennial Age, is farthest away in time, and its outlines are vague and shadowy. The suppression of the powers of evil during the Millennium is a fundamental feature of the Age and follows on the fact that a righteous, and all-powerful Administration has taken control of the world. The evangelical work of that Administration will have the effect of bringing all men, without exception, face to face with the vital issues of eternal life or death, and before it closes every living being will have made the crucial choice, for God or Satan, for good or evil, for life or death. It is within the framework of this choice, at the end, that this rather obscure passage in Revelation has its place. It would seem on the basis of this vision that at this climax there is to be a last attempt by the forces of evil to regain the allegiance of any who may at heart still be in sympathy with sin. It is not an opportunity that will last long: it is not an effort that is going to be crowned with success. Swift and inexorable, the immutable laws of God will move to judgment.

But is this “loosing of Satan” in harmony with the revealed character of God? Having done so much to remove evil from the hearts of men and teach them of his ways, where is the logic of letting the author of all evil loose upon mankind again? For answer we must go back to the beginning. God created our first parents creatures of free-will and with the knowledge that all they had of life and intelligence and ability they owed to him. But they had freedom of choice that their allegiance might be voluntary and not of compulsion, and under the deception of the Adversary they exercised their freedom of choice and chose wrongly. The situation will be exactly the same, except that all men will then have the benefit of experience and practical demonstration, and if any give way to the Evil One it will be in the face of full knowledge. Before men pass into everlasting life, and the next stage of their continuing experience of God, it must be demonstrated that their allegiance is sincere and of freewill even in the face of opportunity to take the opposite path. There is another factor, too, which is indicated in this passage. This will be no passive abandonment of men to the seductive influence of the Adversary with no corresponding force on the other side. The forces of righteousness will do battle with the forces of evil for every human soul, and it will be a hard

thing for any man to resist the appeal of God.

The account says that Satan will “*go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle; the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.*” (v.8). This has been interpreted to suggest that the great majority of earth’s millions will join the rebels, as though they were the sand of the seashore for multitude compared with a relatively few righteous. This is not consistent with the Divine Plan. If, after this thousand year’s reign, which is ordained by God for the reconciliation to himself of “whosoever will,” (Rev. 22:17) so that his original purpose in creating humankind on the earth might go into effect, the vast majority of men fall again into sin at the first temptation, then we can only conclude that the whole creative purpose of God has been a failure. If only a minority of earth’s inhabitants eventually attain eternal life then the glowing rhapsodies of the prophets were, to say the least of it, exaggeration, and the coming of Jesus to earth by no means such “good tidings of great joy...to all people” as the angels claimed. (Luke 2:10) This is not the case. Everything that is revealed concerning the Plan of God stresses the transcendent truth that it is going to be a glorious success. So far from it being a hard thing to enter into eternal life, as was supposed in medieval times, it is in fact going to be a very hard thing to keep out of it. The interpretation is based upon a misunderstanding of the reference to “Gog and Magog.” (v.8)

The expression “Gog and Magog” was a term used in Jewish literature to define the most remote and primitive peoples of the earth, as distinct from their immediate neighbours, Egypt, Syria, Assyria, Babylon, and so on. It had its origin in the days of Ezekiel’s boyhood when Israel and her neighbour nations were suddenly and without warning assailed by a savage onslaught of barbarous people from the north, of whose very existence they had previously been hardly aware. These invaders ravaged and looted for some thirty years before being driven back to the coasts of the Black Sea, from whence they had come, but Israel never forgot their visitation. It provided Ezekiel in later life with the background for his memorable description of the trouble with which this present Age is to end. The term became a synonym for ruthlessness and savagery, but basically it was a general expression for peoples from the far corners of the earth. The idea of a final attack upon the citadel of God’s holiness at the end of the Messianic reign by such peoples from the farthest parts of the earth, referred to as Gog and Magog, was a very general one at the time of the First Advent. It is not easy to decide just when or how the belief came into being or how much it owed in the first place to Ezekiel’s

