

WORDS OF HELP

FROM THE

SCRIPTURE OF TRUTH

VOL. II

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The Passing Hour.

THE beginning of another year brings home to us the fact that the sands in the hour-glass of time are running out. This is, through God's grace, no matter of regret for the true Christian, though for the world it is solemn and serious. We can say—

Thus far, by grace preserved, each moment speeds us on ;
The crown and Kingdom are reserved where Christ is gone.
When cloudless morning shines, we shall His glory share ;
In pleasant places are the lines ; the home how fair !

Are there dark clouds appearing on the horizon of any ? Are we anticipating troubles ? If so, God says, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble : I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me," so that we can trust *Him*. Again, "God is our refuge and strength, a help in distress, verily readily found ; therefore will I not fear." He would teach us to wait upon *Himself* ; so that even though faith and patience may be tried, we may prove what a blessed and unfailing resource He is in every time of trouble.

Another consideration in connection with the rapid flight of time is, *the immense value of the present moment*. We have opportunities to serve Christ and to witness for Him now, which we shall not have in heaven. *There*, there will be no need for the service of love amongst the tried and afflicted of His people, no demand for testimony for Christ in a hostile world, no call for preaching of the gospel to the unsaved. *Now* there is indeed a serious need for all these things. Let us, then, each ask ourselves the question, How far am I using this present moment, so quickly passing, to serve and witness for Christ, while waiting for His coming again ?

Gleanings and Jottings.

CAN we say, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly" ? It is a sort of plumb-line, a sort of touch-stone to test our state of soul by ; and by it inconsistent believers often find out what it is that hinders their desire to see Christ. What Polar star have you to guide you down here ? Nothing but the coming of the Lord. The bride has nothing as a future but the coming of Christ.

The object of hope, this blessed Person and His coming, should ever be near the heart, but as a *patient* hope that would not wish Christ to have an uncompleted body. A hope that can wait on in the calm quietness of faith, knowing that if put off, it is that others may be called ; and that when the last is called, then He will come ; but not *till then*.

The freshness of the hope of the Lord's coming springs from ever bringing before the mind the person of Him for whom we are waiting : as the One who is occupied with us in all we are passing through, the One who is the strength and joy of our souls and our portion.

If I am looking for the coming of Christ, I do not stop to look at my shadow behind, but *up* to the Lord's appearing. My only object is to reach the goal, and, receiving a glorified body, to be with Him for ever.

* * * * *

The life of a believer is inseparable from the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Among all the glories and marvels of that blessed One, there is nothing more precious than that He is the *life-giver*, and is Himself the life. If you have not got Christ as your life-giver,

you have not the rest and peace which are inseparable from that life. The life so given bears the impress of *Him*. The living water in the heart of a poor sinner who believes bubbles up to the spring from whence it came. Who can let go his hold of the things that are clamouring in our hearts down here? Who can rise above it all as a secondary thing, but the one who knows Christ as a life-giver?

It is Christ Himself who is our life—we are related to the Christ of God in the most vital way, having one life with Him; when he appears, we shall appear with Him, and all that characterises His manifestation in glory, will characterise us.

When the work Christ has undertaken is finished, and His people are taken up in bodies of glory, then it will be seen that all the springs of God are in Him; and all the fresh eternal fulness of the life that was with the Father will be manifested. But it *has been* manifested on this earth. There was the display of that life in the whole history of Christ as man down here—He, the only holy, undefiled One, the One in whom was no spot, but spiritual divine purity.

If Christ, Himself in heaven, is my life, it links me up with Him in whom is the whole bundle of life. Did you ever look up in the face of the Lord Jesus Christ with the consciousness of having *one life* with Him? If so, you cannot entertain a single question about the place you are in before God. If you have the eternal life that is in the only begotten Son, you cannot look up without seeing that you are in a new place altogether before God.

G. V. W.

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God leads to "the Rock that is higher than I." *Faith* gets to what is above circumstances, when *nature* is overwhelmed by them.

We must wait on God and this implies dependence, because we cannot do anything without Him. The deliverance which comes from God is sweet; it is in love; it is righteous, holy deliverance. It is perfect in *time, way, and place*. God is always a refuge: He acts in the right time. He is always a refuge for the heart; and the heart realises what He is, even when the deliverance is not yet come. In some respects this is more precious than the deliverance itself. But this supposes integrity of heart.

Nature has circumstances between itself and God; faith has God between the heart and circumstances. And what a difference!

There is no peace like the peace which hiding in the tabernacle from the provokings of men gives us. Faith leans on the love of the Father and of Jesus. For the securing infallibly happiness and peace, we need not look to circumstances, save to pass through them with God. This was perfect in Christ. He had only this, nor looked for aught else.

J. N. D.

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What is the wilderness made up of? There are the burning sands beneath our feet and the scorching sun above, but WITH GOD. Satan's great object is to get us to be occupied with the difficulties, the trials, the adverse circumstances; but to *leave God out*. Israel had the pillar and the cloud; the manna also, when going through the wilderness. Mark, it was not only the cloud by day, but even all through the night God was thinking about them, and there was the pillar of fire to guard their way. And these continued all through the wilderness journey.

Christ has the keys of Death and of Hades. None of His saints can enter the domain of death without His knowledge and permission. If a friend has the keys and holds the door open for you, you do not fear to pass through it, and He has the keys of the grave, and should you be called to pass through death, He will open that and let you out when the moment is come for Him to do so.

Tears.—Tears are the expression of the heart's sorrow. Is God unmindful of them? Certainly not. The psalmist could say, "Put Thou my tears in Thy bottle: are they not in Thy book?" (Ps. lvi. 8). He has recorded them all. We read three times in the Bible that *God Himself* will wipe away all those tears (Isa. xxv. 8; Rev. vii. 17; xxi. 4).

The Fool.—"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Why is this? It is because his conscience tells him there is a God, but his *will* is opposed to this, and he would like to persuade himself that there is not. God is set aside, and the man's whole conduct is under the influence of his *will*, as if no God existed. His conduct follows his *will*; he is morally blinded, judging only from present things. He philosophises and draws conclusions; but, being alienated from God, he is morally blind. He looks around, and seeing the mass of evil and misery there is in the world, he seeks to account for it and remedy it in his own way.

But faith believes that *God is* (Heb. xi. 6), and this changes everything. He is above all the evil. And God has come down in the person of his own Son; the true light, which, coming into the world, sheds his light on every man. He could say, "I, [as] light, am come into the world, that whosoever believeth on Me should not abide in darkness" (John xii. 46). *God is*

now revealed, and that as Light and Love. Sin is shown out as it really is, and salvation is brought to those who believe the gospel.

Communion.

COMMUNION with God is the highest and most sanctifying privilege for a creature, and the thing of all others to be desired by our souls, even as David says, "One thing have I desired of the Lord; that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple" (Ps. xxvii. 4). What a mercy it is to be assured that "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him" (Ps. xxv. 14).

Communion is often confounded with *blessing*, as if they were practically the same thing. Possibly the occurrence of the two words in 1 Corinthians x. 16 may have given rise to this in the thoughts of many, through want of careful reading of the whole passage. We often jump at conclusions which turn out to be faulty, because we have not taken the trouble to make ourselves acquainted with all that God has been pleased to reveal to us in His Holy Word, both as to the way of drawing near to Him as an acceptable worshipper, and as to the means by which relationship with Himself is made intelligently good in the soul. The exhortation to "draw near" to Him is based upon the appointed way that He has opened to us, and on the presence of our High Priest, who is ever living to make intercession for us (Heb. x. 19-22).

Much, very much, may be learned from the relations of God with His redeemed people Israel, and His gracious purpose to dwell in their midst. This will be, we trust, a means of leading our souls into a deeper

and truer understanding of what is involved in having thoughts in common with God, for that is the real meaning of the word COMMUNION. Such thoughts can only be produced by His Spirit, through His Word, and will always flow out to Him in worship such as He looks for from those who are the objects of His love and grace.

No intelligent creature of His can be in His presence without worshipping, but we can all understand that the worship, in order to be acceptable to Him, must be in accordance with His revealed will, that is to say, with the truth unfolded in His Word both as to the way and means of approach. Every exercised conscience must admit this, and the more we become conscious of our depraved nature, and our loathsome condition as sinners in thought, word, and deed, the more must we value His work on our behalf in purifying our hearts by faith (Acts xv. 9). In every exercised soul, there must at least be Enoch's faith in drawing near to God (Heb. xi. 6).

The Lord Jesus, when here below, made known to a poor outcast, hated by the Jewish nation, the wonderful fact that the Father—His Father—was seeking worshippers who should worship Him "in spirit and in truth" (John iv. 23, 24). Further on we learn that the immediate effect of receiving the revelation that He was the SON OF GOD was to make a worshipper of the poor blind man who had received sight at His hands (John ix. 35-38).

We may compare with this the visit of the Magi to Jerusalem. They had received from God the intimation that the King of the Jews was born, and they at once undertook a long and perilous journey, not only to see, but to worship Him, and lay their offerings at His feet (Matt. ii.).

The communication of God's mind leads to worship. That is clear from many passages in the Book of Revelation, as iv. 10; v. 14; vii. 11; xi. 16; xix. 4, 10; xxii. 8. Moreover, God values it; not only will He have His temple and His altar measured, so that we may be enabled in some measure to grasp its dimensions and meaning, but also "them that worship therein" (Rev. xi. 1). And compare as to this the instructions given to the prophet (Ezek. xliii. 11, 12).

In His presence communion is enjoyed in the holiness that becomes it. But, owning this as a principle, we find that in every anxious soul arises the question: How, when, and where may this communion be known? To answer this fitly we need to go over some preparatory ground. Mercifully, God has not left us in uncertainty as to this most precious feature of a believer's life, even in this present scene.

In paradise, Adam's portion was one of communion with God as to everything. It was to be enjoyed without any knowledge of evil or the possibility of there being such a thing. God would not even name the animals, but brought them to Adam to see what he would call them (Gen. ii. 19, 20). Alas, this blessed intimacy did not last long. It was tested by obedience, and Adam, following his help-meet, failed, and lost paradise. Abel, however, recognised the sentence of death passed upon Adam and his race, and he brought to God a sacrifice which owned it. God honoured his faith and accepted his offering. Abel's faith stands recorded; God will not have it forgotten. His is the first name mentioned in Hebrews xi. This faith remains as showing the fundamental truth of all acceptable approach to God.

Two thousand years after, God called Abraham, separating him from the inhabitants of the world. He

obeyed; and when God was about to act in judging the wickedness of Sodom, He came down to talk with His servant, knowing that he would command his children after him to keep the way of the Lord; and before leaving him, He allowed him to intercede for Sodom (Gen. xvii. 3; xviii. 19, 33).

Wholly new, however, in the ways of God with man was the announcement given to Moses, after the children of Israel had been brought to Mount Sinai: "Speak unto the children of Israel that they bring Me an offering. . . . And let them make Me a *sanctuary* that I may DWELL among them" (Exod. xxv. 8). The next verse introduces for the first time the word "tabernacle." This term means literally a dwelling-place, and expresses exactly this "dwelling" of God with His people.

We can all understand that those accustomed to move about used as dwelling-places such as could easily be transported from place to place. The common word "tent" means literally a "covering," and may be of any form or material. These two words, *tabernacle* and *tent*, are carefully distinguished in the next chapter, the inner glorious curtains, seen from within, being designated the "tabernacle," whereas the covering of goats' hair was called the "tent" (Exod. xxvi. 6, 7, 11).*

Previous to separating to Himself a people chosen out from the nations of the earth, God had never had a dwelling-place among men. The first intimation of it is given in the song in which the children of Israel took part, when, at the farther side of the Red Sea, they saw their enemies "dead upon the sea-shore" (Exod. xiv.

* The word "tabernacle" in Exodus xxxiii. 7-11 should be "tent." The tabernacle was not then made. It refers to some special tent set aside and appropriated for the time being to the service of God, or for "seeking" Him.

30, 31). The divinely-appointed answer of faith then was: "JAH is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation: He is my God, and I will prepare Him a habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt Him." *

There is, however, more than this in the song; for we find not only, "Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth the people which Thou hast redeemed: Thou hast guided them in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation"; but, looking on into the future, when God's purposes of grace should have their accomplishment according to His own heart, we read, "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Jehovah, which Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in; in the *sanctuary*, O Lord, which Thy hands have established" (Exod. xv. 12-17). Here the word "sanctuary" first appears.

It is most important that we should meditate upon these fundamental principles of the relations of a redeemed people with God, true in every dispensation

* Compare as to the name JAH, here introduced for the first time, Psalm lxxviii. 4. It is used for God in relationship with His people, but acting according to what He is in His own nature and being. In this sense it differs from JEHOVAH, the name communicated to Moses (Exod. iii. and vi.) in connection with the accomplishment of *promises* previously made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God had never intimated to Abraham by what *means* He would deliver the children of Israel out of the hands of the Egyptians. He acted Himself, and in a way worthy of Himself, without using providential circumstances or angelic power. He wrought then to show as it were, once for all, what was involved in the Word, "I am COME DOWN to deliver" (Exod. iii. 8). Blessed forecast indeed of the birth of Emmanuel, and also of His death and resurrection (Matt. i. 23; John xii. 24; Acts xxvi. 18)! "JAH" turns our thoughts to that which alone can answer to what God is in the unchangeableness of His eternal being; "JEHOVAH" casts us upon His WORD, which He will always maintain, magnifying it above anything that we might conceive to be within the range of possibility in our favour (Ps. lvi. 10; cxxxviii. 2).

and for all time, and reaching on even into eternity ; as is shown in Revelation xxi. 3, where we read, " Behold the *tabernacle* of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God." The things that were written aforetime were indeed written for our learning, so that by the patient application of what is written to our hearts and consciences, we may be enabled even now to enter more effectually into our present privileges and relationship with God. This lies at the basis of all true worship.

Every careful reader of Scripture will have noticed that the instructions given to Moses for making the tabernacle occupy in all six chapters, xxv.-xxx. The first three refer to the tabernacle itself and the court. The two which follow describe the dress of the priests and their consecration. They close with instructions concerning the continual daily sacrifice, and the assurance that the God of Israel would "dwell among the children of Israel," and that He had brought them out of Egypt for that very purpose (Exod. xxix. 43-46).

Then we have a supplemental chapter, complete in itself, containing five paragraphs relating to the character and maintenance of *communion*.

The first thing that strikes one is the omission of any allusion to the golden altar in chapter xxv., which describes the furniture of the tabernacle. It had a very prominent place, just outside the veil, but its description and use are reserved for this final chapter. The altar, in principle, sets forth the means ordered of God for approaching Him, but this one was restricted to the use of the priests who served inside the tabernacle, (vers. 1-10).

Secondly, the redemption-money offered by all those that were numbered in Israel is specially indicated as

making "an atonement for their souls." Every one of them had an equal privilege and part in this, though not called upon to serve in the tabernacle (vers. 11-16).

Thirdly, we find the water of purification in the laver, needed by the priests for any and every service whether connected with the tabernacle itself, or with the offerings at the brazen altar in the court (vers. 17-21).

Fourthly, the composition and use of the anointing oil is described with much detail, and forbidden to be imitated or applied to any fleshly use, or put upon any not belonging to the people of God. It was to be used for anointing the tabernacle and all its furniture and holy vessels, including the laver and the altar of burnt offering in the court; and by its means Aaron and his sons were consecrated for their priestly service. Typically, we must understand a foreshadowing of what was to come, and we find the "anointing" spoken of with reference to the coming of the Holy Ghost, whether on the Lord Himself at His baptism by John, or on those who are the "children" given of God to Him (Matt. iii. 16; Acts x. 38; 2 Cor. i. 21; 1 John ii. 20, &c.). The anointing oil is spoken of in verses 22-33.

Finally, we have the sweet incense, setting forth the perfections of Christ alone. This must ever be the highest and most blessed theme for the believer's soul in communion with God. Our intelligence cannot help us much, or carry us far, but the *heart* can rest with ineffable delight in that in which God ever finds His own delight. A little of it, "beaten very small," referring no doubt to human incapacity in such matters, was nevertheless to be put in God's own presence in the tabernacle (vers. 34-38).

We reserve a little meditation upon these five subjects for another article (D.V.)

W. J. L.

Short Notes on Ephesians i.

THE Epistle to the Ephesians is, in a certain sense, the Christian's book of Joshua. God gave the land of Canaan to Israel as their possession, but they had to enter into it, to dispossess the nations, and to plant their foot down upon it in order that it might be actually their own.

Thus, in meditating on the blessed truths of this epistle, it is well to be familiar with the history of God's dealings with Israel as recorded in the Old Testament, and especially in the Book of Joshua, because, as the apostle tells us in Romans xv., "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning," and again, in 1 Corinthians x., "Now these things were our examples" (or types). It is the Spirit of God, the same One who has recorded those facts for us by inspired men, who takes them up and uses them for our instruction in the ways of God.

It is needful, in reading this epistle, to keep in mind the special blessings and privileges which belong to the Christian, as contrasted with those which God gave to Israel of old. Paul was an apostle "by the will of God," and he was specially gifted to bring out these truths, as regards the place and calling of the Church. Bitter enemy and persecutor as he had been, he was now "a chosen vessel"; and, at the very start of his ministry, he "confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ." The truths he brings out in Ephesians all flow from the sovereign "will of God." In verse 1 the expression, "the faithful in Christ Jesus," means those who have the faith of Christ, and it shows that the epistle is intended for every Christian, at all times, as well as for the Ephesians.

He then wishes them "grace and peace"; this is what we need in going through this world where everything is in conflict with God's mind and will. Grace is God's love in its activity towards us; and it is needed where the power of the enemy is directed in bitter hatred against the Christian, and where the Christian is in himself weak and dependent on God for strength. God's grace brings in His power to meet the difficulties, when we are dependent on Him. *Peace* keeps the soul quiet and confident, for God is our resource, and He is sufficient to meet every trial. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and then we are brought to know God as the *God of peace*: He is able to keep the soul in perfect peace even in the most stormy seas and when everything seems adverse to us. At one time we were afraid of God; the thought of His holiness filled us with terror; but now, being redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, we can say we "joy in God," and we glory in His presence and the blessed reality of His love. All around may be in a turbulent restless state; everything may appear to be going astray as if God had dropped the reins of government; but the Christian confides in the God of peace and knows that God is over all, and that He will surely accomplish all that which he has purposed for the glory of His own beloved Son and the blessing of His people.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"; it is not the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, nor is it Jehovah as it was with Israel, but the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. What a blessed and wonderful truth it is for our souls, that God is fully revealed now; for the beloved *Son* has revealed the *Father*! As the apostle's mind dwells upon the blessings wherewith God has blessed us, and the

place He has brought us into in His divine and sovereign grace, his heart is filled with praise and bursts out in adoration and worship, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," &c. Thus it is with the Christian too, for, when the knowledge of God as Father is brought into the soul in the power of the Holy Ghost, it must have the effect of drawing out the heart in praise, worship, and thanksgiving. E. R. I.

Brief Studies in Prophecy.

The present period and the coming of the Lord. We never can "rightly divide" the word of truth unless we have some intelligent understanding of what is sometimes called "dispensational truth," that is the truth concerning God's ways with men in the various dispensations or periods of time. If, for example, we apply to the Church of God *now*, passages in the prophets which unfold God's dealings with Israel in the past or in a future day, we shall get into utter confusion and misinterpret much of the Old Testament scripture. We may see an illustration of this in some of the printed headings in our Bibles, such as in Isaiah, "God revengeth His 'Church,'" "Restoration of the Church," &c, placed over chapters which apply, not to the Church, but to Israel in a future day.

Then it is well to bear in mind that, in the study of prophecy, as in every other branch of truth, we need the guidance and instruction of the Holy Spirit who alone can unfold the word for God's glory and our blessing. "They shall be all taught of God" is a principle true at all times, and it is only thus we shall be kept from the mere speculations and fancies of the human mind, into which even learned men not unfrequently fall.

Prophecy, as indeed all scripture, circles round the

person of Christ, who is ever the centre of God's ways and counsels; and all things, both in heaven and on earth, are to be headed up in Him. Peter tells us that the scope of no prophecy of scripture is had from its own particular interpretation; that is, it cannot be isolated from the whole scope of God's mind and counsels, the ultimate aim of which is to exalt Christ, crowning Him with glory and honour, and setting Him over all the works of God's hands. Then again, the Christian (whose whole heart and soul must respond to everything that glorifies Christ) is, through divine grace, instructed beforehand by the prophetic word in that wonderful series of events which will prepare the way for the establishment of the Kingdom of the Son of man, who must reign over this world, till, every enemy being put down and His mediatorial Kingdom finished, He voluntarily gives up the Kingdom to God the Father, that God may be all in all. Moreover, the study of prophetic truth, though neglected by many earnest people, is important, because it shows us what the world is and what will be its end, and thus it should help to detach the Christian from the spirit and principles of this age, which is fast going on to judgment. May God grant us the light of the Holy Spirit's teaching on the divine word, so that we may truly value it and profit by its prophetic teachings as well as by those parts of it which more immediately concern ourselves!

Now this present period of grace, which has already lasted more than 1900 years, *may* come to a close at any moment, but we should never fix dates, because, in this connection, scripture never does so. We have already endeavoured to bring before the readers of this magazine the scriptural teaching concerning the coming of the Lord, but we shall here go over the matter again

briefly. Christ is coming first *for* His people; He is coming afterwards *with* His people in power and glory, and there is a certain interval between these two events. When He comes *for* His saints, He will be, as far as scripture shows, unseen by the world, and He will not come actually to the earth, but into the air: when He appears *with* His saints, every eye shall see Him, and every kindred of the earth shall wail because of Him, for He is coming in judgment. *Then* He will come to the earth; His feet shall stand upon the Mount of Olives (Zech. xiv. 4).

But we shall never understand the subject unless we see that the present period, when God is gathering out His Church, is a distinct parenthesis in His ways with Israel as a nation. Israel as a nation had, and will have, a very special place in the ways of God. He gave promises to the fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and He fulfilled them to their children. He brought a vine out of Egypt and planted it in His inheritance in the land of Canaan; and He looked that it should bring forth grapes, but it brought forth only wild grapes. In due time Christ came, the true Messiah, King of Israel. He "came to His own, but His own (people) received Him not," they, so to speak, cast Him out of the vineyard and slew Him. Not only so, but, when the Holy Ghost came, they resisted Him; as their fathers did so did they. But God's resources were not limited; He brought in something which was far higher as to the place of blessing bestowed than ever Israel as a nation enjoyed. This new thing was the Church of God. Israel's blessings were national blessings in the land, in the store, &c; the Church of God is an entirely different thing, it is a gathering out from all nations of a people whose calling and hopes are, not of an earthly character as Israel's were, but

essentially *heavenly*. When Christ, the Head, took His place in heaven, the Holy Ghost came down at Pentecost, and formed the body on earth, which consists of a people united by the Spirit to the Head in heaven.

It is perfectly clear, therefore, that, on the rejection of Christ, God, for the time being broke off His dealings with Israel as a nation as we read, "Blindness in part is happened to Israel"; and this will continue "until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." The Church of God, therefore, began at Pentecost and ends with the coming of the Lord: as already remarked it is a parenthesis in the dealings of God with Israel as a nation. After the close of this parenthesis, God will again take up Israel for blessing; and then "all Israel (*i.e.*, not, as at present, individuals here or there, but the people as a nation, the whole remnant of Israel) will be saved" (Rom. xi.). We may here remark that looking on this present period as a parenthesis explains many passages of scripture which we could not otherwise understand. For example, Matthew x. 23, "Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come." The same work of preaching the kingdom of heaven, which the disciples were then sent out to do, will be resumed again after the Lord has come and this present period is over, by the godly remnant of Israel in that day. Again, "This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled" (Matt. xxiv. 34)—the same race of men who then rejected Him, characterised by the same unbelief, will be found again at the end.

It is by the Lord's coming for His saints that the present period of grace will be brought to a close. This blessed hope was ever to be the true and proper and immediate hope of the Christian according to the teaching of the Holy Spirit in the scriptures. We learn

from the first Epistle to the Thessalonians, which was the first inspired epistle Paul wrote, that he himself preached the truth of the Lord's coming as a part of the gospel which he announced. The consequence was that these simple converts, who had been so short a time converted (he was only preaching there three weeks or so, see Acts xvii. 2) were "waiting for God's Son from heaven whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivered us from the wrath to come." It was not that they were waiting for deliverance from the wrath itself, they had already got that, but they were waiting for the deliverer. The end of chapter iv. gives us, doubtless, the most complete and detailed explanation of this subject which we find in scripture. In this aspect of the Lord's coming (which has sometimes, and we believe rightly, been called the "rapture") it is not a question of His visible *manifestation* in glory; in fact there is nothing to show that He will be seen by the world when He comes for His Church. When the Lord Himself ascended He was not seen by any but His own disciples; nor, indeed, was He seen after His resurrection, except by those chosen witnesses to whom He manifested Himself by many infallible proofs. So it will be with us. We shall disappear from the world, unseen as He was. What grace and what a privilege for His people to be thus identified with Him!