prophecy, but certain it is that John was not the only seer who spoke and wrote in such terms. Thus the “Sibylline Oracles,” written roughly at the same time as Revelation, says that the Messianic Kingdom will be closed by an attack of all the nations upon Jerusalem and their destruction by the intervention of God. The “Apocalypse of Elijah” and the “4th Book of Ezra,” among other apocryphal works of times very close to the First Advent, repeat this belief. It has to be remembered that the Jews at the First Advent had no knowledge of the coming Christian Age and the two Advents. To them the first coming of Messiah was to be the final and see the establishment of his Kingdom, so logically they placed the onslaught of these distant peoples prophesied by Ezekiel as occurring at that time. John took this popular belief and spiritualised it to show that at the end of the Millennium, a thousand years after the literal invasion of Gog and Magog at the end of the present Age, there would be a similar rebellion against the Millennial Kingdom by peoples from the “four corners of the earth.” (v.8) Satan is to seek his dupes, not merely among the faithful ones at the very centre of God’s Kingdom, not among the relative few in the “beloved city,” at headquarters, so to speak, but among all the millions of redeemed humanity spread abroad upon the face of the earth who themselves are as the sand of the sea for multitude .

It seems incredible that after the object lesson men will have had from the righteous rule of the Messianic Age anyone should be found ready to follow the paths of evil. The upsurge of sin described in this passage, the condemnation of the unfit in the Parable of the Sheep and Goats in Matt. 25, the prohibition against the unclean and immoral entering the Holy City in Rev. 21:27 and the Millennial descriptions of Psalm 66:3 alluding to the “*feigned obedience*” of some whose hearts remain obdurate against the appeal of the Gospel, appear to show that when all that can be done has been done, some remain whose opposition to truth and goodness is never overcome. There may be factors in this matter which we do not, even now, fully understand, but the vision of John certainly pictures this final rebellion of evil against good, and its consequences in the withdrawal of life from those who have thus demonstrated their irrevocable allegiance to evil for its own sake.

It is important to observe that those who thus take the side of the rebels do so with their eyes open. The basic meaning of the word rendered “deceive” in Rev. 20 is to lead astray or in wrong paths, to wander. Those who take their places in the ranks of the Prince of Darkness do so not because they do not know, but because they do not believe. This involves the question as to the hopes and aims of the apostates. They will have

seen the wondrous works of God manifest throughout the thousand years and had abundant opportunity to realise the extent of his power no less than his inherent goodness. What kind of deception is it by means of which the Devil, loosed from his prison, is able to convince them that sin and sinful men have yet the opportunity and power to regain control over the now righteous world of mankind, and restore to their own advantage the old bad days of sin and death? It must obviously be a subtle temptation, buttressed by convincing and apparently logical arguments. Even in these present days men do not embark on a desperate venture unless they have reason to hope for success, and the rebellion of that final day will be in face of a much more united and powerful world than any revolutionary has had to face in past history. Even the most hardened of the rebels will have to admit that they are up against what the world today calls a “tough proposition”! Death will have been unknown for a thousand years. Disease and sickness will have been long since eliminated. The earth will have become fair and fertile, fear and anxiety for the future long since banished, men living happily together as one great family. The days of sin and death will seem very far away—as far away as the time of William the Conqueror is to us. The knowledge of the Lord is abroad in the earth “as the waters cover the sea,” (Hab. 2:14) and the human race, at least the vast majority, will have become fully reconciled to God through Christ and are living their lives in full communion with him.

But some, it may be, there are, here and there, who do not seem to share in the general happiness. They will always have been marked out by their tardiness in co-operating with others for the general welfare. They give outward and nominal assent to the laws of the Kingdom but it is easy to see that they resent them and are not at heart lovers of the Lord Jesus. They are still unreconciled to God and there can be no disguising the fact. But they have never been able to inflict evil on others nor to injure the earth. Whatever may be their inmost thoughts and desires, they have had to conform to the general rules of conduct which have been binding upon all in the Millennial world. Nevertheless they are misfits in a world which is solidly set for righteousness and harmony with God. This is a condition—if in fact there are any at the end who have thus proved impervious to the Divine appeal—which cannot be permitted to endure. God’s creation is a creation of order in which no element of disorder can continue indefinitely, and sin is disorder in creation. A consideration which does not often come readily to the mind is that a heaven for the righteous in which the unrighteous is compelled to live everlastingly will become hell (unacceptable) to the unrighteous, an environment with which he has no sympathy and into which he cannot fit. Such an everlast-

ing life would become unendurable so that the apparently harsh sentence “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23) in fact becomes a mercy.