The saints are divided into two classes in this passage—"those who have fallen asleep through Jesus," and "we, the living, who remain" (this latter phrase occurs twice). It does not say that the Lord comes *to* the earth exactly, but He descends "from heaven," and both those who sleep in Jesus and those who are alive and remain, are caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. He Himself conducts them to the Father's house. His "shout" it is which

effectuates the resurrection of the dead and the changing of the living. The word here translated "shout" is only used this once in the New Testament, it was the word of command given to the oarsmen on the galleys, and by a commander to his troops; here it is used for the assembling together of the saints to meet the Lord in the air. The Thessalonians thought that those who had died had missed the blessing; not so, says the apostle, on the contrary, the living ones will "in no wise anticipate (or go before) those who are fallen asleep," *i.e.*, the ones who had died. The "dead in Christ," would have the priority.

So also 1 Corinthians xv. confirms this, "Behold : I tell you a mystery : We shall not all fall asleep, but we shall all be changed, in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump." It is but an instant of time between the raising of the dead and the changing of the living, and this takes place "at the last trump," which, we know is a military allusion, referring to the trump for the starting off of the whole army, after all had fallen into line of march. It is remarkable that the apostle should use the word "we" in both the epistles we have referred to—"we, the living who remain," and "we shall not all sleep." It is just as though he put himself amongst the number of those who might be alive when the Lord would come, and this because it was intended to be always the proper and immediate hope of the believer. Well may he add in Thessalonians, "Wherefore comfort one another with these words." Do we sorrow over some dear departed saint of God? Thank God we sorrow "not as others which have no hope"; and the time is coming when both we and they shall hear that assembling shout, and shall be caught up to meet Him in the air, and so to be for ever with the Lord. What a consolation!

F. G. B.

“Hold Fast.”

THE very fact that this exhortation was addressed to the Church in early days (Rev. iii. 11) shows that it was needed even then. And if they needed it then, how much more do we need it now! The Church at Philadelphia had “little strength,” it is true; they were not marked by great exploits or shining gifts, but they had kept Christ’s word and had not denied His name. This was what He valued so highly.

And is there not to-day much that would tend to turn us aside and to make us give up the truth? Are there not many and varied counter-attractions and seductions of the world, as well as specious reasonings of the mind of man? Surely there are, and what is wanted is loyalty of heart to Christ, devotedness to His name and glory, and a deeper value for His word.

Let us never forget that we can only “hold fast” in so far as we walk the path of humble dependence and lowly obedience to the Father’s will and word; the very same path in which our blessed Lord Himself walked. It cannot be done in human strength or wisdom.

The exhortation here to “hold fast” was given specially in view of His coming; “*I am coming quickly,*” He says, “hold fast that which thou hast.” Christ Himself is patiently waiting, waiting till the moment when it is the Father’s will He should come. And He *is* coming, coming quickly; let us treasure and value His words. It is only a “little while”; but we *need* to watch and hold fast, because, to lose the brightness and freshness and living reality of this blessed and purifying hope, is to lose spiritual power for service and testimony during His absence.

As He is.

THE frequent occurrence of these three little words in John's first epistle cannot fail to strike every attentive reader, and will well repay our consideration. There are four places of special significance:—

As He is *so are we* (chap. iv. 17).

As He is *righteous* („ iii. 7).

As He is *pure* („ iii. 3).

As He is, *glorified* („ iii. 2).

It will be noticed that we have reversed the order in which these words are found in the epistle, and our reason for this is that we desire to consider the truth in the way it appeals to us. Thus placed they present in the most remarkable way, *Christ as the standard* of the Christian's acceptance, righteousness, purity, and future glory.

Taking first, then, the statement of chapter iv. 17; how welcome and reassuring is its first clause, namely, that love has been perfected towards all those who have known and believed the love that God hath to us, “that we may have boldness in the day of judgment”! What a contrast this is to the “fear that hath torment”! That fear of the righteous judgment of God against us on account of our sins, which once rightly haunted us, whenever the just claims of God intruded themselves upon our attempts to quiet our guilty consciences.

Now the love of God has been manifested in His sending the Son to take away our sins—those sins which we had got—and to give eternal life, which we had *not* got. And this love finds its satisfaction in giving us no less a place before Himself than that which Christ has; where He is, in resurrection, at the right hand of God. Mark it well: it is not said “as He *was*” (on earth), the blessed, lowly, perfect, dependent One in whom God was always well pleased; but “as He *is*,” now seated in

heaven in resurrection glory as the Son of man, who glorified God on the earth.

Such a statement, if made apart from divine inspiration, would have been declared to be the most awful presumption; in fact, who would have dared to make it? And how many of those of whom it is true, accept the precious truth of it in its simple blessedness, so as to have the joy of it in their souls? To be accepted *in* Christ, is to be accepted *as* Christ. And here, in the scripture we are considering, the fact is stated without reasoning or inference, in a way perfectly in keeping with the epistle in which we find it, and in accordance with its uniform teaching, "which thing is true in Him and in you" (chap. ii. 8). Marvellous statement indeed!

Consequently, we have ventured to call this the standard of acceptance. And not less remarkable is the next scripture noted at the beginning of this article, taken from chapter iii. 7, "he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He (Christ) is righteous." No less a standard, no other measure, can properly express what the Spirit of God would unfold to us here. Our epistle links together the new nature and practical righteousness (chap. ii. 29). And, consistently with the manner in which the truth is always presented in it, this epistle knows no comparative degree, or middle way, if we may so say; but at once presents Christ Himself, not as the righteousness which God has made us, or given us (which is also blessedly true); but as the measure of that *practical* righteousness which we, as those who are made righteous, *do* or practise.

Could the passage read, "he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as the law is righteous," without doing violence to the character of the truth here presented to us? We could *not* so read, yet we may well pray for a clearer understanding of the truth; for how many dear

children of God still cling to the idea that the law is the only God-given standard of righteousness, even for the saved in this present dispensation. As one replied to us quite lately, "but apart from the Ten Commandments, what standard have we got? shall we not all do as we like?" And this expresses the thought of numbers who have never seen the true character of Christianity, as set before us in this and other scriptures. One can imagine the Apostle John replying to such a question somewhat as follows: "What will a man *like to do* who has a new nature, an unction from the Holy One, and Christ Jesus set before him as his standard?"

But it is not here alone that we find this question met, for Romans viii. 4 tells us "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." And what, or rather *who*, will the Christian have before him if he walks after the Spirit, but Christ Himself? Well does the scripture in John's Epistle say, then, "As He is righteous."

And so with the next scripture quoted, "As He is pure." The Father's love has been manifested, and has satisfied itself by bestowing upon us the place of children. This relationship is ours *now*, as well as in God's purposes yet to be accomplished, and it is ours to be enjoyed. But it has not yet been *manifested* what we shall be, *that* awaits His (Christ's) manifestation. And when He is manifested, two things will happen—we shall be like Him, and we shall see Him as He is. But there is a present effect of having this hope before us, an effect both practical and effectual; for every one "that hath this hope in Him (Christ) purifieth himself, even as He (Christ) is pure." No other standard of purity is presented, nothing lower

than this. Shall we pare it down to meet the poverty of our thoughts or our low spiritual condition, and say it is impossible? Nay, but let us rather meditate upon it, humbly, thankfully, prayerfully. And as we say to ourselves, "Can it be possible that this is the thought of God for His children while here in this world, surrounded by trials and temptations, pressed with cares and sorrows?" let us ask Him to lead us, by His Spirit, into a deeper practical apprehension of such a hope.

And when we are gathered home; when His voice which once quickened us into life spiritual, shall have awakened the sleeping saints and changed the living ones; we shall not only be in His presence, but *like Him*, glorified, "*As He is.*" No words can adequately describe this. Our thoughts are barren, and our words are weak and poor when we come to such a theme. We often seek, perhaps, for some idea of what the glory is like. If we go to the Mount of Transfiguration, as we find it in Matthew xvii. 2, we are only told in a few words that "His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light." But it is Peter's description of that wonderful scene which really helps us, when he recalls the Transfiguration and says, "He (Christ) received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

May the Lord graciously help us to remember this in all the vicissitudes of our pathway here. We may be found, "*if need be*, in manifold temptations"; even "pressed out of measure, above strength"; but let us remember that we are even now the *children of God*. This is the "*manner* of love bestowed upon us," and we shall be like Christ when He is manifested in glory, for we shall see Him *as He is*.

T. R.

A Note on the Gospel of Matthew.

WE are thankful to observe that, in various places, God is just now calling attention to the gospel of MATTHEW. From the opening chapter, we learn that besides being really introductory to the other gospels, its main object is to draw attention to the blessed Lord's *person*: Son of Abraham, Son of David, and at the same time Emmanuel, "God with us." This is of all importance for our souls. He to whom all the prophets bore witness, for whom and by whom all things were made, at length appears.

The late Mr Darby, before he passed away, felt particularly the importance of it, from this point of view; feeling that it had been much lost sight of. Recent efforts to displace it (as has been done in a published translation of the New Testament) by putting Mark in the first place, "because it is the shortest," tend rather to make evident the short-sightedness and superficiality of the authors of this attempt. God has providentially watched over His own word in every particular, and the more this is accepted in simplicity, the more will the attentive reader be struck by the perfect wisdom displayed in His gracious ordering.

In the first place, Matthew is the great link between the Old Testament and the New, showing how the prophecies of the Old, referring directly to Christ, were fulfilled in all the details recorded. Not to speak of almost countless references to the inspired writings of old, the familiar words "[All this was done] that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet" (words which are occasionally modified in form), occur no less than five times in the first two chapters. John the Baptist's preparatory ministry is

introduced in the third chapter, by the little word, "For," preceding a second quotation from Isaiah.

This style of writing characterises the whole book. For it was of the utmost importance to show those who are (in John's gospel) called the Lord's "own" people, that Jesus was the One promised aforetime, to whom alone every part of God's word testified, whether by actual description, type, or prophetic declaration. *They* were the guardians of the oracles of God (Rom. iii. 2), and, therefore, supremely responsible to bear witness to this convincing proof as to who Christ was; but alas, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not" (John i. 11). Thenceforward, the guardianship of the scriptures passed into other hands, and the proofs as to the person of Christ, as there foretold, and actually undeniably accomplished, have been through God's grace a cogent means of convincing unbelievers, whether Jew or Gentile, and turning them "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God" (Acts xxvi. 18).

The promise of the Seed was given to Abraham. There was, in consequence, for all descendants of the patriarch, a divine necessity that the word should be accomplished, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given" (Isa. ix. 6). Not only so, but even when those to whom He had been given had crucified their "King," the Apostle Paul still maintains God's governmental order in the service of the gospel, saying to them, "It was necessary that the word of God should *first* have been spoken to *you*; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the *Gentiles*: for so hath the Lord commanded us, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles that thou shouldst be for salvation unto the ends of the earth" (Isa. xlix. 6; Acts xiii. 46-47).

And it is precisely this transition, after a full trial of the Jewish people, which is the main subject of Matthew's gospel. Beginning with the announcement, which should have awakened an echo in the heart of every true Israelite, namely, that Jesus Christ was "the son of David" and "the son of Abraham," he shows that the Lord's patient ministry amongst "the poor of the flock" in Galilee met with no response, and that *that* was the occasion for a radical change in the character of His preaching.

Let us not forget that these poor of the flock could not plead any selfish reason for refusing One, whom those in authority jealously regarded as an interloper, saying, "We know that God spake unto Moses; as for this fellow, we know not from whence He is" (John ix. 29). The chief priests and pharisees "took counsel to destroy Him," whilst the Galileans followed in crowds wherever they heard he was (Mark vi. 54-56). Notwithstanding all this, those cities which had heard Him and seen most of His miracles, especially that Capernaum where the Lord had had His dwelling-place, remained unmoved, and "repented not" (Matt. iv. 13; xi. 23).*

Their extraordinary hardness of heart is summed up in verse twenty of this eleventh chapter, a verse which is

* Does not this fact serve to illustrate the desperate hardness of the human heart? All the inward powers of the mind, intellect, thought, and will, are, as the Apostle says, naturally at enmity with God (Romans viii. 7). Was it not indeed fully manifested at Nazareth, when, for the first time, Jesus "stood up for to read" in that synagogue which He had no doubt frequented during the thirty years of His silent sojourn with His mother. They "wondered at the words of grace which proceeded out of His mouth," but God's grace shown in their past history was for them a dishonour to their national reputation, and they sought to cast the Saviour down headlong from the cliff on which their city was built (Luke iv. 16-30).

peculiar to Matthew's gospel; and it is most noticeable at this juncture as the turning point in the Lord's ministry.

Referring to two passages in Isaiah, He accepts from His Father's hand the hiding of these things from the wise and prudent, and their being revealed to babes. The "deaf" were to hear, and the "blind," see; the weak and the poor amongst men "should rejoice in the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. xxviii. 9; xxix. 14, 18, 19, 24).

From that time forth, Jesus is no longer, as it were, seeking fruit on the "fig tree" (a figure representing the nation as responsible to bear fruit to God), but He assumes the character of a "sower," Himself bringing in the divine seed, from which alone the true harvest for God could be expected (compare Luke xiii. 6-9; Mark iv. 26-29).

We should ever keep in mind that the blessed Lord was both "Son of David" and "Son of Abraham"; and that all that He is in those characters must eventually be made good on behalf of Israel His people, over whom He will yet reign, and who will then under His beneficent rule, be made the centre of blessing for the whole earth. To them as a centre, all the nations shall be gathered (Gen. xii. 3; xxii. 18; Ps. xlvii. 9, R.V.). That remains true; but at the same time, Jesus was the SON OF GOD, and as such, His delight was to make the Father known (John i. 18). Such is the basis of Christianity, and the way was paved for introducing it, through His own people having rejected the blessings which the prophets had led them to expect at Messiah's coming.

In refusing to receive the Blessor, they forfeited the divine gifts He brought. But Jesus Himself still remained among them, the Revealer of the Father, and

He invites the weary and heavy-laden to come to Him in order that they might get "rest" in listening to His words.

The Lord's precious invitation, "Come unto Me," is thus as we may say, the crisis in Matthew's gospel, everything in Christianity depending upon the revelation of the Father's name. We must go to John's gospel for the details of this revelation, and for its effects; Matthew is content to present the Revealer to whom every sin-burdened soul must "come." In John, we learn from the Lord Himself, "Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out" (chap. vi. 37). What an encouragement it is to hear it! Matthew does not say a word as to the *effect* produced by the reception of the revelation, but, in the beginning of John's gospel, we read that those who do receive Him become "children of God." Matthew simply directs attention to the Person of Him who makes the Father known.

Further on in the gospel, as soon as the Lord gets from Peter the confession that He was "the Son of the living God," He insists on the fact that the truth had been communicated to His disciple by His Father who is in heaven; and for the first time he intimates the building of His Church "upon that rock." Every "stone" in that building is a confessor of what Jesus is, after the example of Peter, whose name simply means *a stone*. Such is the meaning of the words, "Thou art Peter" (Matt. xvi. 18). The *confession* is not merely a statement made concerning the Christ of God; it must be expressed *to* Him who is the searcher of all hearts: "THOU ART the Christ, the Son of the Living God."

In chapter xviii. after the transfiguration scene, where Peter's confession is confirmed by the heavenly "voice" (2 Pet. i. 18), the Lord, again in connection with His Father's name, shows what a local church

or gathering of His people really involves and implies.*

Let these three things sink deep into our hearts, for they are not transient blessings but assured, as the apostle says, till the Lord come (1 Cor. xi. 26), having their counterpart in eternity :

1. Individual relationship with God, depending on the fact that Jesus came to reveal the Father's name (see also Eph. i. 3-6).

2. Consequent upon this, the building of the Church as a whole, by the Lord Himself as the one and only dwelling-place of God upon earth at the present time, His "habitation through the Spirit" (Eph. ii. 20-22).

3. The immense privilege conceded to His saints of being gathered around His person in any given locality owning His name, confiding in His word, and finding the reality of His spiritual presence as He has said in favour of the smallest possible number : "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there AM I in the midst of them" (Matt. xviii. 20).

How fitting is the closing word of this precious gospel, where the Lord takes as it were the name Emmanuel, into His own lips "I-WITH-YOU AM"; for such is the wonderful order of the words in the original. Compare God's revelation of Himself to Moses (Exod. iii. 13-15).

* The truth of the BODY was a "mystery" still reserved for the future, and communicated to the Apostle Paul alone, some time after the Holy Ghost had been given, and after the apostle himself, who had received his commission from the Lord in glory, had been long engaged in his service to the Gentiles. But he was the first to preach Christ in the synagogue as "the Son of God" (Acts ix. 20 ; Eph. iii. 8).

Short Notes on Ephesians i.

IT is not sufficiently understood by Christians to-day, that God Himself is the source of our salvation and blessing; it all comes from Him. It is *this* side of the truth which is brought out in the Epistle to the Ephesians. We often think of *our own part* in the blessing, and it is quite right that we should do so; but do we realise as we ought, that in nothing else now is God so glorified as in the salvation of the sinner, wherein is displayed the "*riches* of His grace," and in the blessing of the saint, wherein will be displayed the "glory of His grace"? Yet here it is that we see the display of the grace, love, and wisdom of God in its fullest and deepest perfection. Take the vilest and most wicked person you can find: God, of His own free will, takes up such an one, and, without sacrificing an iota of His righteousness, holiness, or truth, sets him in the glory with His own beloved Son, and makes him fit for the regions of light and glory. Saul of Tarsus was the "chief of sinners," yea, he was a "blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious"; yet he could say "By the *grace of God* I am what I am."

Now does not all this show to the angels in heaven even now, in such a way as nothing else could, what a wonderful thing the grace of God is? And will not each saved one shine out, through the ages of eternity, as a monument of the marvellous grace of God?

Note here the little word "hath." It is not that God is going to bless us, but He *hath* blessed us already. These blessings are already ours, and God desires that we should be in the full enjoyment of them; therefore He makes them known to us in the scriptures. They are not *earthly* blessings like those of Israel were (in the barn, in the store, &c.), they are *spiritual* blessings;

and, as it says "all," we can claim every spiritual blessing in either the Old or New Testament. It is true that God gives us many temporal mercies, for which we have to thank Him indeed; but the special blessings of the Christian are not on earth, as those of Israel were, but "in the heavenlies," and they are not in our own keeping, but infallibly secured "in Christ." Though they are ours actually, yet they are all *in Christ* above, and therefore secured. How thankful we ought to be, and what praise and worship should ascend from our hearts as we, by faith, lay hold on these precious truths and make them our own! These blessings could not be merely earthly ones, for God had chosen us in Christ *before* the world was! This world, great and important as it is in man's eyes, is a thing that came in afterwards, and it is comparatively small when looked at in the light of eternity. But the saints were chosen in Christ *before* the world was; and so, after the world and its fashion have passed away, the saints will be displayed in glory, according to the counsels of God, absolutely apart from all the sin and evil of the world out of which they were redeemed.

This leads the apostle on to speak of the character of our calling, for which God has chosen us in Christ; it is that we should be "holy and without blame before Him in love." Everything must be suited to God's presence and glory. No speck must sully nor mar the beauty of holiness; no discordant note must be heard in the music; nothing must be there which even the eye of God could detect as unsuitable to His presence, or which He could not look upon with pleasure. Moreover, God would have us to be suited to Himself as to our nature—that is "holy"; and as to our conduct "blameless"; and for this purpose Christ in His divine and perfect love, sanctifies His church, cleansing it by

the washing of waters by the Word, with a view to presenting it to Himself "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." And we are to be before him "in love." "God is love," and as we, in the peace of his own presence, think of His love, and what that unfathomable love has done for us; we see that it is beyond all our power to fully comprehend, and our hearts well up and overflow, so that God finds in us that which answers to what He is in Himself; that is *love*.

How we see here this display of what God is in Himself, in all that He has done! There are no "ifs" here; there is no mention of the wilderness, but all speaks of the accomplishment of God's own thoughts regarding the glory of His beloved Son, and of our association with Him through grace: all is for God's glory. Thus everything is in perfect and glorious harmony, and God finds His own delight in us, blessed be His name! He has "predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved." God has *willed* to have children, and that *we* should be before Him *as* his children; yea, in thus *willing*, it was His good pleasure to have predestinated us to the place of *sonship*. How could His children be other than "holy" in nature, "without blame" in conduct, and happy in His love? In order that this might be so, He has made us accepted in the Beloved. How sweet and precious to our souls is the title here given to Christ! Was there in all heaven an object on which God could look with peculiar and special complacency and delight? It was His Beloved Son, and He has taken us into favour, in Him! Yes, in the very One over whom the

heavens could open and the Father's voice could say,
 "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!"

E. R. I.

Brief Studies in Prophecy ii.

OUR Lord Himself spoke often of His coming. In Luke xii. 35, 36, He said, "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord . . . that when He cometh and knocketh, they may open unto Him immediately." The attitude of the waiting servant, who has his hand on the latch of the door, so to speak, is the true and proper attitude for everyone who loves Christ and whose heart beats true to his absent Lord. Do we sometimes forget this? Alas we do, but as the compass-needle instinctively turns to the north, so the true and normal aspiration of the Christian is to see Him face to face. And even if, for a moment, the needle is agitated by the storm or the tempest, or temporarily diverted by magnetic influences, yet it soon swings back to its normal position. So Christ's coming is the centre of attraction, the governing and regulating pole for the Christian's heart and life, the goal and climax of all his most cherished hopes. May our hearts never beat out of truth to their true and living centre!

In John xiv., too, Christ pours the oil of consolation into the hearts of His sorrowing disciples when just about to depart out of this world to the Father, by saying to them, "I am coming again, and will receive you unto Myself." And when risen and glorified, He speaks, Himself, once again in the last chapter of Revelation, presenting Himself as the "bright morning star" and closing with the words, "Surely I come quickly."

In truth this momentous event, the coming of the

Lord, an event unprecedented in the history of the world, and which lies entirely outside the calculations of the men of science of this or any other age, is the bright and blessed hope set before the Church of God. The Lord said at the grave of Lazarus, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." He is, in His own person, the first-fruits of the harvest; and this is the pledge that the harvest itself will follow. The power of resurrection life has been already displayed in Christ, who *is* the resurrection and the life, and it only needs that He, the victor over death and the grave, should appear again upon the scene, and then this victorious power of life will be applied, not only to the souls of His people as now, but to their bodies also, and in one moment every one of His saints shall be raised or changed, and clothed with a body like His own. There is no mistake, no uncertainty as to this, scripture is clear and precise; Christ *is* already our life, and we pass into the *full* participation in it, even as to the body, when He comes.

It is true that this hope, in its proper heavenly character, was lost sight of by the Church for many centuries; but oh, what manner of people ought *we* to be, for whom this blessed truth has been recovered through the instrumentality of valued servants of God, many of whom have now gone to their rest! What a practical and formative power it should have on the life and walk of the Christian, in our conduct in the Church and in the world, if we are looking and waiting for the coming of the Lord at any moment!

There are three or four words used in scripture in reference to His coming, viz., "coming," "appearing," "manifestation," and "revelation." When we think of

His “coming” for His saints, it is a question of pure grace, and it is connected with our *privileges* as Christians—those blessed privileges which grace has conferred upon us.

His “appearing” brings before us the solemn side of the matter connected with our *responsibilities* as those who are to serve and witness for Him here. The latter takes in also, we believe, *our* manifestation before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. v. 10), where we shall receive according to the things done in the body, and the place of each in the kingdom will be assigned. There every act of service or testimony will be appraised at its true value by the Lord Himself. Hence Paul could speak in his last epistle (2 Tim. iv. 8), of the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, would give to Him in that day (the day of manifestation) and not to him only, but to all those who love His *appearing*. It is this aspect of the Lord’s coming which we find, generally, in the epistles of Timothy and Titus, which instruct us as to the conduct of the servant in the house of God here on earth, rather than as to the privileges which belong to the Church as the body of Christ.

It is remarkable that both the Old and New Testaments should close with the coming of Christ. In the former He is the Sun of Righteousness, about to arise with healing in His wings, to usher in the “day” of blessing for this earth, with Israel restored to their land as the centre of His government. But the New Testament gives us the “bright morning star,” this is the *heavenly* hope of the Christian during the night of Christ’s absence and His rejection by this world, before the “day” dawns. It is for the rising of the morning star *we* are waiting (as the godly remnant of Israel will be for the rising of the Sun of Righteousness),

and, as Peter tells us, it should be already arisen in the heart of the believer (2 Pet. i. 19).

Though scripture never warrants us in fixing a date for the coming of the Lord, for which we wait; yet it is not out of place to take our bearings, so to speak, and to seek to discern the characteristics of the times in which our lot is cast. And here we have to guard against the tendency to think that our time is worse and more fraught with remarkable events than any other time which preceded it. If, for example, we take the epoch in history when the Roman Empire, which had dominated most part of the then known world for many centuries, was crumbling to pieces beneath the sword of the barbarian hordes from the north; these events must have appeared to the early Christians as a complete overturning of everything stable. For this reason they prayed for the upholding of the Empire, which they looked upon as that which hindered the development of lawlessness, of which they were warned in such passages as 2 Thessalonians ii., and others.

Comparing the present time, however, with, say, some sixty or eighty years ago: there has been, undoubtedly, an immense increase in the distribution of knowledge and education amongst the masses, but with it there is less simplicity and more restlessness on the part of the people in general. Indifference and irreligion have increased as a consequence of the infidelity and the unsettling of the authority of scripture in the minds of men. This latter is being largely helped on by "Higher criticism" (so called) which is preached or taught from many of the pulpits of the land. Besides this, there is the giving up of light and truth, and the going back to superstition and sensuous religion, which appeals so much to lovers of display and that which

gratifies the senses, in Ritualism and the Romeward movement.

Yet, while all this is so, there has been a great activity in the foreign mission-field, for which we can thank God. True, in spite of the many good and earnest men and women at work, we cannot close our eyes to the comparatively small results obtained ; but we can rejoice that Christ is preached.

Then, again, there can be no doubt that Satan has been particularly active of recent years in the spread of evil doctrines and the formation of systems which overturn the very foundations of Christianity: for example, Christian Science, Millennial Dawnism, Christadelphianism, and others. These systems are, we believe, the active working of the spirit of error; and, though clothing themselves with the name of "Christian," they are, in reality, antichristian and a deadly attack of Satan on the truth. They are all untrue to the great central truth of Christianity, the person of Christ, God over all blessed for evermore, yet truly man—God and man in one person ; besides being false as to the truth generally. And those who propagate these errors have shown an amount of zeal in flooding the world with tracts and books, which true Christian workers often lack ; thus the enemy succeeds only too well in spreading his poisonous and blinding influences by means of the printing-press.

Politically there is at the present time, unrest and apprehension. One cannot contemplate the immense growth of armaments, both naval and military, without believing that the crash will come sooner or later. It is stated that the "armed camp" of Europe contains over 22 million soldiers on its war strength, and the annual expenditure on military forces is said to exceed 226 million pounds sterling. Count Mouraveiff pointed

out, in his famous circular, that the progressive burden of armaments strikes at the root of public prosperity, that capital and labour and intellectual and physical forces, are diverted from their proper task of enriching society into channels of waste and destruction, that hundreds of millions are annually employed in acquiring and training men to operate fearful engines of slaughter, that these engines, which are for the moment the most perfect that science can produce, are doomed to lose almost immediately all their value by reason of some new discovery. Another writer remarks that great firms and companies in England, Germany, France, and the United States have sprung up to supply the less advanced powers with the very best and latest weapons for destroying life and property wholesale, by land, by sea, and also now by air. Of this the recent war in Turkey is a plain evidence.

But the Christian who is content to walk humbly in separation from the world, finds a resource in God Himself outside it all, which nothing can change or set aside. His life, his truest interests, his deepest joys, are drawn from above, and cannot be taken away by anything which transpires in this world. And everything seems to point to the speedy coming of the Lord for his saints; when this present period of time will come to a close by the resurrection of the saints who have fallen asleep during all the ages which have elapsed, and the changing of the living, both together being caught up to meet the Lord in the air and so to be for ever with the Lord.”

F. G. B.

Fragment.—Every mark of the world is a reproach to him who is heavenly.

J. N. D.

Evangelisation.

EVERY Christian is not gifted as an evangelist it is true, but every Christian should be interested in the work of evangelisation and in making known, in some way, the good news of the gospel of Christ. Those who are not so gifted can help by prayer, by the distribution of books and tracts, by their presence at evangelistic meetings, and in many other ways.

There is much need for earnest service in proclaiming a full and clear gospel at the present time. Satan is particularly active in trying to turn people aside after "another gospel," and so to pervert the true gospel of Christ. There are a multitude of "divers and strange doctrines" abroad, as well as "profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of false-named science," and it is the fashion of the day to question or deny the plenary inspiration and authority of Scripture.

Is the servant of God to be less earnest because of the activity of the enemy and the state of general disorder in which the people of God are found? No, no; just the contrary. He is not to be "ashamed of the testimony of our Lord," but to be "strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus"; to "endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." He is to "preach the word; to be instant in season, out of season"; to uphold the standard of the word of God—the holy Scriptures, which are able to make wise unto salvation—with all the more vigour, because of the attacks of the foe and the general weakness around. He is to be found on his knees, with God in prayer, all the more constantly because of the need of the times.

And then how encouraging to remember that, wherever there is a soul that has a need—one who

is weary and heavy laden—the mention of the name of Jesus and the blessed story of God's love in giving Him, has always a charm for such. It touches a chord in the heart, it meets the deepest need of the awakened conscience, it brings peace to the troubled soul. There are many such around us, if we were only in touch with them; let us endeavour to seek them out with more energy than ever.

And what a gospel we have to preach! It can meet the most desperate cases, it can save the vilest sinner who believes, it can bring peace and joy to the heart of the burdened, it can fill the soul with the sunshine of God's love. In one word, *Christ* can meet *every* need of the soul as truly to-day as ever.

Let us not be discouraged by apparent lack of results or by difficulties. God can open doors of service as truly *now* as at any other time; let us be diligent in seeking out such. The Spirit of God is here now as truly as ever He was; here to work in blessing amongst both sinners and saints, here to convict, to convince, to convert, as well as to teach and instruct believers. True, we have no power of our own, and God would keep us in constant and humble dependence; He would show us that all our strength is in Him. But He has told us not to be weary in well-doing, knowing that in due time we shall reap if we faint not. Then, what a consolation to know that it is His joy to save and to bless! and this is just as true to-day as it was in the most palmy days of the history of the Church of God. May our gracious God encourage every true-hearted servant in the work of the gospel, and enable all such to count upon Him with more implicit confidence, and to carry on the work of the Lord with more untiring energy, in spite of all the difficulties and discouragements of the times!

Gleanings and Jottings.

AT the end of four years in prison Paul could say, "Rejoice in the Lord always"; he had nothing else to rejoice in. He says, as it were, the more I know of every trial and hindrance in my work as an apostle, the more I can tell you, You can rejoice in the Lord always. The thing that hinders our rejoicing is not trouble, but being half-and-half. Here we get what is so important practically—to rejoice *always*. Any one can rejoice in the Lord when the Lord gives him what he likes. But, "Bless the Lord *at all times*"; that is the testing point.

"Be careful for *nothing*"—this is a magnificent sentence and leaves no loophole. It has often stopped my mouth completely when I have thought about the state of the Church or the saints. "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Present your requests to God; thank Him before you get them. He does not say you will get them always; it is the interest which God takes in us that is the point here. Paul besought the Lord three times that the thorn should be taken away. Indeed I am not going to take away what I sent for your good! such, virtually, was the answer—"My grace is sufficient for thee."

"And the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts." This is not peace *with* God; nor is it that your heart keeps the peace. But the peace keeps your heart, and it is the peace *of God*, the peace He is in. Having cast our burden on Him whose peace nothing can disturb, *His* peace keeps our hearts. Oh, what grace! that even our anxieties are a means of our being filled with this

marvellous peace, if we know how to bring them all to God, and how true He is.

“And the *God of peace* shall be with you.” Cast your care on God, and the peace of God will keep you; walk as a Christian ought to walk, and the God of peace will be with you. You have a companion in the path of trouble and sorrow, and such a companion too! “The God of peace!” J. N. D.

* * * * *

“*After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do: and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do*” (Lev. xviii. 3). “*Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes*” (Deut. xii. 8).

When Israel came into Canaan, they were not to do after the doings of Egypt, nor of the wilderness, nor of Canaan. Egypt was, in figure, the world in its natural state; that which suits and pleases the unregenerate man. They were slaves in Egypt, but God had brought them out from it by His mighty arm. Egypt furnished the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, the garlick, and much that was pleasant to the natural man; after which, alas, they lusted, forgetting the lash of the taskmasters from which they had suffered. Nor were they to do after the doings of the land of Canaan. In Canaan the nations worshipped false gods, living in idolatry and wickedness. But Israel was a people separated to God as *His* peculiar people, and they were not even to inquire after the manner in which these nations worshipped their idols. And there was still something else that they were not to do, namely, after the things which were done in the wilderness, every man doing what was right in

his own eyes. We know from the book of Judges that they sadly failed in this, for we read several times, "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes." Self-will and self-pleasing took the place of doing God's will.

But what *were* they to do? "Ye shall *do* my judgments, and *keep* mine ordinances, to *walk* therein: I am the Lord your God" (Lev. xviii. 4). The path of simple obedience to the word of God was the path He had marked out for His people to walk in.

Now these things are of great practical importance for ourselves. We are ever in danger of getting off the ground of faith and obedience and following the desires of our natural minds. It is just what the Corinthians were doing, and the apostle says to them, "Are ye not carnal, and walk as men?": their divisions showed it. But, on the other hand, we are in danger of falling into the snare of following some false religious principle: something which comes in to turn away the soul from Christ and to hinder communion with God. Hence the apostle John says, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." Then, again, we are not to do that which is right in our own eyes. This meets the radical religious spirit of the day; which is just *doing our own will*. The only right and safe place for the Christian is the place of simple dependence on God and implicit obedience to His word.

* * * * *

The word "last" in 1 Corinthians xv.—I have been much struck by the word "last" in this chapter. You will see in the 8th verse, the apostle Paul says, "And last of all He was seen of me also." Paul was the last of the many witnesses to the resurrection of Christ. Then in verse 45 we have "The last Adam."

The first man Adam was the head of a fallen race ; but, thank God, our history and origin and standing as men in the flesh have come to an end, and we are now "in Christ." The last Adam is the Head of a new race, in resurrection ; He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, and we are linked with Him in resurrection-life.

In verse 52 we find the words "last trump." I often saw an illustration of this in the military barracks opposite where I lived. Early in the morning you would hear the first bugle sounded, and the men came out from their quarters, ready equipped ; then there was another bugle, and they would fall into rank under the eye of the colonel ; then a third bugle, and they marched out of the gate together immediately they heard it. So, the dead will be raised and the living changed in a moment, at the *last* trump, when Christ comes for His saints.

In verse 26, we have the words "last enemy." We have many enemies and trials to meet after we are converted, but the last enemy is death. It is true that one may be a Christian and go on very smoothly and quietly ; but you will find that, if you are going to live out the truth *practically* in daily life, everything will be against you. But the last enemy will be destroyed ; this, we know, will be after the judgment of the "great white throne" (Rev. xx.). But the Christian can say even now "death is ours" (1 Cor. iii. 22), for we have already gotten the victory, because we have received eternal life ; that very life which, in Christ, has triumphed over death. What a cheer and comfort to the soul this is !

Thoughts suggested by an address.

Communion—II.

BEFORE entering into the consideration of the five paragraphs of Exodus xxx., it seems needful to make a few preliminary remarks, from which it will be more clearly seen that the chapter stands entirely by itself. It refers to a divine order which may indeed prophetically run on into the future, but the principles set forth in it are of eternal importance and present value for our souls.

In the first place, it must be evident to every careful reader that the peculiar use to which the redemption money was applied—that is, for making the silver sockets of the sanctuary, and the connecting-rods for the court pillars—could not be modified or repeated. See Exodus xxxviii. 25-28. Every Israelite numbered at the first, had his place and portion, as it were, registered before God. But all these, with two exceptions, had passed away before the people crossed the Jordan.

We find, however, from Nehemiah x. 32, that the remnant, brought back from the captivity, imposed upon themselves a yearly offering of a *third* instead of *half* a shekel, as they said, “for the service of the house of our God,” in order to meet the expenses of the various offerings; possibly their reduced condition made the half-shekel too heavy a tax. In our Lord’s time, the half-shekel was evidently restored; and it is of the deepest interest, in connection with the Lord’s word to Peter in Matthew xvii. 27. Into this we cannot enter now.

Again, as to the *golden altar* itself, the most important service connected with it, was modified on the occasion of the failure of the priesthood, when the two elder sons of Aaron died on the very day of their consecra-

tion. That failure led to the institution of a special service on the great day of atonement, once a year, on which occasion the blood had to be carried in *within* the veil. The golden altar was outside it. Consequently, on that day the altar was replaced by the censer (Lev. xvi. 12-13); and as the service of that day is the great subject of Hebrews ix. we find no mention there of the altar, which was on that day represented by the golden censer.

As to how far the ordinances relating to the special sin-offerings, indicated in Leviticus iv., for the high priest and for the whole congregation of Israel, were ever carried out, we have no mention in the history. The main point is that the blood of those beasts whose bodies were burned outside the camp, had to be carried into the tabernacle, and sprinkled outside the veil. The typical value of that service is set forth in Hebrews xiii. 10-12. But we must reserve any further comment on this precious subject for a separate note.

The *laver*, we know, was eventually replaced, in Solomon's time, by the "molten sea," so called no doubt from its size. Besides it, there were ten subsidiary lavers for the extended service of the temple, five on each side, for washing the sacrifices (2 Chron. iv. 2-6). The peculiar character of the wilderness, and the spiritual teaching connected with it was then a thing of the past. But it was made of the looking-glasses of the women who assembled at the tabernacle door, no doubt to take part in praise as on a previous occasion (Exod. xv. 20; xxxviii. 8).

Finally, as to the two closing sections of our chapter, we may well suppose that the anointing oil was continually prepared according to the instructions here given; but we find no historical mention of the peculiar use of the sweet incense described in verse 36 of our

chapter. With these few introductory words we proceed to examine the chapter itself, which, as already noticed, forms a sort of appendix to the instructions concerning God's dwelling-place in the midst of His people, closing with the words:

"There will I meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by My glory. And I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar [*i.e.*, of burnt-offering (xxxviii. 1) outside the tabernacle]; I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister unto me in the priest's office. And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the LORD their God" (xxix. 43-46).

Here we have, in a short sentence, the definite purpose of God in bringing the Israelites out of their bondage under the Pharaohs. It is a repetition of the first message sent to them through Moses, as soon as they came into the wilderness of Sinai and had pitched before the mountain: "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bear you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself." The same purpose had been indicated in the song they sang on the shore of the Red Sea, after the crossing: "Thou, in Thy mercy hast led forth the people which Thou hast redeemed; Thou hast guided them in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation" (Exod. xv. 13; xix. 4). God's work of grace in their favour was definite and complete; it remained to be seen whether there was with the people * such an answer of heart and conscience as we find expressed in Psalms xxiii. 6, and xxvii. 4—a true

* Their failure in this respect was the final subject of their seven-fold murmuring (Num. xvii. 13).

desire to "dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." The priestly service was appointed in order to render such an approach to God possible, and for us it is realised in the person of our High Priest who has passed into the heavens, and is now waiting to have us with Himself there (Heb. ii. 10-13; iv. 14-16; viii. 1-2; x. 19-22).

An altar, of whatever kind, even in its simplest form "of earth," was the means of approach to God, and particularly so in any place where His "name" was recorded. See Exodus xx. 24-25. That was especially the case with the tabernacle which accompanied the children of Israel in their journeys through the wilderness. They themselves had to make the "sanctuary" so that God might "dwell among them" (Ex. xxv. 8; and compare Ps. lxxviii. 18). The brazen altar in the court was for the sacrifices that were offered there; no Israelite could approach the tabernacle any nearer than to it. At the brazen altar the priest's service commenced, and all connected with the tabernacle itself belonged to them alone. Their duty was to burn incense upon the golden altar, placed just before the veil which enclosed "the ark of the testimony." All the service connected with the interior of the tabernacle, especially the dressing and the lighting of the lamps, was to be accompanied by the sweet incense burned thereupon. No burnt sacrifice or meat-offering was to be offered there, nor any drink-offering poured upon it.

Consequently, we understand that all questions relating to a sinner's acceptance by a holy God had to be settled elsewhere. The golden altar was for those who, by their very position and calling, were already established priests; and such had to be constantly reminded of the holiness of their calling,

and of what was involved in their being brought so near to God. "He has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Tim. i. 9). The apostle's desire for the saints was that their conduct should correspond to their high calling, and "that God would fulfil in them all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power" (2 Thess. i. 11-12). The service inside the tabernacle breathed holiness corresponding to God's own nature. According to that holiness every saint needs to be "kept" (John xvii. 11; Heb. xii. 10).

Communion established upon such a basis for the glory of God supposes also an enlargement of heart corresponding to God's purposes of grace towards *all* His people (2 Cor. vi. 11-13). The Lord found His "delight in the excellent of the earth," and did not hesitate to identify Himself with those who had listened to John the Baptist's preaching, and had told out their sad tale of sins into his ear. He would make no outward difference between Himself and them, and left all justification to His Father's care, who immediately owned Him from heaven, and the Holy Ghost "descended upon Him" (Matt. iii. 6, 13-17). In blessed accordance with this, too, the next thing we find in our chapter is the place that every Israelite had in the foundations of the tabernacle itself. Each one had to give the same amount, just one half shekel as a memorial, "to make atonement for their souls" (verses 15-16). How precious to find the blessed Lord, identifying Himself with Peter by means of a whole shekel, given as He said "for me and thee," in humiliation, whereas His poor disciple was unable, at that time, to enter into the deep meaning of association

with the Lord in glory on the mountain (Matt. xvii., 1-8, 24-27). It is only as we realise our association "with all saints," that we can enter into the true character of the love of Christ, and be filled with the fulness of God (Eph. iii. 14-21).

The laver reminds us of the feet washing so necessary in order to have part with the Lord (John xiii. 8). The anointing oil speaks to our hearts of the power of the Holy Ghost taking of Christ's things to show them to us, so that all the excellence of His person may be for our souls the expression of the Father's love to us (John xvi. 14-15; xvii. 23). And, finally, the sweet incense brings before us the divine evenness of Christ's perfection—of each kind of spice there was "a like weight." A little beaten very small, and thus condescending to our feeble apprehension, was to be placed "before the testimony" in God's appointed meeting-place. There, the enraptured soul is lost in what belongs to God—the antepast of heaven's joy, and all centered in His person who ever was and is the delight of the Father (Prov. viii. 30-31). May the Lord enable us to enter into it in measure, in His purity, while we wait for His coming! (1 John iii. 1-3).

Brief Studies in Prophecy—iii.

THE period between the coming of the Lord for His saints and His appearing with them in glory.

The translation of the saints from earth to heaven, to which we have already referred, is evidently a momentous epoch in the future history of the world. It closes what might be called the "Church" period, or parenthesis, and re-opens the Jewish period, bringing us back to a state of things somewhat analogous to what we find in the gospels when our Lord was on earth. Prophecy maps out the future with unerring certainty,

so that the humble Christian, taught of God, may know what is about to take place in this world far better than the most astute politician who depends only on a human forecast of events. Prophecy is connected with God's government of the world and the events which will occur when He is preparing the way for the blessing of Israel, and above all for the establishment of the Messiah as King in Zion. We read in Deuteronomy xxxii. 8: "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel." In speaking of prophecy, it has been remarked by another that "Jehovah and His dealings, and the Messiah, shine through the whole. Israel always forms the inner circle, or chief platform, on which these dealings are developed, and with which the Messiah is immediately in relation. Outside of, and beside this, the nations are gathered, instruments and objects of the judgments of God, and finally, the subjects of His universal government made subject to the Messiah, who, however, will assert His special claim to Israel as His own people" (J. N. D., *Synopsis*, ii. 273).

It is remarkable that a large portion of Scripture, both in the Old and New Testaments, is occupied in dealing with the period of time with which we are now concerned; indeed, a much larger portion than we might think, especially when we consider the shortness of the time itself. Let us inquire then, What will take place immediately after Christ comes, and what length of time will elapse between His coming *for* His saints, and His appearing *with* them in glory?

In order to answer these questions, perhaps the best Scripture we may take up is the close of Daniel ix. The prophet was found on his knees in the place of

confession of his own sins and those of the people, always the right place in a day of failure, and when God's hand was upon them in chastening on account of their sins. Daniel takes also the place of intercession, and in answer to his prayers, God gave this remarkable explanation of the vision, which, though it only occupies four verses of Scripture, carries us over a lengthened period of time, commencing with the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem (which took place, as we learn from Nehemiah ii., in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king) to the final judgment of those who will be allowed to desolate the city of Jerusalem and the sanctuary in the last days, prior to the millennial reign of Christ. The 70 weeks are clearly weeks of years, and they are divided into three periods—first, 7 weeks or 49 years, which were occupied in the building of the city; then 62 weeks or 434 years, making in all 69 weeks or 483 years to the Messiah the Prince. After this (we are not told how long after), as the passage states, the Messiah shall be cut off and have nothing.* This, we know, has taken place.

There remains, therefore, one week of the 70, or 7 years; and some, whose judgment is well worthy of respect, have explained that the first half of this week (or $3\frac{1}{2}$ years) has been fulfilled in the ministry of our Lord, which just lasted that time; but the unbelieving part of the nation of Israel, not recognising Him, have to go over the whole week in a future day. In the book of Revelation, we get the events recorded with the last half of the week especially in view;

* It is necessary to make some corrections in the translation of this and other passages in the Authorised Version, in order to get the true sense. Most of these changes will be found in the Revised Version.

and our Lord referred particularly to this time also when He spoke of the "great tribulation." According to the prophet Daniel, room was left for the acceptance of the Messiah by the nation of Israel; and at the beginning of His ministry the announcement was made, "the time is fulfilled" (Mark i, 15); the 69 weeks had gone by. But the Jewish nation was unbelieving, and only a small remnant received Him. The nation as such, influenced by the religious leaders, rejected Christ and will be allowed of God to fall into the snare of receiving the Antichrist in a future day. Antichrist, as we shall see later on, will be in league with the imperial head of the revived Roman Empire (here called "the prince that shall come") and this head of the Empire will confirm a covenant with "the many," or the mass of the Jews, for one week.

It has been remarked by another that, "In the half-week of the Lord's ministry the *remnant* received Him, the nation did not. When under Antichrist the nation again go through the first half-week, it will be the converse; the *nation* receive him [Antichrist] the *remnant* do not" (*Coll. Writ.*, J. N. D., xxviii. 551).

The present period of time, during which the Church is being gathered out, namely, the whole period from Pentecost to the coming of the Lord, being a parenthesis in God's direct dealings with Israel as a nation, is entirely omitted from the 70 weeks, as we might expect.

The interval between the coming of the Lord for His saints and His appearing with them in glory to reign, occupies therefore not only the last week or 7 years (which dates from the confirmation of a covenant with the apostate mass of the Jews, referred to in Daniel ix. 27) but before this begins, a certain space of time, the length of which we cannot determine. From the book of Revelation (chaps. vi.-ix.) and other passages, however,

we may gather that it will be long enough for the complete overthrow of the present political status, what is called the *status quo*, and for the development of the apostasy, the mystery of lawlessness, which is already working, and which will go on to the close. But, on the other hand, there will be the gracious work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the godly remnant of Israel, as well as in those Gentiles who will receive blessing through their instrumentality, in enabling them to witness for God on the earth and in preparing them to receive Christ as their Messiah.

Let us now inquire what will take place on the earth during the interval between the coming and appearing of the Lord, always bearing in mind that the Church, composed of all true believers of this dispensation, will have been already translated to heaven, "caught up to meet the Lord in the air," and thus kept out of the hour of trial, which is about to come on the whole habitable world, to try them that dwell on the earth. (Rev. iii. 10).

The Jews will be gathered back to their land, the mass of the nation in the same unbelieving state in which they were when the Lord was on earth; but a remnant will be prepared of God to receive Christ, the true Messiah. The prophet Zechariah thus describes this godly remnant; after first stating that the apostates, the two parts of the nation, shall be cut off and die he adds—"But the third shall be left therein (*i.e.*, in the land); and I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on My name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is My people: and they shall say, The Lord is My God." This remnant, in whose hearts God's Spirit had wrought, leading them to repentance, will pass

through deep trial and persecution, as well as sorrow of heart for having crucified their Messiah.

The return of the Jews to Palestine is a subject which has occupied the attention, not only of Christians who are interested in these things, but of politicians also. No doubt there are many more there now than there were some thirty or forty years ago, and the events now passing may also facilitate their return; but we have not to wait for the gathering back of the Jews for Christ to come for His Church. Doubtless the bulk of the nation will return after that event has taken place, and with the modern facilities for travel, this would not occupy a long space of time.

Once Christ has come for His Church and the Jews are back in their land, everything is ready for the last great series of events which will fill up the last week of Daniel ix., or rather more (Dan. xii. 11-12); and which will be brought to a close by the appearing of the Lord in the execution of judgment on the apostate Jews and Gentiles and the deliverance of His people.

F. G. B.

The Holy Scriptures.

THE Scriptures have a living source, and living power has pervaded their composition: hence their infiniteness of bearing, and the impossibility of separating any one part from its connection with the whole, because one God is the living centre from which all flows; one Christ, the living centre round which all its truth circles, and to which it refers, though in various glory; and one Spirit, the divine sap, which carries its power from its source in God to the minutest branches of the all-united truth; testifying of the glory, the grace, and the truth of Him whom

God sets forth as the object and centre and head of all that is in connection with Himself; of Him who is, withal, God over all, blessed for evermore.