Now a change becomes evident. The thousand years is at an end and there must be a certain amount of interested discussion as to precisely what happens next. The reign of Christ over the nations is to close; that much is known, and mankind is to be completely self-governing. Clearly those whose hearts are set in them to do evil must look forward to the prospect with more than academic interest. When, for the first time for a thousand years, the Evil One finds himself able to whisper his suggestions into the ears of those who will listen, what is likely to be the nature of his deception? Could it conceivably be the old one, Satan who was so effective at the start, back there in Eden? “*Ye shall be as gods—ye shall not surely die!*” (Gen. 3:4-5)

For a thousand years there has been no death. Men have, in that time, become godlike in form and physique, and in mental powers. But suppose the claim is made in some quarters that this is not due to the work of an unseen God or the evangelistic endeavours of a great band of enthusiastic missionaries calling to repentance and acceptance of Christ, but is the natural and inevitable and long-expected consequence of human evolution? Despite so many outward arguments to the contrary in our own day, the learned among men continue doggedly to proclaim the onward and upward development of our race from near-barbarism to the acme of perfection. More than one research centre is actively pursuing investigations into the nature of life and death from the purely physical aspect with a view to ascertaining how death can be postponed or even abolished. Suppose the cry is raised that this is what has happened, that at last man has attained by means of his own efforts that state of development in which the ills of the flesh and the onset of death together with the social evils of the past can be shrugged off and man look forward to an eternal evolutionary paradise? Past history has shown that there is no limit to what man will reason and believe in the attempt to explain God away. There is no blindness so complete as the blindness of unbelief. Can it be, so the argument might run, that this is the cause of man’s obvious freedom from disease and his thousand-year life? Can it be—is it possible—that even if God does exist, He is unable after all to cause any to whom He has once given life to go into death, that the ancient dogma of the immortality of the soul was right after all? And if it is that rebellion against God does not really bring death in its train, then surely, given sufficient determination and ruthlessness, God could be defied indefinitely? “*Ye shall not surely die!*” At this late stage in the history of humanity, so many

millenniums after man's creation, with so long a history of evil, it is still true that not one intelligent creature has as yet suffered the penalty of sin—eternal death. Here at the end of the Millennium every human being and every angelic being, good or evil, who has known conscious existence, is alive still. The law that eternal death is the wages of sin has still to be demonstrated in actual fact. Is it not at least possible that the great delusion which will test humanity and search out the sinful at heart, at the end of the Millennial Age, will be just that; *“Suppose Satan is right after all! Suppose God is unable to inflict eternal death! He has not yet done so, to anyone! There is no evidence, as yet, that He can do so! And, if that be so, then we, refusing loyalty to God, can still be as gods! We shall not surely die!”*?

Once such a thought took root in the minds of the unregenerate there would soon be an attempt to convert it into action. *“We can do as we like and God cannot interfere; we shall live for ever.”* The challenge is thrown down before the Divine representatives in the earth and it is a challenge that cannot be ignored, for the whole fulfilment of the Divine purpose in creating man depends upon the outcome. In the Revelation passage the story is told in symbol. *“And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed (encircled) the camp of the saints (holy ones) about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.”* (v.9) The word rendered “camp” means a walled military encampment or barracks, or an army drawn up in array. In Acts 21:34 it is translated “castle” in reference to the Tower of Antonia, the Roman garrison in Jerusalem, built at the north-west corner of the Temple area so that a watch could be kept upon activities within the Temple. The “beloved city” is, of course, Jerusalem the Holy. In the symbolic imagery of Revelation this allusion might well refer to the celestial ruling entity, the Church, the “camp of the holy ones,” the place from which ruling authority proceeds, and the earthly representatives of Christ, the “heroes of faith” of Heb. 11 administering the affairs of the world from their centre in the “beloved city.” Thus the rebels challenge Divine authority and rule. This is not a literal investment of a literal city with physical weapons; the symbolic nature of Revelation rules that out in any case. This is a determined attempt to defy the authority of God and those who represent him in the world and seduce the righteous of humankind from their faith and allegiance.

There is no indication that they make any converts. It is hardly to be expected that they would. The day of probation has ended; all are well in a position to make up their minds for good or evil, and all will have made

up their minds. Those who have not been influenced by the specious (misleading) arguments of the arch-rebel are not likely to take much notice of his followers. The dividing line will therefore be clear and definite. To quote Elijah at Mount Carmel, “*If the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him.*” (1 Kings 18:21) It can be taken that the incorrigibly corrupt at heart will stand revealed in their true colours over this matter but no one else will be misled or in any way hurt. At this point, when it is demonstrated beyond all question that nothing can ever turn these men from evil and make them sons of God, the time comes when God must turn sorrowfully away and leave them to the consequences of their choice. John saw fire coming down from heaven to devour them—fit symbol of that everlasting destruction which is the only possible end of anything and everything in which evil and sin resides and cannot be eradicated.