Perfection marks the book of God as a whole, as it marks everything which God has made, from the insect which sports in the air, up to man himself, created in the image of God, with a body of exquisite workmanship united to a mind capable of enjoying God, of communion with Him, and even, through grace, of expressing something of His character and His ways. The Word is not a shapeless mass; it is the complete body of the revealed thoughts of God more perfect even than man, to whom it is addressed, because more immediately divine. Man, who would be wise, does not understand this body of divine communications, but judges this or that part of it according to the little pitiful history of ecclesiastical weakness and contentions. The things of the Spirit are spiritually discerned. For him who is spiritual, divine perfection shines forth in every page; and the unity of the whole, the perfect connection of its several parts, the relation of these parts to each other and to all the ways of God, to the person of Christ, to the heart of the renewed man, to the necessities of sinful man, to the dangers and difficulties which have sprung up in the Church—all combine to crown with divine glory the demonstration of the origin and authorship of the book which contains these things.

Its author is so much more evidently God from the human instruments having been many and diverse. But its unity—and above all, the intimate union of its different parts—demonstrates a complete and perfect body. If but one joint of a finger were wanting to a man, he is not a man such as God made him; he may have life, but he is imperfect, and his imperfection is perceptible. To take away a book from the

New Testament, the remainder is divine undoubtedly, but it is no longer the New Testament in its divine perfection. As in a noble tree, the inward energy, the freedom of the sovereign vital power, produces a variety of forms, in which the details of human order may appear to be wanting, but in which there is a beauty that no human art can imitate. Cut off one of its branches, and the void is obvious; the minute connection of the remainder is destroyed; the gap which is made in the intertwining of its tender leaves proves that the devastating hand of man has been there.

The Bible is not one book, but a collection of writings by different authors; these books were written at periods very remote from each other. In spite of this great diversity of time and of authors there is a perfect unity of design and of doctrine; a unity, the separate parts of which are so linked with each other, and so adapted to each other, that the whole work is evidently that of one and the same Spirit, one and the same mind, with one purpose carried on from the beginning to the end, whatever might be the date of each separate book; and this, not at all by means of mere uniformity of idea, for the promises are quite distinct from the law; and the gospel of grace is distinct from them both. Nevertheless, its parts are so correlative, and form so harmonious a whole, that, with the least attention one cannot fail to perceive that it is the production of one mind. Now there is but One, who lived through all the ages during which the various books of the Bible were written, and that One is, [not any man, but] the Holy Ghost.

I have myself found difficulties in the Word. This has not surprised me, ignorant as I am; but I have found these difficulties, one after another, to be but the means of entering more fully into the perfection,

the wisdom, and the divine beauty of the revelation of my God. If I still find more of these difficulties, and I do so, I wait upon Him to solve them for me; I do not say, "The meaning is doubtful," but "The meaning is doubtful *to me*." I do not say, "There is inaccuracy, and I am accurate enough to judge it without divine light"; but "I am ignorant, and God will enlighten me in due time."

The intrinsic authority of the testimony of scripture is clearly established. It is an authority independent of the reception of the testimony by the hearer; so entirely independent, that the Word will judge him who is not obedient to it. This proves to us that God has endued it with moral evidence, powerful enough to bring in as guilty the man who does not receive the testimony, and who thereby treats God as a liar. Nevertheless it is only the grace of God which can overcome the moral resistance of man's heart, unbelieving as it is by nature and by will as to the things of God, though full of credulity as to the things of man.

In judging of inspiration by the precision of the account, a mistake is often committed as to what should be sought for. The Holy Ghost does not aim at that accuracy which would be needful to prove the truthfulness of man. The Holy Ghost has always a moral or spiritual object—the revelation of some eternal principle of truth and grace. Every circumstance which has no bearing upon His object is omitted. He regards not accuracy in that respect. But the moral accuracy is all the greater on this account, and the picture presented to the conscience much more complete.

J. N. D. (collected),
 Vol. 1 of collected words and writings of John Nelson
 Dunnington, 1811-1871, pp. 100-101.

Needs of this Day.

EVERY sober-minded Christian must feel that one of the great needs of the day is *practical Christianity*. There is plenty of profession, but nothing tells so much as practical godliness and consistency. The Christian is left in this world to be a witness for Christ, an epistle of Christ, known and read of all men. Let us remember that practical Christianity shows itself in every detail of the Christian's walk and conduct—in our houses, our dress, our work, our associations, in buying and selling, in non-conformity to the world, and in many other things.

We read in the epistle of James, "Be ye *doers* of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." We live in a day of widespread profession; we do not suffer open persecution as the early Christians did (and we can thank God for this); but is there not all the greater danger lest we slip into the ways of the world by which we are surrounded? "Be not conformed to this world," says the apostle; again, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." We need to "suffer the word of exhortation" given to us in the Scripture: let us thank God for it, and seek to profit by it.

God said to Abraham of old, "Walk before *Me*, and be thou perfect," and we may be assured that he who walks aright *before God* will walk aright before the world and before his fellow-Christians also. True, we need grace and strength every day and every moment; but, thank God, He is not only "able to save," but "able to keep us from stumbling," if we are truly dependent on Him.

Gleanings and Jottings.

A DISTRACTED heart is the bane of a Christian. When my heart is filled with Christ, I have no heart or eye for the trash of the world. If Christ is dwelling in your heart by faith, it will not be the question, What harm is there in this, or that? rather, Am I doing this for Christ? Can Christ go along with me in this? If you are in communion with Him, you will readily detect what is not of Him. Do not let the world come in, and distract your thoughts. I speak especially to you young ones; we, who are older, have had more experience of what the world is; we know more what it is worth, but it all lies shining before you, endeavouring to attract you. What else does it fill its shop windows for? Its smiles are all deceitful, still it is smiling upon you. It makes many promises it cannot fulfil; still it *promises*. The fact is, your hearts are too big for the world, it cannot fill them; they are too little for Christ, for He fills heaven; yet will He fill you to overflowing.

Remember, Christ bought you with His own blood, that you should be His, and not the world's. One word more. Talk with Him. Never be content without being able to walk and talk with Christ as with a dear friend. Be not satisfied with anything short of near intercourse with Him who has loved you with such manner of love!

Where does faith see the greatest depth of man's sin and hatred of God? In the cross; and at the same glance it sees the greatest extent of God's triumphant love and mercy to man. The spear of the soldier, which pierced the side of Jesus, only brought out that which spoke of forgiveness.

J. N. D.

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Service—We find three conditions of service in 2 Timothy ii. :—

1. *The Soldier*.—The soldier is not supposed to have easy times of it; though, alas, how often we are like what are sometimes called “featherbed soldiers”! But the true soldier has battles to fight, long marches to make, privations and hardships to endure. And he must not be hampered or entangled with other affairs; but devote his time, his energies, and his best abilities to the work, if he is to please and truly serve the one who has enlisted him for military service.

2. *The Athlete*.—The one who enters the lists to contend in the games must contend according to the rules of the game. If he uses his strength and energies in his own way and according to his own will, he will not receive the crown. Do we seek to serve and act for God in accordance with *His* word and *His* will, and not in our own way?

3. *The Husbandman*.—What husbandman would expect to reap a field of corn without first ploughing up the ground and sowing the seed? It may be hard and difficult ground, the weather may be wet and stormy, and he may feel the full force of the blast in his face when guiding his plough up the field, and in his back when coming down in the opposite direction. But he has to go on and not to faint; for the rule stands good, he *must* labour before partaking. But the harder the work and the more perseverance it requires, the sweeter and more valued will be the harvest when it is reaped.

* * * * *

The Three Passovers.—In the early history of Israel we have the passover in three places—in Egypt, in the wilderness, and in the land. The pascal lamb in Egypt spoke of redemption. On the cross Christ, the true Lamb of God, died for us. There He was lifted up

between heaven and earth as if not fit for either ; there He was crucified between two malefactors as if the worst of the three. Such was man's estimate of Christ. But though His "love to the utmost was tried," yet it "firmly endured as a rock." The people were commanded to eat the passover with their "loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and their staff in their hand," etc. They were ready to go. You will find that he who is the most *fit to go*, is the most *fit to stay*.

But Israel partook of the passover in the wilderness also, on the exact day in accordance with the command of God to Moses, "the fourteenth day of the first month, at even" (Num. ix. 5). What a privilege it is even in this wilderness, to be able to remember the death of the Lord ! The wilderness is the place where the trials and difficulties are ; and *there* God would teach us His sufficiency for every trial. Do you say, This is a cold and dead time ? Well then, keep alive in a dead time. Do you say, It is a dark day ? Then *you* shine all the brighter just because it is dark. I once heard of a man who was blind, but who carried a lantern in the dark. When asked why he did so since he could not see, he replied it was in order that other people should not stumble over him. The very deadness and darkness gives you all the more opportunity to shine brightly for Christ amidst it all.

Finally, they had the passover in the land (Joshua v. 10). The land was the place which God's heart had desired and ordered for them ; and we, too, have crossed the Jordan and entered the land, at least for faith and in spirit. We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ ; we are seated in Christ in the heavenlies. It is remarkable that, though the manna ceased on the day after the children of Israel had eaten the old corn of the land, yet they had

both for *one day*. The manna typified Christ in His blessed path of humiliation, as we see Him in the gospels; the old corn of the land (that which grew *in* the land, the store corn) was the heavenly Christ above. It is our blessed privilege to feed upon both. May the Lord enable us to “press towards the mark,” to have Christ in glory so truly the Object for the heart, that we may follow Him here with greater earnestness and more energy every day, while waiting for His coming again.—*Thoughts suggested by an address.*

* * * * *

Christ's Coming.—Oh, what it will be to see the face of Him who loves us, that face once so “marred more than any man,” then radiant with all the glory of heaven! The same Jesus who once sat wearied by the well of Sychar, the same who wept and groaned at the grave of Lazarus; yea, the same who died amidst the agonies of Calvary that He might redeem us by His precious blood and have a people “clean every whit” and suited to His holy presence. “How shall I meet those eyes? mine on Himself I cast!” and if it is so real to faith *now*, what will it be *then*, when faith is exchanged for sight, expectation for realisation, and the sands of the desert for the joys of the Father's house where all the bridal affections of the Church—those purest and deepest affections which the Holy Spirit Himself has begotten within her—shall be satisfied, yea, much more than satisfied, by beholding the face of Him who is indeed “the chiefest among ten thousand; yea, the altogether lovely.” *Then* He shall be owned by heaven and earth, crowned with His many crowns; “blest answer to reproach and shame” which He suffered down here. Does not the thought of this, yea, the realisation of it by faith,

wither up the best things offered by this dying, fading scene, which is slipping away from under our feet so quickly?

* * * * *

“For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me; for he wrote of Me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe My words?” (John v. 46-47).

What an estimate of the authority of those very Scriptures which self-sufficient men have assailed as untrustworthy! They dare to tell us that they are neither Mosaic in origin nor Messianic in testimony, but a mass of legends which do not even cohere in their poor and human reports of early days. On the other hand, the Judge of quick and dead declares that the Scriptures testify of Him, and that Moses wrote of Him, setting the written word in point of authority above even His words. As the Saviour and Rationalism are thus in direct antagonism, the Christian has no hesitation which to receive and which to reject, for one cannot serve both masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to the one and despise the other. So it is, and must be, and ought to be; for Christ and Rationalism are irreconcilable. Those who pretend to serve both have no principle as to either, and are the most corrupting dogmatically of all men. They not only do not possess the truth, but they make the love of it impossible, enemies alike of God and man.

W. K.

A Further Note on the Gospel of Matthew.

(See pages 26-31.)

FOR the profitable reading of this remarkable gospel, it is necessary to bear in mind, especially in its moral teaching, that the failure to answer to God's purpose in blessing through His own Son, is by no

means confined to Judaism. The Church has failed in ways precisely similar, though the present blessings, and consequent responsibility of Christians, is, from a spiritual point of view, far greater than anything enjoyed by the Israelites.

The use of the examples of faith recorded in Hebrews xi. makes this quite clear, and is a further proof of the way in which the things written aforetime in the Old Testament, were "written for our learning" (Rom. xv. 4). The heart of man is the same from the beginning (compare Gen. vi. 5 with viii. 21); the terrible judgment of the flood made no difference in the thoughts which spring from corrupt affections. The prophet Jeremiah gives the same testimony as to Judah before their dispersion by Nebuchadnezzar (chap. xvii. 9), and the apostle, guided by the Spirit of God, in the full light of Christ's suffering for sinners on the cross, sums it all up in a word: "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. viii. 7.)

One deplorable and very manifest fruit of this determined opposition of the heart of man to all that is of God, may be found in the way in which the Scriptures of truth have been, and are now as much as ever, replaced by *tradition*. The Lord refers to the prophecy of Isaiah in this respect (see Matt. xv. 3-11). Mark repeats it with even greater detail; but Matthew adds the solemn paragraph concerning the judgment which will overtake the guilty nation, while making the application of the principle personal for all time, "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (xv. 13). And chapter xxiii. completes the denunciation of the *Pharisees* and their ways.

And this is the more noticeable, inasmuch as the *Sadducees* are rarely mentioned by Matthew. Their

introduction in chapter xvi. 1-12 is peculiar and exceptional, as is also the omission of any mention of them in the corresponding passages of Mark's gospel (chap. viii. 11, 15).

The comprehensive character of Matthew is a very prominent feature; the two opposing elements were then strongly at work in the nation, and this explains the mention of the "doctrine" of these unbelievers just before the Lord was about to speak of the Church. And how the professing Church is, at the present day, permeated with their pernicious views, calling all God's revelation in question, every attentive Christian must know. What a mercy for us to have this work of the enemy dealt with summarily in a few words! The same evil which brought judgment on Judaism will, as the apostle shows, bring judgment on the professing Church, and its universal ruin is, alas, becoming more and more manifest (see Rom. xi. 20-22). The *Sadducees* were the unbelievers or the "Free-thinkers" of those days, as is indeed shown in all three gospels, by the discourses given during the week preceding the cross (Matt. xxii. 23; Mark xii. 18; Luke xx. 27). But Matthew notes the triumph of the *Pharisees* on that particular occasion (chap. xxiii. 34).

It is then to this latter section of religious disputants who professed, no doubt sincerely from their point of view, to believe implicitly in the law and the prophets, that the gospel of Matthew is peculiarly adapted. This is of all importance for the conscience in a day like the present. Profession is rife everywhere, but it will not stand in the day of judgment, when many will say "Lord, Lord," and endeavour to substantiate their profession by recalling both their words and their works, but they will be met by the soul-withering word of the Lord, "I never knew you; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity" (Matt. vii. 22-23).

This leads us to another remark of great interest, namely, the frequent association in Matthew of "prophet" and "righteous man."

These two characters are continually associated, and, as developed in John's gospel in connection with the blessed Lord's own service, are represented by His *words* and His *works* (see John xiv. 10-11; xv. 22-24, etc.). A "*prophet*" is he who has God's word and makes it known; a *righteous* man is he who listens to it and carries it out in practice, walking with God and in His fear, as Enoch did (see Joseph's word to his brethren, Gen. xlii. 18; and also Luke i. 6).

A comparison of Matthew xiii. 16-17, with the parallel passage in Luke x. 24, will make clear this feature peculiar to the first gospel. The passage in Luke makes prominent the persons who, in Old Testament history, were so often especially blessed, "prophets and kings" to whom God's gracious communications in the past were given; whereas Matthew habitually draws attention to the moral excellence of "prophets and righteous men." And from this point of view, the special privileges of the Lord's disciples are recorded, in connection with the fore-announced judicial blindness and hardness of heart which fell upon the unbelieving nation (Matt. xiii. 10-17).

Nor is this confined to a single passage. Chapter x. shows how it is to characterise all service for the Lord during the time of His absence, and in view of His return "in the glory of His Father, with His angels" (chap. xvi. 27); for at that time, He will render to everyone according to their works.

And a recompense will be given not only to the servants sent of Him, but, in like manner, to those who *receive* them: "He who receives a *prophet* in the name of a prophet" *i.e.*, because he brings God's word,

“shall receive a prophet’s reward,” and he “who receives a *righteous man* in the name of a righteous man,” *i.e.*, just because he carries out in simplicity his responsibility to God, “shall receive a righteous man’s reward.” The path of obedience and blessing is by no means confined to special servants called by the Lord and fitted for their duty, but is open to any and all who, honestly and in the presence of God, cast in their lot with such, and who are happy to render them even the smallest service, because they are “disciples” of the Lord. So trivial an attention as a cup of cold water given for that reason, will never be forgotten by Him who sent forth His servants. He accepts it as done to Himself (see vers. 37-42, and note the addition of the words “because ye belong to Christ” in Mark ix. 41).

Furthermore, the “beatitudes,” in Matthew v. insist on the value, in the Lord’s sight, of persecution for *righteousness’* sake, as also of suffering in the way in which the *prophets* of old suffered (vers. 10-12). The special value of all such experience when according to His mind, depends upon the suffering being, as He says, “FOR MY SAKE.”

Verse 19 of the same chapter insists upon the necessity of *doing* as well as *teaching* what is written in the Scriptures of truth. All the Lord’s life here below was a practical fulfilment of the Scriptures that foretold what His life and service was to be. The power and the value of what was *written* concerning Him, is also to be the motive power in our souls, as applied by the Holy Ghost (compare Luke xxiv. 44-49; 1 Pet. i. 11-12; iv. 13, 14).

On the other hand, the mere fact of prophesying in His name or having accomplished miracles on the same plea, will have no value in His eyes at the time

of a future inquiry into every motive, when it will appear that the practical life and conduct of such professors did not correspond with the doctrine they preached. A mere lip-confession of His Lordship will not avail in that day. But those who do the Father's will, that is, who carry it out in *practice*, will be owned of the Lord as His "brother, sister, and mother." Let us note the remarkable repetition of the words, "Who-soever shall do the will of *My* Father who is in heaven," in both passages (Matt. vii. 21-23, and xii. 50).

May the Lord enable us to lay these things to heart! Ecclesiastical assumption, in every age, is based upon the neglect of the written Word, while supplying its place by empty human tradition, or acting upon the vain pretext of having the Lord's mind, without any pretence of such action being based upon His positive declarations, or upon apostolic teaching. This latter is perhaps the worst of these two forms of independency. The "wicked servant" spoken of in Matthew xxiv. is one who is preoccupied with the idea that His Lord "*delays* His coming," and, in order to keep things in order, in view of this delay, makes use of expediency of his own invention to enforce submission to what he thinks is right, or necessary. The Lord stigmatises this as "beating the fellow-servants" (Matt. xxiv. 48, 49). Matthew does not say that he gets drunk himself, as we find in Luke xii. 45; but his ways involve the adoption of worldly principles of coercion, and he naturally gets associated with those who do lose control of themselves in self-indulgence.

Finally, we may call attention to the simple and elementary way in which precepts are generally given, allowing for further developments in Mark or Luke as the case may be. The first miracle recorded by Matthew—the cleansing of the leper—may serve as an

example. Luke's account is longer, and Mark's half as long again, and both of these add a verse giving a touching account of the effect of disobedience after being healed, showing how the Lord's ministry was hindered by its being published and noised abroad (Matt. viii. 2-4; Mark i. 40-45; Luke v. 12-16). Mark shows this up remarkably in connection with the man's action, while Luke makes the matter more general, as being frequently the case, and characteristically refers to the Lord's resource in *prayer*. But the omission of these features in Matthew's gospel serves to fix the reader's attention upon the leper's remarkable faith in owning the Lord's *power* to heal, while unable to base his request upon any Old Testament promise that God would heal leprosy. The limit of true faith is the written Word, which plainly sets forth what God desires we should expect from His gracious hand. Faith cannot go beyond this. But the man owned that the Lord was Almighty, and the Lord immediately answered his petition.

On the other hand, the character of Emmanuel is carefully maintained all through this gospel, and the consequent association of His own with himself in this respect is prominent. In the account of the Transfiguration scene, His face shone "as the sun," no doubt an allusion to Malachi iv., "the Sun of Righteousness." But in chapter xiii. 43 the same description is given of the saints in glory. This is only seen in Matthew.

The above remarks will, we trust, suffice to convince the attentive reader of the importance of being well acquainted with Matthew, in order to derive increased profit from the gospels of Mark and Luke, and to find increasingly how all are needed to bring us nearer to the blessed Lord Himself, who deigned to become man for the carrying out of the Father's will. W. J. L.

The Last Words of Paul.

“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine. . . . But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing” (2 Tim. iv. 1-8).

IT is scarcely possible to read Paul's second epistle to Timothy without being struck with the deep gravity of the tone adopted by the apostle in these, his last recorded words. If the last utterances of the great men of *this* world are worth treasuring up, what shall we say of these solemn parting words of this “chosen vessel” of the Christian dispensation? In view of his speedy departure, the veteran leader in the path of devoted service pours out his soul in burning words of exhortation and encouragement, into the heart and mind of his young and faithful disciple, as to whom he had said to the Corinthians, “I have no man like-minded.”

The first epistle is not much less impressive; probably only two or three years separated them, but they were fateful years. Declension had already set in, and words of warning mingled with exhortations to faithfulness and courage, follow each other in rapid succession, as the apostle unburdens his heart, and commits to his timid but devoted “son in the faith” the stewardship of the precious things with which he had himself been entrusted. In the first chapter we read, “This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy” (ver. 18); again, “I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus

Christ, and the elect angels," etc. (chap. v. 21); and, "I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ" (chap. vi. 13). Might we not say then, that this manner of exhortation is characteristic of both epistles, but more especially of the second?

As Joshua, in the twenty-third chapter of the book called after his name, reproves, rebukes, and exhorts the assembled elders of Israel, so this Joshua of the New Testament, in a similar way, calmly reviews the situation, so to speak. He had been raised up of God to lead His people into possession of their exalted privileges, which lie beyond the Jordan of the death and resurrection of Christ; but he found the same disposition in the hearts of God's people of this dispensation, as was found in the old one, namely, to stop short of God's purpose and to "despise the pleasant land." It was the same reluctance to take possession of what was really theirs, in the energy of faith, and this because of the disposition to settle down in the world's pleasant pastures, and seductive resting-places.

Sadly he warns Timothy of the character of the "last days"; and then after exhorting him to continue in the things which he had learned, and had been assured of, knowing of whom he had learned them (chap. iii. 14*), he bursts out again in the words of the fourth chapter, "I charge thee therefore before

* In the light of this commendation of the truth as taught by the apostles and contained in the Scriptures; we desire to draw the reader's attention to the remarks of a competent scholar (the late W. Kelly) respecting the translation of verse 16, as given in the Revised Version. "The revisers say, 'Every scripture inspired

God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His Kingdom; *preach the word.*" This is the first exhortation, and how appropriately it comes from such a servant! What a preacher Paul had been! To Jews and Gentiles, far and near, in the synagogues of his own countrymen, and in the regions beyond. Never tiring and rarely resting, "in labours more abundant," he had preached the word. Mark, he does not say "preach the gospel," though surely that would be included, but "preach the word"—the whole word, the wide range of truth in all its breadth and blessedness. And how appropriately and justly it comes from one who was himself pre-eminently what he exhorted Timothy to be! How fitting, too, that he should be the one inspired of God to say to another, "Be instant in season, out of season!" It is the tendency to flag in our efforts that so often tests us; we are so apt to work in fits and starts, and to look for the approval of our labours from one another, instead of from the Lord alone.

The next clause is equally interesting and instructive; and as we hear him saying, "reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine," we wonder *why* this strange admixture—*long-suffering* and teaching. But well did Paul know how necessary this qualification of long-suffering is to any servant who would try

of God is also profitable,' etc. They turn a plain construction into one not only awkward but ambiguous. For their rendering might mean 'as being inspired,' and thus it would only differ in *assuming* what the A.V. gives as *asserting*; which would not help the desired end. But taken to mean 'if inspired,' it contradicts the N.T. *norma loquendi* of *graphee*, which is appropriated therein to no writing but God's inspired word. Not so *grammata* in verse 15, which required *hiera* to designate the O.T.; *pasa graphee* here means 'every scripture,' old or new. Every such is inspired."

to carry out these injunctions in the midst of the saints. Had he not "agonised that Christ be formed in them"? "Warning night and day with tears," and withal, "exhorting and comforting and charging, as a father doth his children"? (1 Thess. ii. 11.)

And what was the apostle's present earthly reward for his service?—"All they in Asia be turned away from me;" again, "At my first answer no man stood with me." Well, indeed, might he say, "With all long-suffering and teaching!"

T. R.

(To be Continued.)

Brief Studies in Prophecy—iv.

THE interval between the Lord's coming for His saints and His appearing with them in glory.

We find in Scripture three personages who play a leading part in the events of this period, namely, the head of the Roman Empire, the Antichrist, and the Assyrian. The first two of these are brought before us in Revelation xiii.; the former under the figure of a beast arising out of the sea; the latter, a beast arising out of the earth. The sea is, in prophetic imagery, the symbol of the unsettled, turbulent state of things, somewhat like what existed at the time of the French Revolution. This beast has ten horns and seven heads; and from the explanation given us in chapter xvii. we learn that the seven heads are seven mountains, and the ten horns are ten kings, who receive power for one and the same time with the beast, that is, with the head of the revived Roman Empire, as is clearly indicated by the seven hills or mountains. This re-formation or reconstruction of the Roman Empire which ruled and dominated the world for so many centuries, will be a very remarkable event, and will be the cause of wonder and admiration to the

dwellers on earth of that day. But it would be difficult for us to say exactly what countries will be included in it; and, as a matter of fact, the limits of the empire varied at different times in the past. Though Charlemagne and the first Napoleon held sway over a very large part of Europe and of what had been the Roman Empire, yet it has never been united under one head since it was broken to pieces by the barbarian hordes in about the fourth and fifth centuries. Moreover the Great Powers which exist in Europe now are not at all united under one chief; they are, in fact, exceedingly jealous lest one of them should become too strong, and what is called "the balance of power" should be lost.

If we look at the Latin or Roman kingdom as it is now, it is a comparatively weak power; but what circumstances may lead up to the putting of such complete power into the hands of its chief or head in a future day, we cannot say. It may be a political move, designed to form a union of nations of the West as a counterpoise to the growing power of the East, or it may be brought about for other political reasons without war or bloodshed. But, however this may be it is clear that, when the Roman Empire is revived, it will have a distinctly Satanic origin; it will ascend out of the bottomless pit, will blaspheme God, His name and His people, and derive its power directly from the dragon (Satan). We are told in chapter xvii. that this beast "was," that is, it existed in the days when John wrote; then it "is not," for the empire in its unity under one head has disappeared; and it "shall be" (R. V.), it will reappear in its last imperial form, with its ten subordinate kings.* This beast is said to

* "The nations broke up, and, for the time destroyed the beast—gave it its deadly wound. These receive power one hour with the beast: therefore the beast must come up again. It existed at the first without the kings. Then these kings existed without it, and

continue forty-two months, that is three and a half years, or the last half of the week mentioned in Daniel ix.

The prophet Daniel describes this same person. In chapter vii. we find the fourth or Roman Empire under the figure of a beast with ten horns. Among these ten there came up another "little horn" before whom three of the others were plucked up by the roots, or subdued. This horn exercises supreme authority over the others, and is distinguished by great penetration of mind; it speaks great words against the Most High, and thinks to change the Jewish times and the law, which shall be given into his hand "until a time, times, and half a time," or three years and a half, the same period as we have already seen in Revelation. Though the seat of his authority is in the West, at Rome, he occupies himself with the affairs of the Jews, who will then be gathered back to Palestine. But in the end he shall meet his judgment at the hand of the Lord Himself. Thus we read, "the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy to the end." He will be taken in open rebellion against God and His Christ, and cast alive into hell without any further judgment, as we find in Revelation xix. 20.

We have now to speak of the Antichrist, or second beast, of Revelation xiii. He comes up out of the "earth," which is a figure of the settled or ordered state of things, as contrasted with the "sea," or state of unrest and anarchy. He has two horns like a lamb, but speaks as a dragon. Whatever his pretensions may

you have the ten kings without the beast. At the end you get the ten kings with the beast. Men form schemes; but the moment I get to scripture, I can surely say we have not the beast in this form yet. What is presented here is subsisting kingdoms, but kingdoms which have given their power, without ceasing to be kingdoms, to one head, who leads all as a whole. . . . This beast, with its subordinate kingdoms, rises up in open rebellion against the authority of Christ, while Christ comes with His armies to judge and destroy them all."—J. N. D., *Coll. Writ.*, xi. 499.

be, to the spiritual mind, taught of God, his voice betrays his Satanic origin. He is a complete travesty of the Lord Jesus Christ. The seat of his power is at Jerusalem, and he acts in close league with the first beast of this chapter, the imperial head of the revived Roman Empire. He is more of a religious than a political or civil ruler, though he has this latter character also.

At the present time the priesthood of Christ is exercised in heaven on behalf of His saints, and Satan is a kind of anti-priest, the "accuser of the brethren": but when the time spoken of in Revelation xiii. arrives, Satan will have been cast out of heaven (Rev. xii. 7-9), and will have his representative man on earth, not exactly as anti-priest, but as a kind of false prophet. The Antichrist has power to perform remarkable miracles, causing fire to come down from heaven, as the prophet Elijah did when witnessing for the true God and against Baal. He makes an image of the first beast, to which he has power to give breath (not "life," *that* belongs to God), and he causes that all should worship this image on pain of death.

There are many passages of Scripture, both in the Old and New Testaments, descriptive of the Antichrist in various ways. We can only touch on a few of these. Our Lord Himself said to the Jews in His day, "I am come in My Father's name, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive." Solemn pronouncement! If they would not have the Sent One of the Father, they should be caught in Satan's snare, and receive Satan's counterfeit, as they will in a future day. Again, we read in the First Epistle of John, "Little children, it is the last hour: and as ye have heard that Antichrist cometh, even now there have arisen many antichrists." The Antichrist (only so-called in this place) is here characterised by two

things—he denies that Jesus is the Christ, this is Christ's relationship to Israel as their Messiah; and he denies the Father and the Son, the latter being the special relationship in which the divine Persons are revealed in Christianity. He is, therefore, the complete embodiment of avowed infidelity and unbelief in the truth in its full character as revealed in Scripture.

We have a very distinct reference to the Antichrist in 2 Thessalonians ii., where he is called the "man of sin," the "son of perdition," "the lawless one." All the craft and subtlety, as well as the power of Satan will accompany his manifestation, for his coming is said to be "after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders"; this is the exact contrast to our Lord Jesus Christ, who did His works in the power of the Holy Spirit. Christ was, as Peter said to the Jews (Acts ii. 22), "A man approved of God, by powers, and wonders, and signs, which God did by Him." These same three words are applied to the man of sin, and the word "lying" may be taken as an adjective applying to all three. He is Satan's exact counterfeit of Christ, and the instrument of his lying deception. In the garden of Eden, Satan said, "Ye shall be as gods," and this man "exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped"*. It is not here a question of imperial power so much, but of religious deception; his deceits will be practised and his pretensions manifested in the temple at Jerusalem, which will be rebuilt at that day. There he sets himself forth as God. This is the full climax of man's self-will and pride.

F. G. B.

* "Is it not said in 2 Thessalonians ii. that he owns no God? The answer is 'Yes'; but the difficulty is completely removed by the testimony of Daniel xi., where we see that he does not 'regard any god'; while, at the same time, he honours his god, *Mauzzim*. Outwardly, before the Jews, he will have a god; inwardly, he has none. In 2 Thessalonians ii. it is, to my mind, religious and moral." —J. N. D., *Coll. Writ.*, xxviii. 533.

Laodicea.

A CORRESPONDENT referred recently to the fact that the features of the seventh assembly of Revelation iii. (Laodicea), are prominent at the present time. We might expect this, as the end of the age and the coming of the Lord, draw near.

The word of the Lord to this Church is well worthy of our earnest consideration; "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot." Nothing is more displeasing to Christ than lukewarmness, indifference, being neither one thing or other; so much so that He says, "I will spue thee out of My mouth," as something positively nauseous to Him. Then along with this there was boastfulness, pride, saying, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," when, in fact, they had need of everything, being "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked," but they knew it not.

The very spirit of the age contributes to all this. Was there ever more pretension to human learning, advanced knowledge, greater light, than there is to-day? And then the spirit of the world has so come in amongst professing Christians, that there is not at all the definiteness in testimony for Christ there once was. The world and the Church are so shaded off one into the other, that it is difficult often to tell which is which.

Let us, then, take these considerations to heart, and seek grace to walk the path of lowly, humble dependence on the Lord, in separation from this present evil world. It is always the path of blessing for the soul; where communion with Him is known and enjoyed, where intelligence in His mind and His word is found, and where the sunshine of His love fills and satisfies the heart.

Gleanings and Jottings.

WE must look *above* our path to be able to walk *in* it. A Christian, who has heaven before him and a Saviour in glory as the object of his affections, will walk well upon the earth. He who has only the earthly path for his rule will fail in the intelligence and motives needed to walk in it; he will become a prey to worldliness, and his Christian walk in the world will be more or less on a level with the world in which he walks. The eyes upward on Jesus will keep the heart and steps in a path conformable to Jesus, and which consequently will glorify Him and make Him known in the world. Seeing what we are, we must have a motive above our path to enable us to walk in it.

The True Nazarite.—The spirit of self-denial, entire renunciation of His own will, obedience, and dependence upon His Father, is seen throughout the life of Jesus. After John's baptism, He was praying when He received the Holy Ghost. Before calling the apostles He spent the whole night in prayer. After the miracle of feeding the five thousand with five loaves, He went up into a mountain apart to pray. If the request is made to sit on His right hand and on His left in His Kingdom, it is not His to give, but to them for whom it is prepared of His Father. In His agony of Gethsemane, His expectation and dread of death is all laid before His Father; and the cup which His Father has given Him, shall He not drink it? The effect is that all is calm before men. He is the Nazarite, separated from men by His entire communion with His Father, and by the obedience of a Son who had no other will than to fulfil the good pleasure of

His Father. It was his meet to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work. . . . It is Christ in heaven who is the true Nazarite. . . . His disciples were not of the world, even as He was not of the world. The Assembly, which was formed of His disciples, should walk as separated from the world and set apart unto Himself in a heavenly life.

Let us notice God's grace and condescension in His ways with His people. Was Israel in bondage? God came as a Redeemer. Must the people wander as pilgrims in the wilderness? God also dwelt in a tent in their midst. Must they wage war in Canaan? God appears with a drawn sword, as Captain of Jehovah's host. Were they established in peace in Canaan? God had a dwelling built for Him like the palaces of kings.

J. N. D.

* * * * *

Three Prayer-Meetings.—I would like to draw your attention briefly to three prayer-meetings. I believe one of the great needs of the day is prayer. There may be a great amount of knowledge and intelligence, and going along with the methods of the world and imitating their ways; but what is wanted is unswerving, unwavering confidence in God.

The first prayer-meeting in the Bible, as far as I know, is in Daniel ii. There were just four people at this meeting. Do not be discouraged by small numbers; you might have one hundred together at a meeting and no answer at all, and you might have only four earnest, praying men, and very distinct answers. Here, a time of trial had arisen, they came together to desire mercies from the God of heaven, and how marvellously God came in and met their need! So much so that Daniel could say, "I thank Thee, and praise Thee, O Thou

God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what *we* desired of Thee: for Thou hast now made known unto *us* the King's matter."

In the next chapter you get the steadfastness of three of these praying men—Daniel himself is not mentioned. They absolutely refused to bow down to the image which the king had set up, nothing could induce them to do so. The fact was, they had confidence in God, and they made it a question between *God* and the king, not between *them* and the king. "We are not careful," they said, "to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us . . . but if not . . . we will not serve thy gods." It was as much as to say, "No matter how it goes, we will not bow down."

The next prayer-meeting I would refer to is in Acts xii. We are not told how many were at this meeting, but we read that there were "many" gathered together for prayer. What I wish to bring before you in connection with this is *definiteness* in prayer. They were met to pray about a special object, namely, the deliverance of Peter out of prison. God, in His grace, blessedly answered their requests; indeed beyond their expectations. We ought to have such confidence in one another that, when we meet for prayer we would be free to mention any need which might press on the heart of any, so that it might be made a special subject of prayer.

The last of the three which I would now take up, you will find in Acts xvi. There were just two at this prayer-meeting and it was in a prison! We do not know what subject Paul and Silas prayed about, it may have been about the very men who had just beaten them and put them there. But we know God gave a

very remarkable answer in the conversion of the jailor and his household, as well as the earthquake, &c. We find in the case of Stephen also (Acts vii.), that God answered his prayer, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge," in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus himself.

Let us be encouraged, beloved brethren, to more earnest, united, believing prayer and supplication to God.—*Thoughts suggested by an address.*

* * * * *

"*Mary*" (John xx. 16). Only one word from the lips of the risen Saviour, but what a revolution it produced!

Drawn by deep affection for her Lord, Mary, out of whom He had cast seven devils, came to seek the living amongst the dead. But though love and affection filled her heart, darkness filled her soul, for she understood not the Scriptures that He must rise from the dead. But the moment His voice sounds on her ear, calling His own sheep by name, the darkness is dispelled, and the light and joy of His presence fills her heart. Her answer is one word only, Rabboni, my Master. It was Himself, and now as the risen One; and she possessed, not only the *knowledge* of His resurrection, but what was better still, she possessed *Himself*. She is found as a worshipper at His feet, but Jesus says, "Do not continue to touch me"; He was to be known, no longer as man on earth, nor as the Messiah of the Jews, but as the risen and glorified man in heaven.

We find in Matthew xxviii. 9, that the Lord allowed the women to hold Him by the feet, no doubt because there it typified the future day when He would be recognised again here below by the godly remnant of Israel as their Messiah. But in John xx. we get a glimpse of that new creation, where we "Know no

man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more." A glory belonged to His person, and results flow from His work, which far transcend even His glory as Messiah in the coming Kingdom. He had glorified the Father in His life; He had glorified God, and that infinitely and at all cost, in His death. And now God, in His perfect righteousness, had answered to it all, and had glorified Him in resurrection (John xiii. 31-32), soon to reinstate Him in that glory from whence He came, and which He possessed with the Father before the world was (John xvii. 5). Then, in chapter xx., there follows the new and blessed relationship, declared for the first time from the resurrection side of the empty grave, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." And how blessed to find that Mary, the very one whose heart found its absorbing object in Christ Himself—Mary who, if she was unintelligent, was inconsolable because He whom she loved was not there; *she* it was who was the suited vessel to convey these blessed tidings to the disciples! This relationship, so characteristic of Christianity, it is ours to know and enjoy now by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; for in truth we can look up by faith into that heaven where Jesus is, and say with adoring hearts, *Abba, Father.*"

The Judgment Seat of Christ.

Q. Is there any difference between the "judgment seat of Christ," and the "great white throne"; if so, what?

A. The expression "judgment seat of Christ" is used in 2 Corinthians v., when speaking of true Christians, or saints. "For we must all be manifested

before the judgment seat of Christ, that each may receive the things done in the body, according to those he has done, whether it be good or evil." This makes it clear that the saint, as well as the sinner who dies unsaved, will appear there. The differences between these two events comprise the following:—

(i.) **One of Time.**—The saint will appear before that judgment seat after the coming of the Lord and *before* the millennial reign. The sinner will appear *after* the millennial reign; heaven and earth having already "fled away" (Rev. xx. 11.). After this follows the *eternal state*,—on the one side, the "new heavens and new earth" for the saved: on the other, the lake of fire" for the lost. There is, therefore, more than a thousand years between these two judgments; and it is well to be clear that, at that solemn session of judgment called the "great white throne," *only* the *unsaved* appear.

(ii.) **One of Condition and Character.**—The saint will appear at the judgment seat in a *glorified body*, like the Judge who sits upon it, and with whom he will dwell eternally. He will be there to the glory of God, and as a trophy of the sufferings and death of Christ on the cross: eternally a witness of the efficacy of the sacrifice offered up at Calvary. The One who occupies the judgment seat is Himself the Saviour, and will be the object of the adoring worship of all His redeemed. Nevertheless, the believer will be manifested there, in order that he may "receive the things done in the body, according to those he has done, whether it be good or evil." Not, indeed, that he is to be judged for his sins; the Judge Himself having already declared that he "SHALL NOT COME INTO JUDGMENT" (John v. 24), and He will never go back on that. It is a solemn, yet a wholesome thought, that

we shall all be thus manifested. Fellow Christian! let me ask, Have you weighed this great fact, that the things you have done in the body are to pass under review in the searching light of the judgment seat? Not merely those things we regard as "service," but the things of your whole life? What sobriety of conduct this should produce in us now! What carefulness in our walk and ways, so as not to allow anything which would not suit the light of that day!

Then it should also have an effect upon us as regards others. The apostle says, "knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." The effect of this knowledge of the "terror of the Lord" upon him was that it impelled him to "persuade men"—to urge men with greater earnestness to "flee from the wrath to come." But, for the apostle himself, it awakened in him no fear. He could, with confidence say, "Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."

Q. Will the believer be judged for his sins at the judgment seat of Christ; and what will take place there so far as the believer's works are concerned?

A. Never can the believer be judged for his sins. To suppose that he could, would deny the Saviour's own word, that he "shall not come into judgment." God says in His word, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember NO MORE"; again, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Christ having borne the believer's sins in His own body on the tree and made a full atonement for them, they can never be imputed to him. The result is that he can have "boldness in the day of judgment," for all

has been fully and finally settled, and the Christ who died on the cross is now the risen and glorified Saviour in heaven. Thus the perfect love of God casts all fear out of the heart of him who believes (1 John iv. 18).

But there, at the judgement seat, the Christian will "receive the things done in the body," &c., and there he will receive his reward. Everything will be seen according to God's thoughts, and in its true light; and we shall be thankful to have it so. Christ Himself will put *His* value upon everything; and we may rest assured that He who said concerning Mary of Bethany, "Let her alone—she hath wrought a good work upon me—she hath done what she could," will pass by nothing to which He could attach a value, and will reward every act of service which has been done with a single eye to His glory. And what a tale will come out in that day! On the one hand, our weakness and failures, as well as those things of which He could approve: on the other, His infinite grace, which could bear with and sustain such poor failing things in going through such a world as this. May we, like the apostle, be zealous that, whether present or absent, we may be well pleasing to Him!

C. R. L.

The Last Words of Paul.

(*Concluded.*)

TIMOTHY was told to "do the work of an evangelist." What a rebuke this is to the narrowness of some who seem to think that ministry to the saints and love to the Church cannot be maintained in the heart at the same time with ardent desire for the conversion of sinners! There was no conflict between the two things in Paul. Labour for the saints was unceasing with him, yet never did his heart lose its longing to carry the glad tidings of Christ to the regions beyond;

to "make known to all nations for the obedience of faith" the revelation of the mystery now made manifest.

May the Lord grant that this little meditation upon the last words of the apostle may stir us up to the like devotedness in every department of His vineyard, and to watchfulness against the enemy's tactics of setting one service above another, and in anywise disparaging "another man's line of things." The strength and persistence of the enemy's attack to-day upon the stronghold of truth is unmistakable, and many of the outposts have already succumbed. Like a wily foe he has found weak places in the resistance of the defenders; and one after another supposed stalwart, has fallen a prey to the encroaches of worldliness and error, by giving up dependence on "the word of truth, the power of God, the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left."

How fitting, then, are these trenchant sentences! And now, in the spirit of the last few verses of the Galatian epistle, as if he would again say "let no man trouble me," he utters (by the Holy Spirit) those memorable words, "*I have fought the good fight.*" Thirty years of unceasing labours had not diminished his zeal. With sword in one hand and trowel in the other he had wrought in the work; now, with the end in view (and what an end!), he says without a murmur, "*I have finished my course.*"

It was not a brilliant finish, as this world, or even the "Christian world" (so called), would count brilliancy. "All men forsook me" does not say much for the estimate even of the Church for this faithful servant: and perhaps it was partly on account of what he says in the next sentence, "I have kept the faith," that he was left thus alone.

Through all his career this was ever true of our

apostle; he had unswervingly, uncompromisingly, "kept the faith." It had been committed to his trust (1. Tim. i. 11), and as a faithful steward he had guarded the sacred trust. With deep and tender regard he exhorts Timothy, in the first epistle (chap. vi. 20), "O Timothy, keep the deposit which is committed to thy trust"; and again, "That good deposit which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us" (2. Tim. i. 14.); for he himself had kept this good deposit of the truth, the faith, inviolable to the last. To him "the faith" was no vague, uncertain agglomeration of truths, to be held only while they were popularly acceptable, and trimmed to meet the fashion of the day; but one great and luminous whole, a distinct and definite revelation from God concerning His Son Jesus Christ. It was, truly, something that could be "*walked in*," and "*lived in*"; and that we can be "fellow helpers" in, as the apostle John says. And so with Paul; it is "unfeigned faith" that he rejoices in, and exhorts to; whether with a fickle Galatian, a philosophical Corinthian, or a once compromising Peter. It is faith unfeigned, "*the faith* which was once delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). He had wrestled against "wicked spirits in the heavenlies," as well as the powers of the "lion" in the world's high places (2 Tim. iv. 17), and he had not been worsted in the combat, because he trusted in the Lord, who, he says, "shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly Kingdom."

Delivered out of the mouth of the lion,—to the righteous Judge, and to the crown which He would give, Paul now looks. We do not find a word here, or indeed in any part of the epistle, about the rapture of the saints, or the presence of the Lord to gather His own to Himself; but always *His appearing* is kept in view;

and how perfect and appropriate this is! It is the day of manifestation that Paul thinks of, without fear and without apprehension. And very beautiful it is to hear him say, notwithstanding the turning away and forsaking of certain of the saints, that the crown of righteousness not only awaited him, but "all them also that love His appearing." May the Lord graciously grant that both reader and writer may be amongst the number!

T. R.

The Religion of the Modern Man.

AN address on "The religion of the modern man," delivered some time ago before the Y.M.C.A. training school at Springfield, Mass., and published in an American magazine, gives us a very fair idea of the trend of modern religious thought. The gist and substance of it is just this:—The advance of the arts and sciences, the progress of biblical criticism, and the revolutionary forces of the age, have so changed everything in the religious world (so called), that we must make our ideas square with the progress of modern thought! Christianity must suit itself to evolution and the ever-changing theories of men's minds, and the old ideas must be recast!

Man and his great achievements fill and absorb the mind; not *God* and His supreme authority and glory. In a word, Man's reason and cleverness, and not God's revelation, is to be the moving power of this age which vaunts itself on its advancement in learning and knowledge! Everything must bend to man and man's reason: simple subjection to the authority of God's word being put out of court by many of the leaders of religious thought in this enlightened age.

But, after all, what is man? When we consider the vast universe, of which we know comparatively little

or nothing, we may well ask, What is man? Those heavenly bodies which are the work of God's hands, created and upheld in their perfect order, have doubtless run their courses for many thousands of years, and we may well say, with Bildad, "We are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow" (Job viii. 9), and with the psalmist, "As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so it flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone: and the place thereof shall know it no more" (Ps. ciii. 15, 16). All the great achievements of science are but small indeed compared with what is to be known; and not one of them, useful as they are in their place, can touch the root of moral evil in man's being or bring the soul one whit nearer to God.*

And what of the application of man's wisdom and research in the domain of spiritual questions—concerning God and His relationship with man? The truth is, God has written "folly" on all man's wisdom the moment it tries to investigate or explain these matters or the question of the soul's relation to Him. "Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" says the inspired Scripture. Man in his wisdom would not have God when He came into this world in the person of His own Son, in perfect love and grace. And is this world one whit changed in its verdict to-day, spite of its boasted progress?

* Scientific men, if honest, must admit their inability to explain even the most simple facts in nature around us, as well as how little they really know. Lord Kelvin says, "One word characterises the most strenuous of the efforts for the advancement of science that I have made perseveringly for fifty-five years, and that word is—failure. I know no more of electric and magnetic force, or of the relation between either electricity and ponderable matter, or of chemical affinity, than I knew fifty years ago."

Certainly not. It will have religion, but it will not have Christ; unless, indeed, to patronise Him and place Him as a model, a kind of ideal personage for the unregenerate man to imitate! But the wisdom of the age will not admit the lost and ruined condition of man, and the absolute necessity for a *new birth*, an entirely new life and nature, which alone can give capacity to understand divine things. This is one of its most fundamental mistakes, and it accounts for much of the failure to understand the Bible and the objections raised to it by the learned sceptics of our day. Truly has it been written, "The natural man [man unregenerate, in the state of nature] receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. ii. 14). Indeed without the new birth, there is no true conception either of man as he is, or of God as revealed in His Word.

Moreover, Christ is the true test for everything. The Apostle John, writing specially in view of the growing infidelity of the "last hour," commences his first epistle with a setting forth of the person of Christ as the Word of Life, the only true and adequate manifestation of God and eternal life. But the modern theorist, who cries up the merits of investigations in what is called "comparative religions," professes to find much that is commendable in the system of sages and heathen philosophers of bygone days; which he proposes to place in the same category with Christianity; only, perhaps, admitting that, of all these religions, Christianity is the best!

There is no blindness so great as that which deliberately closes one's eyes to the light and turns away from it. Surely no one could be guilty of such

folly, unless blinded by a positive animus against true Christianity and a spirit of actual hostility to Christ.

But the Scripture itself, foreseeing from the beginning the real bent of man's will and mind, meets these evils in its own divine way. It presents to us "That which was from the beginning" (John i. 1). Once we have the person of Christ before us, this is the closing of all cavil and opposition for the true Christian. There can be no advance, no development beyond "That which was from the beginning." Christ was no merely ideal personage, but a real, living man, whom they had heard, seen with their eyes, contemplated and handled. The eternal life which was with the Father was manifested on earth to witnesses chosen of God to report the same to us. Here then is the momentous truth for every soul—Christ, the eternal life has been manifested. It is no question now with God of the amelioration of the first man, or of giving a place to man and his petty presumption; what *He* does is to set aside entirely fallen Adam, and to bring in the Second man, the last Adam. This necessarily excludes everything connected with the first man.

Christ was no less a person than *God* manifested in flesh, the eternal life which was with the Father come down here in grace, the true God and eternal life. He has no compeer. None can, none dare, stand on the same level with Him. If He brings His people near to Himself, unites them to Himself as the risen Head, they being members of His body, He does so in pure and infinite *grace*. All the petty speculations of man's mind, all his wisdom and learning—His theories of evolution in religion, disappear like the morning cloud before the brightness of the sun. This world is but a scene of moral and spiritual darkness, in which man, when without Christ, gropes in the vain pursuit of what

he believes to be the truth. It is of no use blinking the fact that man cannot by searching find out God.