Do the words of Peter in 2 Peter 2 give a hint as to what might be expected? That chapter alludes to the false prophets of past ages and the descent of Divine judgment upon them, detailing the nature of their sins, and draws an analogy with the corresponding seducers of—it has generally been thought—the Gospel Age. The thought may well be correct, but even so Peter’s language is strong, almost too strong if his allusion is only to false teachers among Christians during this Age. Did he have in mind also the seducers of the Millennial Age and was his language deliberately chosen to define their position too? He certainly alludes to a similar class of evildoers in each of earth’s former ages; the fallen angels in the Antediluvian Age, the men of Sodom and Balaam the prophet of Aram (Num. 23) in the Patriarchal Age, and the false prophets of Israel in the Jewish Age. Of all these he speaks in general terms describing their uncleanness and immorality, but above all of the fact that they are, first, unbelievers (2 Pet. 2:1); second, hypocrites, seeking to deceive the righteous (v.3); third, presumptuous, standing up against the powers of heaven (v.10); fourth—and this is important—themselves deceived by reason of their unbelief, so that they fail to understand the power against which they fight. (v.12) The chapter is replete with strong expressions denoting judgment upon these rebels. “*The Lord knoweth how...to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished*” (v.9). “*As natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed...shall utterly perish in their own corruption*” (v.12). “*To whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever.*” (v.17) There is much in this striking chapter that fits very well the position of those who set out at the end of the Millennium to deceive the righteous.

NOTICES

Bible Students Seminar Day
Saturday 19 October 2024
 St. Martha's Hall, Park Road, TRING, HP23 6BP

Bible Students Fellowship Conference 2025

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

Wednesday 13–Sunday 17 August 2025



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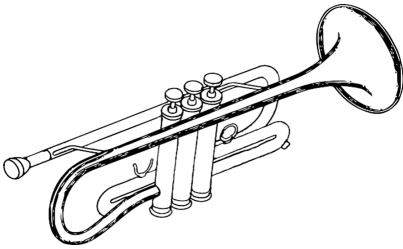


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Unbelief—hypocrisy—presumption—blindness to the invincibility of righteousness; these are the characteristics of those who side with the Evil One in this the last challenge to God’s goodness. But they will have forgotten one thing, perhaps they never really believed it. Paul knew, and he imparted his knowledge to the men of Athens. *“In him we live, and move, and have our being.”* (Acts 17:28) In God’s hand is the life *“of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind.”* (Job 12:10) In a manner beyond our comprehension He has but to withdraw his Spirit, and life ceases.

That is how the end will come. In the very moment of the proud boast, of the scornful and final rejection of all that the Heavenly Father has done for them, He has but to *“gather unto himself his spirit and his breath.”* (Job 34:14) The arrogant words, dying on the lips; the proud glance, fading out of the eyes; the suddenly nerveless body, slumping helplessly to the ground; all will give mute but eloquent testimony to the burning truth of the Divine word *“the soul that sinneth, it shall die.”* (Ezek. 18:4)

AOH



Extol the Lamb of God,
The all-atoning Lamb;
Redemption through His blood,
To all the world proclaim:
The year of Jubilee is come,
Returning ransomed sinners home.

BLOW ye the trumpet, blow
The gladly solemn sound;
Let all the nations know,
To earth’s remotest bound:
The year of Jubilee is come,
Returning ransomed sinners home.

Ye, who were sold for naught,
Whose heritage was lost,
May have it back unbought,
A gift at Jesus’ cost:
The year of Jubilee is come,
Returning ransomed sinners home.

Jesus, our great High Priest,
Hath full atonement made;
Ye weary spirits rest;
Ye mournful souls be glad;
The year of Jubilee is come,
Returning ransomed sinners home.

The seventh trumpet hear,
The news of heavenly grace;
Salvation now is near;
Seek ye the Saviour’s face:
The year of Jubilee is come,
Returning ransomed sinners home.

*Bible Students Hymnal,
Charles Wesley*