But Christ is "*the* truth"; His words expressed exactly what He was, neither more nor less, for He could say, "I am what I speak" (John viii. 25). Now truth, just because it is truth, can never admit of change or development. We may not know the truth and we may have to ascertain what is truth; but truth itself can never change or vary. And if God has revealed the truth in His word, as He has, blessed be His name; that word cannot be made to accommodate itself to the varying ideas of men's minds.

But there is more—Christ was, not only the truth, but the light, which, coming into the world sheds its light on every man, Jew or Gentile. At the close of His public ministry He could say, "I am come into the world [as] light, that every one that believeth on Me may not abide in darkness" (John xii. 46). But there is in this world the great enemy, Satan, whose unceasing aim and object it is to cloud the glory, and dishonour the name and person of the blessed Son of God. This he does most effectually by exalting the first man in his own eyes; until, finally, he falls so completely under satanic power, that he actually sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God (2 Thess. ii. 4). We see the foreshadowings of this dark and evil influence already at work, filling the mind of fallen man with ideas of his own power and greatness.

May God graciously shield His people from the intolerable spirit of man-worship and self-exaltation, so prevalent in this present evil age. It is sad to notice that even true Christians sometimes become tainted with it. Only in nearness to Christ himself, in complete dependence upon Him, and in soul-subjec-

tion to His word can safety for our souls be found. The path of dependence and obedience is the path where the light shines, as it is also the path of true peace and joy.

Brief Studies in Prophecy—v.

The period between the coming of the Lord for His saints and His appearing with them in glory (continued).

WE may now turn to another striking passage where we get further light respecting the Antichrist and his actings. It is in that remarkable chapter, Daniel xi., which gives us such a concise survey of events set down in the scripture of truth; which were then future, but which have since become matters of history, at least up to verse 35. The history, given in its prophetic form, commences with the Persian kingdom, which was then just in its beginning, and carries us right on (from ver. 35) to the latter days, which are, of course, still future. All is in connection with Daniel's people, the Jews, and with the land of promise. The prophet speaks of the "time of the end," "the time appointed," which evidently shows a break in the historical sequence of the chapter at this verse, and brings in the events of the last days. Here we find "the king" introduced abruptly, as a personage well known to the student of prophecy; "and the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods." Is not the unity of Scripture, of which sceptics seem to understand nothing, a manifest mark of its divine inspiration? Here we have the prophet speaking hundreds of years before Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, and yet delineating

the same features as are attributed to the same person in that epistle. Self-will carried beyond all bounds, and impious opposition to God Himself, is what characterises the Antichrist. It would seem from this passage in Daniel xi., that the Antichrist will be a Jew, indeed, it would be difficult to see how the apostate Jews would be deceived by his pretensions as a false Messiah, if this were not so. Thus we read: "Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers (Jehovah, the true God of Israel) nor the desire of women (Christ), nor any god." But, as man cannot do without an object of some kind, he honours the god of fortresses or forces: because the resources he relies on to carry out his designs and enforce his decrees cannot, after all, go beyond human strength of arms, though Satan's power acts behind it all.

Let us pause here for a moment to consider the moral and present effect which this prophetic teaching of the word of God should have upon us. There can be no doubt that much of what we see around us at the present moment will contribute to, and find its full expression in the Antichrist. Infidelity in its various phases, such as the general unsettling of the belief in the authority and inspiration of Scripture, the socialism and lawlessness which is so widespread, the growing pride and boastfulness of the age; all these things and many more will find their complete climax in "the lawless one." God warns His people beforehand as to what is coming, and it is for us to seek grace to keep clear of the spirit and tendency of the age, learning of Him who was meek and lowly in heart, who, though God over all, was truly the dependent and obedient One here, and who came down from heaven, not to do His own will, but the will of the Father who sent Him.

Turning now to Isaiah lvii. 9, we find "the king"

introduced abruptly as follows: "And thou wentest to the king with ointment, and didst increase thy perfumes, and didst send thy messengers far off, and didst debase thyself even unto hell." How vain it will be for the apostate part of the Jewish nation in that day to ally themselves with this deceitful enemy of Christ! It is, in truth, to debase themselves even to hell. And yet this is just what the scornful men who will then rule in Jerusalem, will do in order to secure themselves, if they can, from the overflowing scourge which God will bring upon them, namely, the Assyrian. So we find in Isaiah xxviii. 15, "Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves." Vain delusion to think that they can escape God's chastisement thus! Terrible hardness of heart, under the influence of Satan's craft! That man should rise to such a pitch of pride and wickedness as characterises the Antichrist, we can hardly conceive, but God allows this great manifestation of satanic energy as a just judgment upon the apostate nation of Israel, as well as upon apostate Christendom.~ "For lo," says the prophet Zechariah, "I will raise up a shepherd in the land, which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither seek the young one, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still: but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces." Then follows God's judgment upon him; "Woe to the worthless shepherd that leaveth the flock! the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened." The cup of his iniquity is full, and his judgment comes at last. We learn from

various scriptures that he will meet his end, not by being overcome by force of arms, nor by angelic power, but by the judgment of the Lord Himself in person when He appears. Thus we read in 2 Thessalonians ii. 8, "Whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of His mouth, and bring to naught with the manifestation* of His coming." With this we may compare Isaiah xxx. 33, which may be best read, "For Tophet is ordained of old; for the king also it is prepared: he hath made it deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it." "The king" here is clearly the Antichrist and his fearful doom, as being cast into hell, is plainly brought before us.

Finally, we get the execution of judgment on these two leaders in evil—the head of the Roman Empire and the Antichrist who acted in league with him—described as the subject of prophetic vision in Revelation xix.: "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him . . . these both were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone." The Lord Jesus will descend from heaven in warrior-judgment, as King of kings and Lord of lords, followed by the armies which are in heaven, and will execute summary judgment on both these; who will be cast straight into hell, without any further judgment. "Everlasting fire," we are told in Matthew xxv., is prepared [not for men but] for the Devil and his angels," but what a striking fact it is that these two men will be cast in there 1,000 years before the Devil! During the millennium the Devil will be kept bound in the bottomless pit, or abyss (Rev. xx.); after which he will be loosed for a little season.

* It is remarkable that the words *epiphania* and *parousia* which are used separately elsewhere are brought together here.

F. G. B.

“Rejoice in the Lord alway.”

HOW it shows the superiority of Christianity to all adverse circumstances, that the Christian is encouraged to rejoice in the Lord *alway*! Times of difficulty and trial do and will come, but let us never forget that word “alway.” Paul had been a prisoner for about four years when he wrote to the Philippians, and he had to say sorrowfully, “All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s”; but in spite of it all, there is no epistle in which he speaks so much of rejoicing in the Lord.

Then, again, it was part of the legacy which our Lord Jesus left to His disciples, that *His* joy might remain in them and that *their* joy might be full. Was he not a “Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief?” Yes, truly, but His joys were drawn from outside this world; they flowed from perfect communion with the Father above, and therefore the perennial spring of joy in His heart was never dried up.

And the Holy Spirit, by the apostle John, unfolds to the saints the blessed truth of “fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ,” which should be the enjoyed portion of all, in order that “your joy may be full.”

We find also a very striking word in Neh. viii., “The joy of the Lord is your strength.” It was not then the palmy days of Solomon; those days had long since passed away, and the captivity in Babylon was the sad witness of the people’s sin and failure. But a little remnant had returned; and they were found in tears as the reading of the word of God showed them how deeply they had sinned. To them the encouraging message was sent, “THE JOY OF THE LORD IS YOUR STRENGTH.”

May this be *our* blessed experience also!

Gleanings.

THE Value of the Soul.—What are all the schemes and undertakings which begin, continue, and end in time, when compared with eternity and the salvation of your never-dying soul? They are as the small dust of the balance. “What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” If you had the wealth of a Rothschild, the money king; if you stood on the loftiest pinnacle of literary fame or political ambition; if your name were adorned with all the honours which the universities of this world can bestow; if your brow were wreathed with the laurels, and your breast covered with the medals of a hundred victories: what would it profit you? You must leave all; you must pass through the narrow arch of time into the boundless ocean of eternity. Men of princely wealth, men of literary fame, men who have ruled by their intellectual power the House of Lords and Commons, men who have held thousands hanging entranced upon their lips, men who have reached the very highest point of naval, military, and forensic distinction, have passed away into eternity; and the awful question as to such is, “Where is the soul?”

C. H. M.

* * * * *

Watching.—Whether the close to us be by death or the rapture . . . the day and the hour remain alike untold; no pledge of it is promised at all. Each and all are set on the watch tower. We wait for the “Son from heaven.” . . . With Enoch, no circumstance necessarily delayed his translation. His walk with God was not a circumstance. And that was all that led the way to his ascension. And so with the Church now gathering. She waits for no circumstance; no

years measure her sojourn here, no events prepare her heavenward way.

The sense of the nearness of the glory should be cherished by us. I mean its nearness in *place* as well as *time*. . . . It is but a thin veil, which either hides or distances it. The path is short, and the journey rapidly accomplished. We should cherish the thought of this, beloved. It has its power as well as its consolation. And so ere long, when the time of 1 Cor. xv. 51 arrives, that moment of the general transfiguration, as soon as the voice of the archangel summons it, the glory will be here again, as in the twinkling of an eye, to do its business with us, and in the image of the heavenly to bear us up, like Enoch, to the heavenly country.

Then shall the Lord be glorified in His saints; not as now, in their obedience and service, their holiness and fruitfulness, but in their *personal* beauty. Arrayed in white, and shining in our glories, we shall be the wondrous witness of what He has done for the sinner that trusts in Him. And as one much loved and honoured in the Lord has just written to me, so I write to you, beloved: "No lark ever sprang up on a dewy morning to sing its sweet song with such alacrity as you and I shall spring up to meet our Lord in the air." And his exhortation to me I would make mine to you (though feebly echoed from my heart): "Oh, my brother, set it before your mind's eye as a living reality, and then let hope patiently wait for the fulfilment!"—"Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

J. G. B.

The Gospel, and Preparation for it.

THE opening verses of Mark's Gospel have a character of their own, which stamps the whole book, calling attention to the words and works of the blessed Lord Himself, from the point of view of the GOSPEL. It was *His* gospel emphatically, but only the "beginning" of it; for until He had died and risen again from the dead, the gospel, as we understand it, could not be preached.

It may be said that the account of His death and resurrection completes what is needed to give the gospel its full character, in as far as the *facts* are concerned, which form the basis of it; and all the more so as, in contrast with Matthew's account, these are presented particularly by Mark as the Lord's "teaching" (see chaps. viii. 31; ix. 31, as compared with Matt. xvi. 21; xvii. 22). We may also add that Mark is the only one of the four Evangelists who mentions the further fact of the Lord being "*seated* on the right hand of God." That carries us on to the beginning of the Acts, and the giving of the Holy Ghost, as foretold by Jesus Himself in John xiv.-xvi.; consequently, also to the mission specially given to the Apostle Paul, from the glory (Acts ix.), and which characterised "*His* gospel" (Rom. xvi. 25).

But our present object is rather to consider the gospel from the way in which it is presented by Mark, as it "at first began to be spoken by the Lord," before it could be "confirmed unto us by them that heard Him" (Heb. ii. 3).

And here we may notice the fact, that in the first books of the New Testament the Greek word for "gospel" is almost confined to Mark's writing. Matthew uses it three times, defining it by the added words "of

the kingdom" (chaps. iv. 23, ix. 35, and xxiv. 14). Only once does he use it absolutely, "*this* gospel" (xxvi. 13), exactly as Mark does in the parallel passage (xiv. 9). In all these cases the word "preach" occurs. Luke does not use the Greek *noun* at all, but in place of it employs ten times the *verb*, whence comes our English word "evangelise,"—to preach, or show glad tidings.

It only requires that these facts be weighed to see what a very remarkable place is given to "the gospel" by Mark. Only once are the words "of the kingdom" added, and these are thought by many to be an interpolation, as the old manuscripts and versions differ in this respect. They might possibly have been added in very early days in accordance with Luke iv. 43, viii. 1, and xvi. 16, and because the expression "gospel of God" sounded too extraordinary. But the more this remarkable book is read, the less one wonders at such an expression being used. Paul commences the Epistle to the Romans with it, besides using it half a dozen other times, while Peter has it once (1 Pet. iv. 17). The word "preach" is found with it in Mark i. 14, as also in xiii. 10, xiv. 9, and xvi. 15. In the other four passages where it occurs the word "gospel" is found alone.

It suffices to read these to feel their importance:—

Mark i. 1. "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God."

i. 15. "Jesus came . . . saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel."

viii. 35. "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life

for My sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it."

- x. 29-30. "There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life."

Compare the last two passages with Matthew x. 39 and xvi. 25, or with Luke ix. 24 and xvii. 33, for the former one (see also John xii. 25); and for the latter passage, with Matthew xix. 28-29, or Luke xviii. 29-30. The words "for My sake and the gospel's," *repeated* in Mark, according to his usual habit in the case of characteristic expressions, show unmistakably how the Lord associated the gospel with Himself in His work and service. And surely it should ever have this place in our hearts, according as we have tasted of the riches of His grace made known to us through the gospel. It was pre-eminently the case with the blessed Apostle Paul (1 Tim. i. 11-17).

Having premised this much, let us now turn to the concise introduction of Mark's account, serving to unfold in a most striking way the hidden power which alone can produce by the preaching its desired effect.

Following the verses in order, we are struck in the first place by a quotation from Malachi, not exactly in the words which the prophet was given to write, but as modified by the Lord Himself, when He bore testimony to John the Baptist, after the departure of the messengers sent by John from his prison to inquire whether Jesus really was the One to whom,

in his active service, he had borne witness. The Lord first of all calls the attention of the listening crowds to John's character and habits in complete separation from the outward show and glory of this world, and then states definitely that he was the subject of the prophetic testimony, as it was written, "Behold, I send *My* messenger before *thy* face, which shall prepare *thy* way before *thee*." (Matt. xi. 10; and compare Mal. iii. 1).

The change of the last pronouns, from the first person to the second, purposely made by the Lord, is surely an illustration of the truth of John i. 18: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."

In Malachi iii. 1, "Jehovah of hosts" is speaking, as the end of the verse states, and He is addressing His people when He says, "Behold, I will send *My* messenger, and he shall prepare the way before *Me*; and the Lord (*Adonai*), whom *ye* seek, shall suddenly come to *His* temple." The Lord's quotation is a practical unfolding of the Father by His Son, to whom the words are thus addressed; and consequently it is *His* (the Son's) "way," which is prepared by the "messenger" (John the Baptist) previously raised up for this very purpose.

The following quotation, from Isaiah xl. 3, confirms this. It is indeed the answer given by John, when the priests and levites were sent by the Jews to inquire of him who he was (John i. 19, 23). An even more confirmatory statement is seen in verse 6 of the same chapter, "There was a man *sent from* GOD, whose name was John." One scarcely knows which to admire most,—the wonderful agreement of all these Scriptures, or the unfolding of their hidden meaning as soon as the proper time was come, when John's imprisonment

had prepared the way for the Lord's public ministry in Galilee (Matt. iv. 12-17; Mark i. 14). It were needless to add that both Mark and Luke give the quotation from Malachi iii., according to the Lord's interpretation of it (Luke vii. 27).

All these facts serve to throw light on the first four verses of our gospel. In the first place, the gospel itself is essentially that of Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ revealed and known as "the Son of God." He is owned as "Lord" in the third verse, *His* way as such being "prepared" by the messenger specially raised up of God.

When we consider His blessed person, have we not in these few words the familiar names or titles, which are continually brought before us in the epistles, whether as to the truth presented in the gospel, its effect when received, and consequent confession expected from a believer, or finally, as to the walk and responsibility which every true Christian must perforce own and conform to. Take, for example, Acts viii. 5, ix. 20, x. 36; Rom. i. 16, x. 9; 1 Cor. xii. 3; Gal i. 16, 20; 1 John v. 1, 5. These names are all summed up in one verse by the apostle: "God is faithful by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His SON, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. i. 9). The Christian is recognised by His "calling upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord." How precious to find God Himself working through the outward means used, in order to "prepare the way" for the reception of the truth!

But how was this effected? Evidently by John's ministry, calling upon all men to *repent*, because God was going to set up His kingdom as foretold by Daniel, and every one would have necessarily to stand at His judgment seat, answering to Him for all their conduct.

It is never said that John preached the gospel. He

could not. His mission was a call to repentance,* accompanied by a baptism which was, as it were, God's mark put upon those who confessed their sins, and betokened *mercy*, rather than the judgment of fire reserved for "chaff," and for trees that bore no good fruit (Matt. iii. 10, 12; Luke iii. 9, 17). But the result of the preaching was, that every one who answered the call was kept in expectation, waiting for Him of whom John said that He would come after him. They had to own themselves sinners, by confessing all that they had done that was wrong, in the hope that God would show them mercy when the promised Messiah should come.

The Lord Himself, as we learn from Matthew, began by putting His seal upon John's ministry, using the very same words, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (iv. 17); and His disciples, when sent forth "two and two," took this up (Mark vi. 12). But the Lord, and His disciples also, empowered by Him, accompanied the preaching with works of power, which John had never done. This had its effect in turning many hearts to a God of grace and goodness, whose full redemption yet depended on the *death* of His Son (John x. 40-42, xii. 24; Rom. v. 10).

From the fourth gospel we learn that John the Baptist bore witness to the Light. The two parts of the testimony which made up Paul's gospel, and which should characterise the gospel now, were thus complete in as far as was possible at that time. The gospel has for its subject CHRIST, and what He has wrought; the preparation for it is a call to *repentance* in view of coming judgment.

Is not this latter too much lost sight of at the

* John preached "the baptism of repentance," with a view to remission of sins (Mark i. 4; Luke iii. 3; Acts x. 37).

present day? There was plenty of such preaching in the days of Wesley, and God used it with marvellous effect. Even Felix trembled when he heard Paul speak "of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come" (Acts xxiv. 25). At the close of his ministry he was able to remind the elders of the Church at Ephesus that he had taught them publicly and from house to house, "testifying both to Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts xx. 21).

May the Lord enable us to lay it to heart!

W. J. L.

The Bible and the Critics—i.

IT is a remarkable thing that there is no book in the world which has been subject to so much hostile criticism as the Bible. From Celsus in the second century to Tom Paine and Voltaire in the eighteenth, and the German rationalists as well as their English and American friends in our own day, the great object has been to discredit the Bible. Yet the book survives in spite of it all, and it will survive. As the late Colonel Conder has said, "Each critic writes at his own peril, and is subject to destruction as knowledge increases; he is gathered to his fathers on the dusty shelf, while the great book still remains unharmed, and becomes better understood."

The Higher Critics (so-called) have alleged that the Old Testament is unhistorical, unreliable, a collection of fragmentary documents of later date than they profess to be, etc.; and the New Testament has fared no better in their hands. They boast of their scholarship; and, as all admit, learning is very good and useful in its place; but learning by itself never enabled any-one to understand the things of God. The learned

men of our Lord's time—scribes, pharisees, and doctors of the law—were amongst His greatest opponents, and the learned Saul of Tarsus was one of the most bitter persecutors of the Church. The learned Greeks as well as the religious Jews stumbled over the stumbling-stone when the living Word was on earth; can we wonder if many of the learned men of to-day stumble over the written Word? The truth is that many of these advanced critics are unconverted men, and we know that “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. ii 14). There must be a new life and nature, and the indwelling Holy Spirit, to give capacity to understand the things of God.

Every unprejudiced student admits that there are difficulties in the Bible; but nine-tenths of the difficulties raised by the sceptics arise from not understanding the true bearing of the passages where they are found; then, as to the remaining tenth, the humble Christian never supposes for a moment that these in any way invalidate the book; to do so would be to make himself a judge competent to say what God should, or should not, say or do. Rather he waits on God for light and guidance; and this very exercise of soul is for our good, so that we may feel how dependent we are on Him for wisdom, and follow the instruction of the Apostle James, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.” “Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes,” says the Saviour Himself. It is these little ones who, feeling their weakness, are cast upon Him for strength, who are really taught of God.

We have only to look at creation around and above us to see that God is perfectly and infinitely wise, and we can say with the Psalmist, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork"; again, "When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and stars, which Thou hast ordained, what is man?" Is it likely that a God who has given a witness of Himself in creation would leave Himself without a written revelation adequate to make Himself known to His creature, man? But God is infinitely above man, whether it be in creation or in revelation; why should He stoop to accredit man's petty pretensions to wisdom? He has given a revelation in the Bible, perfect in itself, in the original form in which He gave it, and adapted to every need of the soul. There may be errors in transcription of manuscripts or in translations, which arise from human infirmity and weakness; but what we desire to assert is that God has given a revelation which is reliable, and a sufficient foundation for the Christian's faith.

How different when we leave this solid ground and step on to the shifting sands of human speculation! If there is anything that marks the work of the critics it is the *uncertainty* which attaches to their theories. It is undeniable that many of the "assured results" of their investigations at one moment are found to be quite untenable at another, and have to be given up or recast when some fresh discovery proves them to be unsound.

It is said of our Lord that "He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes," and we may say of the written Word also, that it speaks *with authority*. It must be so, for when God speaks, it is not a question of "yea and nay," but of divine

certainty, and the Christian can put his "Amen" to it all. Listen to God's authoritative statement in Isaiah xlv. 9-10, "I am God, and there is none else; I am God and there is none like Me; declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things which are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure." Now who amongst all the wise men of this age can see into the distant future and foretell the course of events? But if we take up, for example, the first book of the Bible, we shall find from the very first verses and onwards, a *prescience* (that is a knowledge of things before they happen) which is the prerogative of God alone. God is omniscient, and the whole panorama of the future, as well as the past and present, stood out before His mind. His all-seeing eye surveyed the course of events from before the history of the world began, right down to its close. Who could have constructed a narrative, containing in types, shadows, and figures, facts which were not fulfilled till thousands of years afterwards, except Him who "declares the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things which are not yet done"! Thus, Adam and Eve prefigured Christ and the Church (Eph. v. 31-32); Abel's offering of the firstlings of the flock and of the fat thereof, typified the offering of Christ Himself; Enoch's translation to heaven without passing through death, shadowed forth the rapture of the saints at the coming of the Lord, which is still future (1 Thess. iv). And we have a very remarkable confirmation of this in Galatians iii. 8, "The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham." Here the quality of foreknowledge, which belongs to God Himself, is ascribed to the Scripture. Indeed the whole structure of the Bible, with its types,

its shadows, its figurative representations of what still lay hidden in the counsels of God, is an evidence of that wonderful *prescience* which pervades, we might almost say, its every page. It is a quality which is entirely beyond human capability, which belongs to that book and no other, and which stamps it as being as much the handiwork of God as creation itself.

Is the whole book to be given up, or is the confidence of the Christian in its reliability to be shaken, because the critics stumble over certain difficulties, or indulge in fancies and speculations concerning a supposed variety of authors in certain parts, some of which fancies are, as many able men have shown, carried to an absurd extreme? Certainly not. But with all due respect to their learning, the conclusion sought to be drawn by them from the use of the various names of God—Jehovah, Elohim, etc.,—can only show that they themselves do not apprehend the divine design and purpose which underlies the way in which these very names are employed in the Scriptures.

But there are, thank God, many learned and pious scholars on the opposite side who do not agree with the extreme views of the critics, and who still loyally maintain the integrity of the Bible. To the Christian who reverently studies the book it carries its own credentials, and brings to the soul such a conviction of its truthfulness, its living and energetic qualities, as well as its suitability to his every need, as proves it to be divine. He can, therefore, take his stand as firmly as ever on the unimpeachable truthfulness and value of both the Old and New Testaments. To quote the words of Canon Girdlestone, a Hebrew scholar of many years' experience, "The Scriptures are not only oracles, but lively oracles, quick and powerful, reaching, stirring and piercing consciences and hearts as no other book can

do"; again, "As God said to the authors of the Scriptures, 'Write,' and they wrote; so we may say to Him whenever we open the Bible, 'Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.'"

Brief Studies in Prophecy—vi.

The period between the coming of the Lord for His saints and His appearing with them in glory (continued).

HERE we may briefly consider a question which is sometimes asked, namely, If Christ were to come to-night, would there be any hope for those who have heard the gospel and rejected it? We believe there would not. But will anyone be saved during the interval between the coming of the Lord for His people and His appearing *with* them in glory? The seventh chapter of Revelation shows that there will be two companies, one from among the Jews and the other from the Gentiles, saved and preserved during this period. These two companies are the 144,000 of the tribes of Israel, and the great multitude out of every nation, kindred, people, and tongue. Now as to those who have heard the gospel and rejected it, and who will be on the earth after the rapture of the dead and living saints when Christ comes, it is well to bear in mind that it is an invariable principle in God's ways that He deals with men according to their responsibility, measured by the light and privileges they have had. The greater the light He has given, the greater the responsibility.

Christendom has had great privileges, especially the people of the English-speaking countries, where thousands of Bibles and tracts have been circulated, and where the gospel has been widely preached. Israel in the past had many privileges; they were a nation

taken out from all the other nations by Jehovah Himself as His peculiar treasure, and brought into a place of special nearness and blessing beyond the other nations. But after all this, they were worse than the other nations, for the name of God was blasphemed among the heathen through them (Rom. ii. 24). Though God lingered long in grace, the sentence of judicial hardening, spoken by the Holy Ghost through the prophet Isaiah (chap. vi.), was finally pronounced by the Apostle Paul in the last chapter of Acts, after they had crucified their Messiah and resisted the Holy Ghost, "Hearing ye shall hear and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see and shall not perceive: for the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed," etc. Now if Israel was guilty, and brought down upon themselves God's judgment for rejecting the testimony then given, how much more guilty are those who have turned away from the much fuller revelation of God given in Christianity, and the free and full salvation proclaimed on the ground of the death and resurrection of Christ! And so we read in 2 Thessalonians ii. that, because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved, *God* will send them strong delusion; and, no doubt, it will fall deepest, darkest, and heaviest on these very countries where the light and privilege has been the greatest. Again, we find that the "foolish virgins" in the parable in Matthew xxv., who are outside the closed door, take upon themselves to call on the name of the Lord, saying, "Lord, Lord, open unto us," but (alas for these professors of religion without life or reality!) it is now too late. The Bridegroom has come, the door is shut, and the Lord's answer to them is, "I know you not." They preferred their ease and

pleasure and the world to Christ, though they professed His name, and now it is too late. A characteristic feature of the "perilous times" of the last days is that men would be "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God: having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." Was there ever a time in the history of the world when this was more so than it is to-day? The great advance in the arts and sciences within recent years, and the accumulation of riches amongst certain classes of society, have placed facilities within the reach of men for the pursuit of wealth and pleasure to an extent unknown in days when people lived in a more simple way. And the great advance of socialism and unbelief in the Bible has weakened the restraint which the fear of God and reverence for His Word once imposed upon men. The result is that the thoughtless multitude are more indifferent and more pleasure-loving than ever. And the religious world (so-called), desiring to keep pace with the times, accommodates itself to the social world in its religion as far as it can.

Scripture clearly proves that the rapture of the saints will, in the end, be followed by apostasy from Christianity; but we must not suppose that all profession of Christianity will be given up immediately upon the taking away of the Church. On the contrary, the symbol of the woman riding upon the scarlet-coloured beast (Rev. xvii.) shows us that the corrupt forms of Christianity which we see around us—Romanism, Ritualism, etc.—will go on, and ever increase in outward pomp and show for a time. How long God has lingered in patience over this terrible travesty of Christianity, called here "Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth"! She was characterised by pride, assumption, and idolatry;

she was a persecutor of the true saints of God, and she deceived the nations by her sorceries. But her cup is full at last, and judgment, swift and complete, comes upon her. Thus we read, "And the ten horns which thou sawest, and the beast, these shall hate the harlot, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and shall burn her utterly with fire" (Rev. xvii. 16, R.V.). Thus she will be brought to utter desolation, for *God* will "put it into their hearts to do His mind, and to come to one mind." These are the ten kings under the revived Roman Empire, or imperial head of power, which will control Western Christendom, who "give their kingdom unto the beast," acknowledging him as their chief, and recognising his authority as binding all together. These will cast off this corrupt religious system calling itself Christian, which had seduced them by its allurements, and held them bound under its sway for so long a time; making a bad use of conscience in its dupes, in order to forward its own ambitious ends.

There was, on a small scale, a sample of this at the time of the French Revolution. Then, as history informs us, Christianity was formally repudiated, and the sacredness of the Republic and the worship of reason was solemnised. At the time to which our chapter (Rev. xvii.) refers, the profession of Christianity will be given up *in toto*; this is what is called in 2 Thessalonians ii. 3, "the apostasy." And we find in this same chapter that He who now lets or hinders the power of evil, will then be taken out of the way, so that full scope will be given for the exercise of man's will. This hinderer of the full development of lawlessness is, doubtless, the Holy Ghost, who took the place of Christ here, and who now is the blessed active agent for the carrying on of the work of God in this world. The Holy Ghost

dwells on the earth, in the house of God; but when the Church is taken to heaven, the Holy Ghost will no longer dwell here in the same way as now. When this restraint is removed, there is no hindrance to the development of the apostasy. Such will be the end of these highly-favoured Christian lands, and this is a very solemn consideration. Unbelief may sneer or deny it, but God's word is bound to stand true whatever men may say.

Going back for a moment to Dan. ix. 26-27, we find that the "prince that shall come," whose "people" (the Romans under Titus, A.D. 70), destroyed the city and the sanctuary, shall confirm a covenant with "the many," or the unbelieving mass of the Jews, for one week of seven years. In the middle of the week he will "cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease." He will put a stop to the Jewish system of worship; or, as we have seen from Dan. vii., when speaking of the "little horn," he "shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High: and shall think to change times and the law." This state of things lasts during the period of three-and-a-half years, for they (the Jewish times and laws), "shall be given into his hands until a time, and times, and half a time," or three years and a half. This period will, therefore, be a time of unparalleled energy of Satan, acting both through the head of the revived Roman Empire and the Antichrist in deceit and violence, and it will be a time of terrible trial to all who witness for God on the earth. It is to this time the Lord refers when He says, "There shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved" (Matt. xxiv. 21).*

Now, as to those who will be saved during this

period the Lord Himself said to His disciples, whom He had sent forth to preach the kingdom of heaven, "Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come" (Matt. x. 23). As before remarked, the same work in which the disciples were then engaged will be taken up again by servants of God amongst the faithful remnant of Israel in a future day, in preparing a people to receive the coming kingdom. It is during this same time also that the "everlasting gospel" (Rev. xiv. 6) will be proclaimed to them that dwell on the earth and to the nations, kindreds, and tongues; "Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." This gospel is entirely different from the gospel of the grace of God which is preached to-day, telling of remission of sins through faith in the Lord Jesus, and the blessed news of a full and free salvation through His atoning work on the cross. It is a call to fear God because He is about to judge, and to acknowledge Him in creation. Such a message will be most appropriate to those who have never heard the gospel of to-day, and at a time when Satan's special aim will be to supplant God's authority by that of the beast and false prophet. And so the book of Revelation gives us views of several saved companies, both from amongst the Jews and Gentiles, some of whom will suffer martyrdom rather than bow to the authority of the Antichrist, and some will be spared to participate in the blessings of the millennial kingdom under the righteous reign of the Lord Himself (chap. vii. 14-17, xiv. 1-5, xx. 2, 4, etc.).

F. G. B.

The Work of the Holy Spirit.

AS we read through the Acts of the Apostles, we cannot fail to be struck by the fact that the work of God which was then carried on with such wonderful power and blessing was, in fact, the work of the Holy Spirit. Christ had gone on high; the Holy Ghost had come down and He was the mighty agent who carried on the work. True, the instruments used were *men* like ourselves; but they were men "full of the Holy Ghost." They were vessels, human indeed, but men emptied of self, and under the complete control and leading of the Spirit.

Then, again, what distinguished the remarkable revival of truth which took place during the early part of the last century was that it was largely commenced and carried on, for a time at least, as the evident working of the Holy Spirit.

Now this surely contains a most important lesson for ourselves, especially in a day when there is such a tendency to look to human resources and adopt wordly methods and plans, instead of counting alone upon God to work and bless by His Spirit.

Do we go forth to preach the gospel, counting upon Him to use His word by the efficacious ministry of the Holy Ghost? When we meet for prayer, for worship, etc., do we count on the presence and power of the Spirit? Or do we sometimes come to such meetings in a cold and formal way, instead of with hearts *in tune*, ready to respond to the touch of the Holy Spirit? There is surely much need of revival. The time is short. May the Lord arouse all His people to more earnestness and simple dependence on the gracious ministry of the Spirit!

Gleanings and Meditations.

THE Christian's Portion.—What a marvellous portion is ours! To know God in the gift of His Son; to be not only delivered from condemnation, but to be brought into relationship with God Himself as His beloved children; to rejoice in Him; to be in communion with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ; to have access, by Him, to the favour in which we stand; to rejoice in hope of the glory of God; to rejoice even in tribulations; to joy in God Himself, through our Lord Jesus Christ; to love Him without having seen Him, and, believing in Him whom we have not yet seen, to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory! And, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is! May the Holy Spirit direct our hearts into the love of God and into the patience of the Christ.

* * * * *

Christian Progress.—There is progress in the Christian path, and if we are found with Jesus on resurrection ground, we can, in spite of Satan, the flesh, and the world, walk with Him in such sort as to manifest growth in grace, until the moment when we shall meet Him, see Him as He is, and be for ever with Him. How blessed it is to rejoice in Him already in this scene; what a blessed life! Satan does not like to see this, and he is always on the watch to hinder it; but, blessed assurance! the Lord, who never slumbers nor sleeps, is for us; and the Holy Spirit is in us.

What a place is ours—sin condemned, sins expiated, the old man crucified, Satan conquered, Christ on high for us, the Holy Spirit in us and with us, the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, and glory before us!

May the Lord keep us in this path, separate from

the world; and may He enable us to make progress whilst waiting for His coming again.

F. P. (*From the French*).

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“O Israel, return!” (Hos. xiv. 1).—Repentance—that is the soul being really in the presence of God in self-judgment when we have wandered or grown cold—must precede true restoration. But how marvellous the patience of God and His willingness to hearken to the repentant one! When Ephraim had learned to turn away from idols and no longer to lean on the Assyrian, or an arm of flesh, Jehovah responds to the repentant heart with three “I wills”—“I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, I will be as the dew to Israel.” If He is a God of truth and righteousness, He is also, bless His name, a God of patience and grace. And mark how beautifully this is expressed in the short dialogue in verse 8. Ephraim says, “What have I to do any more with idols?” Jehovah answers, “I have answered, and will observe him.” Then Ephraim says, “I am like a green fir tree,” and Jehovah answers, “From me is thy fruit found.” And is it not so, too, with us? When those idols which, alas, too often come in between the soul and Christ are set aside, our gracious God is ready to respond to the turning of the heart to Him; and whatever growth or freshness of soul there is in the Christian, all his fruitfulness must come from God Himself. Yes, it is from *Him*, from that work of divine grace which the Holy Spirit is ever ready to carry on in the heart which is separated from the idols of this world, and which finds its centre and its object in Christ Himself.

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“Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up” (1 Cor. viii. 1).—That kind of knowledge which comes from a

merely *intellectual* acquaintance with truth, occupies us with ourselves and leads us to imagine that we know a great deal more than other people. It puffs up and makes us proud of our attainments. But, as the apostle says, even if I have "all knowledge" and have not love, "I am nothing." True knowledge, learnt in the heart and conscience in communion with God, always humbles, because the soul, being engaged with an object outside itself, learns in His presence its own nothingness. In contrast with that kind of knowledge which "puffs up," there is the love which "builds up." Love is, in its true sense, the divine nature acting in the Christian; just that which was seen in its perfection in Christ. Was ever such perfect obedience to the Father's will, such perfect calm and composure amidst the most trying circumstances, such perfect grace towards the most needy and unworthy of sinners? Such was Jesus in this world. And when these qualities are found in the saints and servants of God they make for mutual blessing, and help, not to scatter and divide, but to establish and "build up" the people of God.

"If ye will Receive it."

IT is written that "no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation" (2 Pet. i. 21), that is to say, that its scope cannot be limited to the circumstances which gave rise to it, nor can its meaning be restricted to the particular events more immediately in question. All prophecy forms a part of the revelation which God has given, destined to reach the heart and exercise the conscience of the reader in every age. His word places the soul in His presence, with the sense of His *grace*; for as sinners we have no right to expect

that He should deign to speak to us at all. Nevertheless, the fact of Christ's coming to this world "to seek and save the lost" is a revelation to us of God's unchanging purpose, which of necessity must draw out our hearts to Him. It brings salvation (Luke xix. 9-10).

There could be no event of greater importance to this world than the coming of Christ in human form, coupled with all the circumstances of His marvellous humiliation; and for a soul taught of God nothing more definitely declares to us the hopelessness of our sinful condition, while setting forth the grace that reaches out to the lost. And this is no afterthought, but God's eternal purpose from the beginning. We may liken it to a golden thread running through all His revelation.

Adam's fall, at the very beginning of history, through listening to the suggestion of the serpent, brought upon himself the sentence of death on account of his disobedience; but in pronouncing judgment upon the serpent, God graciously made known that deliverance from his bondage was to be wrought by the woman's seed (Gen. iii. 15). Yet it involved the "necessity" of the death of the Son of man. Only "by means of *death*" could redemption be effected (John iii. 14; Heb. ix. 15, 16). Is it not remarkable that the Lord Himself in view of the cross, presented the effects of it almost in the same terms as we find in Genesis iii. 15? "Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out; and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me. This He said, signifying what death He should die" (John xii. 31-33).

What an illustration we have here of Peter's word—"One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Pet. iii. 8). Four

thousand years passed ere Christ came into the world, and nearly two thousand have passed since He was crucified, yet are we still waiting for the moment of the "old serpent" being cast out of heaven (Rev. xii. 7-10). Time as we count it is not in question, save as setting forth God's patient grace with His fallen creatures: "Blessed are all they that wait for Him" (Is. xxx. 18).

The main point is the divine sequence of events, whether in grace or judgment. Satan had deceived the woman—the woman's seed must bruise the serpent's head. Death, the death of the cross, was a divine necessity for satisfying God's righteousness—the Son of man *must* be "lifted up"—and that death was the divine end of Satan's power, so that the God of peace may "shortly" bruise Satan under the feet of his saints (Rom. xvi. 20). The same truth appears in Revelation xii. 5, 9:—the "woman" here representing no doubt the nation of Israel, ever the object of God's care in spite of their rebellion, and her "child" representing the whole body of saints as seen in Christ and associated with Him at His coming. The child is caught up to God and His throne, whereas Satan and all his angels are cast out to the earth; and God resumes His relations with Israel, "of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came" (Rom. ix. 5). It is the "woman's seed" that represents Israel repentant, when, in the future, they "keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." For after having broken them off from the "olive-tree" in just judgment, God is faithful and able to graff them in again" (Rom. xi. 15-23). In all these passages it is evident that our ideas of time in no wise help us to lay hold of the truth. God presents to us these things from His standpoint, who lives in eternity, and

“works all things after the counsel of His own will” (Eph. i. 11).

In the garden of Eden, Adam, in listening to his wife, transferred his allegiance from God to Satan; his liberty in the light of God’s countenance was then exchanged for “the bondage of corruption,” and nothing could meet that condition short of the full penalty being paid, and divine righteousness fully satisfied. In the cross that is accomplished in such sort as that grace to the sinner coincides with the judgment of sin, and each redeemed soul can say of the Son of God, “He loved me and gave Himself for me” (Gal. ii. 20).

If we now follow for a moment the witnesses of faith given at the beginning of Hebrews xi., we are struck with the way in which present relationship with God is presented apart from questions of time. We are “compassed about” by this cloud of witnesses, as if they were all looking at us and we at them, at this present moment, so as to gather up strength and courage to “run with patience the race that is set before us.”

Abel recognised the sentence of death hanging over his father, and consequently over all his race, when he took the firstling of his flock, and burned the fat upon the altar. God bore witness to his gift, “and by it, he, being dead, yet speaketh.” Notwithstanding, for us the blood of Jesus “speaks *better* things”: Abel’s sacrifice testified of that which *was to be*, whereas the blood of Christ speaks to us of purification *already* made, and a present relationship with God, eternal in its character, founded thereupon (Heb. i. 3; x. 10-14; xii. 24-28).

Enoch walked with God in contrast with all his surroundings, and “was translated that he should not see death; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.” Does not this fact, so early

given in the history, just fifty-seven years after Adam's death, prove how God delights in mercy and life, and that judgment, however necessary, is nevertheless His "strange work" (Isa. xxviii. 21-22)? And have we not in this most remarkable translation a blessed forecast of what will take place when we shall be gathered together unto our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming (2 Thess. ii. 1)? Is there not in the mind of the Spirit an indication of it, at the close of the dispensation preceding the birth of the Lord, when Simeon was warned by the Holy Ghost "that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ" (Luke ii. 26-28)? Everywhere we find that God's thoughts about Christ are uppermost, throwing into the shade all our ideas of time. Enoch was taken out of this scene altogether, but the world went on in its indifference, as it will do when the Lord comes to catch up into the clouds all that belong to Him. The Lord's word in John xii. evidently has a double meaning, drawing "all," Gentile as well as Jew, to Himself in faith now, but presently, we shall understand it in a new way, when He shall receive to Himself all whom the Father has given to Him (John xiv. 3). It is the moral result of the cross. "Where I am, there shall also my servant be" (John xii. 26).

Noah walked with God before the flood came. Judgment was about to fall upon the whole of the earth, "corrupt and filled with violence"; but he had the opportunity for obeying when, "warned of God of things *not seen as yet*, moved with fear, he prepared an ark for the saving of his house." Again we find the vivid picture portrayed, in unmistakeable lines, of life out of death, and of present relationship with God in a new scene from which all trace of the former evil had disappeared. Hence, says Peter, "What manner of persons

ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness." And in thought he carries us on to the eternal state, "*new* heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," as if the intervening thousand years of Christ's reign over the earth were but "a watch in the night," as Moses was given to say (Ps. xc. 4). "If we receive it," all these things have present power over heart and conscience.

Abraham presents to us the "call of God," and faith's answer to it in the midst of a scene in which God is practically unknown. But the deep, deep lesson of communion with God whom he had "obeyed," was only really learned when he took the knife to slay his son Isaac, in whom all his hopes were centred; for it was "in Isaac" that his seed was to be called (Heb. xi. 18). He had, as it were, to put back into God's hand and keeping everything that he had received from Him, in order that the deeper lesson of life out of death might be forced in upon his soul. At that moment, God brought him to look in advance by faith upon "Him that was to come"—"Son of Abraham" and "Son of God"; then also for the first time, the promise was modified from "thee" to "THY SEED," which, says the apostle, "IS CHRIST" (Compare Gen. xii. 3 and xviii. 18, with xxii. 8, and Gal. iii. 16, 17.) Hence the Lord could say of His servant, "He rejoiced to see My day; and he saw it and was glad" (John viii. 56). Both substitution and resurrection were brought home to him.

Later on in the history, the "burning bush" which Moses saw in Horeb, and which became the turning point in his career, and the strength of his soul in the most trying of his experiences with a rebellious people, again set forth grace in the midst of judgment, and even life out of death. We find it referred to at the close of the Old Testament canon as the abiding resource of a people suffering for their

own unfaithfulness: "I am the LORD, I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are *not* consumed" (Mal. iii. 6). For Israel of old, whether for individual faithfulness or for strength against the enemy, "The Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God" was to be their constant resource (Deut. iv. 23-24; ix. 3). So, in blessing the tribes at the end of his life, Moses found no higher or richer blessing for him that was "separated from his brethren," than "the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush" (Deut. xxxiii. 16). It is the same for us, and ever present, "Our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. xii. 29). Faith's lesson, always needful, can only be learned in full measure at the cross of Christ. It is the theme of the apostle all through the Epistle to the Galatians, in order to win back to the truth those that were already letting it slip.

In all these instances, time, as we count it, sinks into insignificance. God waited four thousand years before the promised "seed of the woman" came, who alone could bruise the serpent's head. And He is still going on waiting since the cross, and the prince of this world is not yet "cast out." But at all times and in every circumstance, the privilege of faith is to rest upon the Word of God and rejoice in it. Thus the believer is enabled to walk with Him, and live in the light of His countenance, so as to become in his turn a light "in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation," holding forth the Word of Life (Phil. ii. 15-16).

The closing word of the Old Testament is the promise of Elijah, the prophet, "before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord" (Mal. iv. 5). That "day," as regularly in Old Testament prophecy, means *judgment* (1 Cor. iv. 3; 2 Thess. ii. 2, 3); and the Lord said, "I am not come to judge, but to save the world" (John xii. 47). Notwithstanding that, he said to His disciples, "Elias truly shall first come and restore all

things; but I say unto you that Elias *is come already*, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of Man suffer of them." And again, "If ye will receive it, this is Elias which was for to come." The disciples "understood that He spake unto them of John the Baptist" (Matt. xi. 13, 14; xvii. 10-13).

The words "If ye will receive it," show, then, clearly that there are constantly two distinct interpretations of prophecy, one fact referring to coming *judgment*, another for faith, referring to present *grace* based upon the work of the cross.

In this view, Daniel ix. 26, 27 can form no exception to the rule. The whole of the present economy of grace comes in between the end of the sixty-ninth week, and the conclusion of the last or seventieth week. A great break takes place in the midst of that week, and in the book of the Revelation, *only* the *last* half of the week is mentioned. In the early part of the book there is an undefined time of persecution, of which the duration is not given (chap. vi., especially ver. 11). Then comes the manifestation of the powers of wickedness (chap. xiii.), and the events of the last "forty-two months" or three and a half years (chap. xi). But faith has the privilege of looking at it all in view of the cross, and rejoices in the blessing which accrues through the cutting off of Messiah after the three and a half years of His ministry preceded by that of John the Baptist.

W. J. L.

The Bible and the Critics—ii.

THERE are two points we might profitably consider briefly in connection with the scriptures: (i) The source of the communications, (ii.) The instruments or vessels used to convey them. Scripture itself, in

many parts of the Old and New Testaments, gives no uncertain sound as to the fact that the source is God himself, speaking by His Spirit, who is the active agent of inspiration. We can only refer to some out of many passages which prove this. In 2 Chron. xxxv. 21, we read, "To fulfil the word of Jehovah by the mouth of Jeremiah"; the word was "*the word of Jehovah*," the prophet was the instrument used to communicate it. Zech. vii. 12, "The words that Jehovah of hosts sent by His Spirit, by the hand of the former prophets"; Jehovah, by His Spirit, was the author of the words which were sent by the hand of the prophets. Dan. ix. 10, "The voice of Jehovah our God . . . which He sent through His servants the prophets," and Neh. ix. 30, "Thou testifiedst against them by Thy Spirit through Thy prophets." God used the prophets as his mouthpiece to testify against His rebellious people. 2 Sam. xxiii. 2, "The Spirit of Jehovah spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue"; if we take this in connection with the words of our Lord in Mark xii. 36, "David himself said by the Holy Ghost," etc., we have a very remarkable confirmation of the divine authority of the communications given of old. So also the apostle Peter says in Acts i. 16, "This scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before," and in Acts xxviii. 25, Paul says, "Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers." We have here the testimony of two apostles as to the fact that the words spoken of old by the king and the prophet were given by the Holy Ghost. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews bears witness to the same. Chap. i., "God who . . . spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets"; iii. 7, "Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith" (quoting

Ps. xv.); ix. 8, "The Holy Ghost this signifying" (referring to Lev. xvi.). Finally, in Luke i. 68-70, we read "The Lord God of Israel . . . as He spake by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began." And not only was God Himself the source of the communications, but He took care that the instruments or vessels used to convey His thoughts and words should be suitable ones. Though the writers were of various ranks, conditions, education, etc., yet they were vessels fitted by God Himself for the work He had for them to do; and as Peter tells us, "Prophecy was not ever uttered by the will of man, but holy men of God spake under the power of [or borne along by] the Holy Ghost. The men were 'holy men of God'; the One who spoke through them was "the Holy Ghost."

Thus, whether we take the living Word or the written Word, both were the expression of the mind of God, and of His love and interest in men. Christ Himself manifested the Father perfectly in this world, He represented God here both as light and love. But he was despised and rejected of men, cast out and crucified; such was the malice of Satan and the hatred of men. So also the written Word conveys God's mind and will for man, and it is perfectly adapted to every need of the soul, when read under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. But fallen man, influenced by Satan, wants to get rid of it. His *will* is opposed to God, and this lies at the root of his efforts to set aside the scriptures. He cannot bear the light being brought to bear on his conscience, or the plain, unvarnished testimony it renders as to his true state before God. But for the true Christian, the deeper and more spiritual is his study of the divine Word, the deeper will be his conviction of its truthfulness, its depth and beauty, its divine inspiration, and

its perfect suitability to fully equip the man of God to every good work. The Lord Jesus Himself found the Scripture absolutely sufficient, as that by which to meet and vanquish Satan. To quote the words of another:—

“ In these days of slighting the Word, it is good for us to remark how the Lord answered Satan. ‘It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God.’ Wondrous expression! It [the Scripture] is divine, absolutely so in its source and character, out of *God’s mouth*, but perfectly adapted for man to live by. The Word of God issues from the mouth of God—the words issued from His mouth, blessed be his name, direct to man. On the authority, truth, sufficiency, and suitability of Scripture, the victory on which all hope for man depended, was founded and won. The last Adam had prevailed, and prevailed by it. Satan succumbed, and succumbed to it: only it was justly used by the Holy Ghost. I repeat, a single text of the Word—whatever be the foolish pretensions of men—suffices for the Lord, suffices for Satan. May this Word suffice for us! Only may God give us grace to make use of it under the guidance of the Spirit of God whose sword it is, in order that it may be effectual in our hands.”

Brief Studies in Prophecy—vii.

The period between the coming of the Lord for His saints and His appearing with them in glory (continued).

WE now come to speak of the Assyrian, the last of the three chief actors in the events of this period; and this brings us to the close, at the appearing of the Lord in glory. Before speaking of the Assyrian, it may be well to remark that we find

in the prophet Daniel another title, namely, the "King of the North," and in Ezekiel "Gog."* It would not be wise to speak too dogmatically as to how far these latter are to be identified with the Assyrian, who is not mentioned by this name in Daniel, but is the subject of frequent prophetic testimony in several of the other prophets. We must remember that Daniel wrote when Israel was in captivity in Babylon, and Ezekiel wrote when among the captives by the river Chebar. It may be that "the Assyrian" is used in prophecy in reference to the last days, as covering more than one person or power. We find in Psalm lxxxiii and other passages various nations confederated with the Assyrian, just as the ten kings are associated with the chief of the Roman Empire in Revelation xiii. But it would be outside the object of this paper to go into the matter in minute detail. Whatever power or grouping of powers may be indicated by this name, it is clear that they come out of those parts which are situated to the north of Palestine.

The Antichrist, acting in league with the head of the revived Roman Empire, will have the seat of his authority at Jerusalem, and will be the *inward* corruptor of the apostate Jews; the Assyrian will be the enemy and corruptor from *outside*. The Assyrian of the past occupied chiefly the territory north of Palestine, which we call Asia Minor, now under the rule partly of Turkey and partly of Persia.

When the Assyrian came on the scene of old, Israel or at least the two tribes, were still owned of God as

* "The King of the North is always he who rules over the territory occupied by Antiochus Epiphanes; but in the end Russia will possess this territory, or will rule over it, so as to be the Assyrian. Russia is Gog, unquestionably." "I believe the *last* coming up of the Assyrian is Gog. The term is *geographic*, whoever is King of the North" ("Letters," J. N. D., i. 635; iii. 286).

His people. Afterwards, the wickedness of the kings of the house of David had led to God's pronouncing upon them the sentence of "Lo-ammi," that is, "not my people" (Hos. i. 9). When they were carried away captive to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, the people became *actually* "Lo-ammi" (though God still watched over them in mercy), and the "times of the Gentiles" began. Thus it was that, where Israel failed and turned to idolatry, God gave power into the hands of the Gentiles and His throne was no longer found on earth, as it had been at Jerusalem, where He dwelt in the house which was built for His name. Since that time (though God, of course, controls the course of events in the world) He no longer rules amidst His people as He did in Israel. This giving of power into the hands of the Gentiles, which began with Nebuchadnezzar, is a fact of immense importance in the history of the world, and it is also very necessary to bear it in mind for the true interpretation of prophecy.

But, to resume our subject, in process of time Christ came, and He was crucified. Thus the Jews remain still "Lo-ammi," and continue in their unbelief and judicial blindness till this day; and this will be so until, in a future day, the Spirit of God works sorrow and repentance in the heart of the godly remnant. God will then once more own them as His people (Hos. ii. 1). It is when they are thus owned by Him once more that the Assyrian of the future will make His final attack upon the city and the land. This is an essential fact for us to remember in order to truly understand these prophecies.

It was by the Assyrian that the ten tribes were carried away captive (2 Kings xvii.), and the Assyrian of the past was a type or foreshadowing of the Assyrian of the future. The overthrow of Sennacherib and his

great host, in answer to Hezekiah's prayer of faith, prefigured the final overthrow of the Assyrian of the last days. In the past, Babylon (where the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin were carried captive after the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar) arose *after* the Assyrian monarchy, and, in fact, out of the ruins of that empire, which preceded it. But in the future to which we now refer, the Assyrian will be the *last* enemy of Israel; this is just the reverse of history.

Now this consideration confirms the application of many prophetic scriptures on this subject to the events of the last days, though they may have had a partial fulfilment or foreshadowing in the past. We find many references to the Assyrian in the prophets—"Ho Assyrian, the rod of Mine anger, and the staff in their hand is Mine indignation." God uses this rod for the chastisement of His guilty people Israel. But at length God judges this haughty enemy, and with this judgment, His indignation against Israel comes to a close; "when the Lord hath performed His whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the King of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks" (Isa. x. 12). Now clearly the Lord has not yet performed His *whole* work on Mount Zion and Jerusalem; this punishment of the Assyrian is, therefore, unquestionably future. Again, in chapter xiv. we read, "I will break the Assyrian in my land, and upon my mountains tread him under foot." He may be proud and powerful, but who can withstand the Lord of Hosts in His purposes, or who can disannul His decrees?

Again, we find in Isaiah xxx., "Through the voice of the Lord shall the Assyrian be broken in pieces, which smote with a rod. And every stroke of the appointed staff, which the Lord shall lay upon him,

shall be with tabrets and harps" etc. (R.V.) It is plain that what is here brought before us is still future, and goes on to the final judgment of the Assyrian, for whom Topheth, or the fire of God, is prepared; and the passage describes the rejoicing which will follow the Lord's judgment of this powerful and haughty enemy of Israel, whom God had used as a rod to chasten them for their good.

We may now refer to a passage in the prophet Micah—"And this man (the Ruler of Israel, the Messiah), shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land; and when he shall tread in our palaces." It is Christ Himself, the true "Judge of Israel," once smitten and rejected by them; but in that future day to which the prophet refers, their deliverer from the power of the Assyrian. Indeed, this chapter takes in, in its scope, the final victory when "the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people, as a lion amongst the beasts of the forest," etc. God Himself will purge the land and the people. He will purge them *inwardly* from their idolatry, and *outwardly* He will execute vengeance in anger and fury upon the nations who come up against Zion. But, in view of this, the true saint of God can enjoy the most profound rest and peace of mind, for he is brought, through grace, into the secret of God's thoughts about everything. These mighty nations think that they can carry out their own will and do as they like, "but they know not the thoughts of the Lord, neither understand they His counsel: for He shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor." God will be the deliverer Himself in that day, and He will strengthen His people and give them complete victory.

Finally, in this connection, let us look at Daniel viii. In the vision given to the prophet we have the "rough

goat," who is the King of Greece, and the great horn between his eyes was the first king, Alexander the Great. But, arising out of the fragments of his empire, there came forth a "little horn," which became exceeding great.* No doubt the passage, to a certain extent, refers to a person well known in history, Antiochus Epiphanes, King of Syro-Macedonia; but, taking it in its completeness, and especially the explanation given in the latter part of the chapter itself, it goes much beyond this and takes in the events of the last days (see ver. 23). This little horn magnifies himself to the Prince of the host (Christ, Jehovah), and from Him (that is Christ, the Messiah) the daily sacrifice is taken away and the place of His sanctuary cast down.

We cannot say who will, in a future day, rule the territory in the east, north of Palestine, which is here referred to; but the prophecy makes it plain that he will be possessed of remarkable intelligence; as it is expressed, he understands "dark sentences" and carries out his aims through policy and craft, as well as by force of arms. His military power, however, will be derived from elsewhere, for it is "not by his own power." He will be allowed to cast down some of the leaders of the Jews; will interfere with their system of worship, prospering by craft; and finally will exalt himself against the "Prince of princes," as Antichrist does against the "God of gods" (Dan xi. 36).

From the geographic position of the territory in Asia Minor occupied by this king, as well as from other considerations, it would seem probable that he is to be identified with "the Assyrian." His actings in corrupting the Jews by his craft, as well as his more active

* This "little horn" is entirely different from the "little horn" of chapter vii., which refers to the ruler of the west.

opposition, is exercised "in the last end of the indignation" (*i.e.*, God's indignation against Israel), "at the latter time of their kingdom, when transgressors shall have come to the full." It is, therefore, near the time when the Lord will be manifested in glory for the deliverance of His people and the establishment of His Kingdom. It is clear as already remarked, that he derives his power from some outside source, more than probably he acts under the direction and authority of the ruler of the Russian empire.

But, whatever may be the crafty machinations of unscrupulous men, or their military prowess, it all comes to an end the moment God interposes on behalf of His people. And so he is "broken without hand."

F. G. B.

Fragment.—If the only thing I am looking for is the coming of the Lord, feeling how soon I shall be with Him, I shall feel that I have not time for a thousand things that might otherwise occupy me.

I never had my heart occupied with a living Christ in heaven without finding that His love drew my affections after Him. I never grew careless without there being cold chills. If occupied with Him, you will not be thinking of yourself, your walk, your beauty, or anything except the love which draws your heart after Him.

I can give no reason why my heart was wrapped round Christ, save that the grace of God drew me to Him, and has kept me these forty years, because He loved me, and will love me unto the end. Peter cursed and swore, and denied the Lord, but the Lord had bound Peter to Himself, and He would keep him to the end.

G.V.W.

“I am with you.”

SUCH was the encouraging word of the Lord by the prophet Haggai to the feeble remnant who had returned from Babylon; “Be strong and work for *I am with you.*”

The moment we are in the place of obedience to God’s word (whatever the weakness may be) and are seeking only His glory, we can take to ourselves the encouraging words just quoted. We may expect difficulties and opposition, for God allows these so that faith may be tested, but if *He* is with us this is everything; without Him we are nothing.

How truly that faithful servant of God, Moses, felt this when he said to God in the hour of trial, “If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence”! Well he knew that everything depended on the presence and power of Jehovah which was indispensable in order to carry such a people through that great and terrible wilderness, with no human resources to sustain them, and where everything around was adverse. But, as Jehovah Himself said to Moses, “Is the Lord’s hand waxed short?” Cannot He carry His people through in spite of Satan and every difficulty? Faith can take its stand upon the sure word of God, “If *God* be for us, who can be against us?”

And oh, how *we* too need Him every moment, especially in this restless and superficial age, when love of ease and the world has so blunted the spiritual appetite of even true Christians! Yes, but let us remember that our blessed Lord promises His presence right on to the end, as He says, “Lo, I AM WITH YOU alway, even unto the end of the age.”

Gleanings.

“THY brother . . . for whom Christ died”
(Rom. xiv. 15). Am I my brother’s keeper?

Assuredly. And where is my brother? Where is he not? Do not I meet him daily, in the train or in the bus, in mart or street, in private houses and in public places? Do I watch for him, do I rejoice when I find him, do I love and care for him, do I long for the opportunity to minister to him as the Lord enables?

How terrible it is that we can destroy, or cause to perish, our brother! Do not say, This does not mean this or that; think of what it does mean, rather than the reverse. Surely it means this much, if not more; a wasted life, that might have been fragrant with Christ—a missing of the mark which God desired for him, a grieving of the heart of the Christ who died for him. Who can measure all this? And perhaps I caused it, without meaning it, for I was unheeding, and thought only of what pleased myself, so I did what I wished, and did not consider my brother for whom Christ died.

Moreover, seeing that if one member of Christ suffer, all the members suffer with it, or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it: surely we should have the deepest care one for another that, at all events as far as in us lies, we should prevent schism in the body.

Many and diverse are the conditions of our beloved brethren for whom Christ died; many are young and tender; many ignorant, and ill-instructed; many sick and sorry, weary and heavy-laden; many scattered, driven away, lost and perishing; many lame, halting, and stumbled. Oh! do not say they are wilful. Have we tried to help them, have we with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing with them in

love, not in a patronising way, or in a spirit of superiority, sought to heal and restore, to teach and to build up, that we may seek to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace?

O God, melt these stony hearts of ours! Cause us (while indeed we seek to be disciples in the sense of Luke xiv., because we have tasted Thy love in Christ, in the great supper that Thou hast spread) in our dealings with our brethren, who in spite of evident defect may still be more Christ-like than we are, to reflect some tiny portion of the tender grace which Christ shows every day to us, ever remembering that Christ died for them, and loves them as He loves us!

S. L. J.

Waiting for the Lord.—i.

THE truth, now well known, of waiting for the Lord Jesus from heaven, to come and receive to Himself all that are purchased with His precious blood, occupies a very marked place in the New Testament. We find it continually from the Gospel of Matthew to the Apocalypse, presented indeed in different ways, but always as that which should characterise the condition of the believer during the present time.

It is not just now our purpose to speak of His “appearing,” that is His coming *with* His redeemed when He will reward His people for their service, though this side of His coming is presented quite as frequently as the other. But we purpose to point out, in the order in which they are found in Scripture, most of the passages which mention His coming *for* His own, and to add some brief practical reflections which will prove its importance in respect of Christian life and conduct.

We will begin with Matthew xxv. 1-13. Having taken their lamps, the ten virgins went forth to meet the bridegroom. And it is important to remember that the oil in their vessels with their lamps, distinguished the wise virgins from the others and enabled them to meet the bridegroom, and to go in with him to the marriage. We may remark that it is not sufficient to be found in the company of Christ's witnesses; but it is necessary, in order to testify for Him, and to be with Him, to possess the life which He gives and to be sealed with the Holy Spirit, of which the oil, which feeds the lamp of outward profession, is the symbol.

Under these conditions only can we be enabled to show forth the distinctive features of a witness for Christ at the present time. A stranger in the scene in which he lives, during the moral night which enshrouds this world, the Christian, by his conduct, causes the light of Christ to shine around him. And, as regards his Lord, his attitude is that of *waiting for Him* every moment, according to the word, "And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately" (Luke xii. 36).

This expectancy, which is inseparable from a full confession of the Lord and true separation from the world to Him, is what should specially characterise the believer and mark his attachment to his divine Master whom it is his privilege to serve. If he fails in this, his testimony and service for Christ loses its proper tone. Moreover, this waiting attitude of which the Lord speaks, is so pleasing to His heart that He grants a special reward to the one in whom it is found; and how precious this is! He lets us know it beforehand for our encouragement; "Blessed are those

servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that He shall gird Himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them" (Luke xii. 37). Can we conceive blessedness exceeding that which is expressed by these words? In order to bring His poor weak redeemed ones, whom He had found watching, into the full enjoyment of the Father's love of which He is the object, the Lord and Master Himself deigns to take the place of servant! How this should stimulate us to wait patiently for Him whom we serve!

Let us note that *service* for the Lord and *waiting* for His return are closely connected together in the Word (Matt. xxv. 1-13, 14-30; Luke xii. 34-44; 1 Thess. i. 9-10). And the same thing ought to be evident in Christian life and testimony. We are serving the Lord, so to speak, in waiting for Him, and we wait for Him whilst serving; these two things are inseparable. We shall see also, in considering Hebrews ix. 27-28, that death is in no way the hope of the believer, but rather the personal coming of the Lord Jesus from heaven *to receive His redeemed to Himself*.

This is exactly what the words of John xiv. 1-3, to which we have already referred, expressly teach us; they form part of the consolation given by our blessed Saviour to His disciples when just about to leave them. It is with this that He begins what He had to tell them in the intimacy of those last moments, after Judas had gone out; "Let not your heart be troubled," He said, "ye believe in God, believe also in Me. . . . *I will come again*, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

L. P. B.

“We have seen the Lord.”

LET me ask you to turn with me to John xvi. 16, “A little while, and ye shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see Me, because I go to the Father.”

This is the time especially for praying in the name of Jesus, and for the Lord's answering us; for receiving fulness of joy, for seeing Jesus again, for having fellowship with Him. It is no question about forgiveness of sins. That through which there is remission of sins, is the cross of Jesus—His death. “I will see you again” He says. Of course, there is joy in the knowledge of God's forgiveness through the blood-shedding of Jesus, but there is a further step, a joy proper to us, in the midst of all our trouble and perplexity, occasioned by our realisation of His presence.

“. . . If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him” (xiv. 22, 23). The heart is never to be satisfied (there is a void in it that cannot be filled up) by anything except the presence of the Lord Jesus.

Look at the Lord's mysterious manifestations of Himself to His saints during the forty days previous to His ascension; very varied were they, and intended, I believe, to be descriptive of the way in which during His absence He would manifest Himself according to the varied need of His people. Mary was in one condition; the disciples with the closed doors in another; Thomas in a third, but in *each* condition the Lord met and satisfied them with His presence.

There is such a thing, beloved, as knowing the Lord so with us, as to be able to realise that word, “Your joy no man taketh from you.”

The Lord had been taken from these disciples. Mary weeps at His grave. The two are sad in going to Emmaus. All their thoughts are about this—the Lord is gone. They had hung their hearts and fortunes upon Him; they had been attracted by His grace; they owned Him to be the Son of God; whatever they looked for and expected, they expected with Him. They were bankrupt, broken-hearted, dispirited; their Lord who was their joy, their hope, their everything, *was gone!* The great day of solemnities at Jerusalem passed over the grave of Jesus. What a picture of religion without life! “Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice.”

The little while over, their “sorrow is turned into joy.” He comes back to be their everlasting companion. If you could throw yourselves into the disciples’ circumstances of sorrow at the loss of their Lord, and then, of their proportionate joy at His return, you would learn what should be your uninterrupted, known joy, in having Him to be your everlasting companion. You may have trial and adversity of every description, but still the word is, “I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you.”

Just consider, my brethren, besides that cherished faith which you have in the indwelling of the Spirit in you individually, there is another truth equally important, namely, that the Holy Spirit dwells in the midst of you as a whole. And therefore when gathered according to that word, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them,” we are called on to expect the Lord in our midst. If we wanted a comment on such a passage, I would say we find it here. What was it that brought the disciples together? The sense of their common bankruptcy, but their common love to Jesus. They

had lost Him whom they loved, and they came to speak about Him. Whether it was in the expectation of meeting Him as really being risen or not, still it was the name of Jesus brought them there.

But there is such a thing as *grieving* the Spirit.

If it be true that the Lord is in the midst of us, and if we come together in the expectation of His presence, we should be able to say when we part, through the sense of His presence, either in joy or in searching power, "We have seen the Lord."

What was Mary waiting for? In the midst of much ignorance and obscurity, her Lord was her object. She would rather have Him dead, than not have Him at all. She wept at His grave, though not questioning about the forgiveness of her sins. If you do not know the realised presence of the Lord, weep for *that*! weep that your souls are not enjoying abiding fellowship with Jesus. This weeping has nothing to do with the forgiveness of sins.

Do you know, my brethren, the presence of the Lord with you in your assemblies? Do you know it as you walk together, two by two? Do you know it above all in secret? Be it your unbelief, your haughtiness of spirit or aught else that is hindering; this is the proper reason for pouring out your soul in weeping to the Lord. You *are* washed, you *are* cleansed, you *are* justified, but if you have not that which is proper to a pardoned sinner—the *known companionship of Jesus*—weep for that!

If you meet together without being able to say afterwards to those who are at the door or at home, or absent like Thomas, "We have seen the Lord"—weep for *that*. And it should be equally so in our private intercourse, or when alone. The Spirit revealing Christ to us; opening Him to the delight of our hearts and enabling us to say, "We have seen the Lord."

My dear brethren, are these unreal words, "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you,"—"We will come and make our abode with him"? If one should ask you what have you to boast of in your meetings, you should be able to say, "The Lord is in our midst; we so know His presence that sorrow is turned into joy."

May He give us grace to search into this matter, and see what this promise is, which is to be realised *now*, whilst He is at the right hand of the Father, till we see Him face to face in the glory! [Extracted].

The Atoning Blood.

I.

IT has often been remarked that this expression, as we habitually and rightly use it, does not occur in the Book of Genesis. The first mention of the blood as "a token" is in Exodus xii. 7-13, where its meaning is quite evident.

In Genesis, the word "blood" does not often occur; when Noah went out of the Ark, eating of it was formally forbidden, and the shedding of man's blood was to be punished with death (ix. 4-6). Besides this, we only find it mentioned in the cases of Abel (iv. 10, 11) and of Joseph (xxxvii. 22, 26; xlii. 22). In chap. xxxvii. 31, the coat dipped in goat's blood was the device of his brethren to deceive their father and conceal their own sin. Besides these, there is only xlix. 11,* where the word is used figuratively for the juice of grapes. The time was not yet come for making the value of the blood known in its proper

* Apart from the possible allusion by way of contrast, prophetically, to what was to be revealed hundreds of years later, as to the "*washing of robes*," there is not a hint of sacrifice in the verse. Compare Revelation vii. 14; xxii. 14. R.V.

connection, as set forth in the New Testament, in the passages which explain the figures and types of the Old Testament.

The impressive theme of Genesis is *death* as the wages of sin, yet not without indications of life out of death, presented in various ways to the hearts of believers, outside paradise on earth, in order to form their hearts in hope while waiting for the "paradise of God." (Compare Luke xxiii. 43 with Romans v. 14, Hebrews ix. 15-16, xi. 5., Rev. ii. 7). The book closes with a note of Joseph's coffin, to be kept in Egypt until the people should be miraculously delivered; but he had no part in the cave of Machpelah, though he was most careful to see that his father's body was laid there, the last of those who, by that fact, testified to their rights over the land of promise. In God's good time, their faith was rewarded; but Joseph, in spite of all his glory, would not, even in death, be separated from his brethren, who had still to learn in bitterness what "oppression" was, in the land of their temporary sojourn.

Joseph's confidence was in the faithfulness of his father's God, who "would surely visit" them. His words thus form a beautiful introduction to the next book of the Bible, which was immediately to follow! For Exodus means THE WAY OUT. God was going to have a people set apart for Himself, in showing Himself superior to all the enemy's might, so that sin, death, judgment, and Satan's power might be learned as of the *past*, while the *present* was to be characterised by the efficacy of the blood of atonement according to all the exigences of God's holiness and righteousness.

Of this, the cross is the great expression, as we learn in John iii. 14. And that gospel sets these things forth in detail, while insisting also on the

“*witness*” of the blood (xix. 34-35). The epistle confirms this as to the believer’s present position before God, “As He is, so are we in this world” (1 John iv. 17; v. 6, 8). This it is which gives “boldness in the day of judgment.”

Can we not thus see at a glance how much was needed historically, in the way of type, to open up these things for faith and true spiritual profit, in communion with God? The enemy appeared early on the scene in Genesis, as a “tempter” (Matt. iv. 3); but his *thralldom* was not set forth until we come to Exodus, where we find God’s intervention in power, not only to overthrow it, but to turn him from being a master into a helpless enemy (however imposing in appearance), whose fiery darts can be quenched by the “shield of faith”; and when “resisted,” he flees (Eph. vi. 16; Jas. iv. 7).

Let us turn then to Exodus. Terrible was the conflict with the powers of evil, in order to effect the final deliverance of God’s chosen people! But the passage of the Red Sea shows, for all time, how complete the salvation was, and how mercy and long-suffering were mingled with judgment, when the power of the enemy was at length annihilated (Rom. ix. 15-24). The “vessels of mercy, afore prepared unto glory,” are shown by the apostle to represent “even us, whom God hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles.” May we not thus read in these pages of old, vividly set forth in unmistakeable figures, the story of our own liberation from Satan’s power—turned from him to God, out of darkness into light, out of death into life eternal (John v. 24; Acts xxvi. 18)? Such was the passing of the divided Sea.

But in bringing the people “to Himself,” God must needs teach them a deeper lesson, before He crushed the enemy’s power. This was reserved for the last of

the ten plagues. What more terrible than sudden death afflicting every family in Egypt!

One deliverance there was, and only one, namely, the *blood* of the paschal lamb, sprinkled all around the entrance to every single habitation. It was not for outward show. The visitation was to be in the night. No eye but God's could see the blood (Exod. xi. 1, 4-5; xii. 12-13, 22-23).

And let us note that no explanation of it is given. God demanded simple and implicit obedience. The head of each house was to sprinkle with the blood the lintel and the two side posts; and no one was to go outside the door, until the morning after the judgment had taken place. Pharoah and his servants rose up before the morning came, when "there was a great cry in Egypt," for "there was not a house where there was not one dead." The Egyptians were urgent to send the people out of the land in haste. As for the Israelites, the night had been passed in the needful preparations, and in partaking of the paschal lamb, their loins girt, feet shod, and staff in hand, ready to start.

It still remained to set forth in the following chapter God's portion, so to speak, in the ordinance, namely, that every one actually spared on that night of terror was by that fact sanctified to God. Every first-born male was His, whether of man or beast.

How this was to be carried out in practice was reserved for future instruction; but the fact of having to sacrifice "every firstling that cometh of a beast," showed clearly that there was, in principle, a passing through death unto life with God, a very solemn consideration for our souls (Exod. xiii. 2, 12-16). In the ages that followed, every parent had to say, "All the first-born of my children, I redeem."

This truth is developed in the epistles in various

ways, for the exercise of the heart and conscience of each believer. But the main point to be insisted on and kept ever prominent is that the cause of the deliverance, as well as its true character, was to be found in the value of the BLOOD in His sight, according to that word: "When I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt."

We may well pause here to note how this fact is enlarged upon in the New Testament. The first intimation of it is in Matthew xxvi. 28, when the Lord, at the last supper, on the very night in which He was betrayed, put the cup into His disciples' hands with the injunction that they should *all* drink of it, saying, "This is My blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many, FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS." * These last words are omitted in Mark and Luke, but they furnish the key for all the teaching of the epistles on this head.

In John, the blessed Lord Himself insists upon our "drinking" His blood as the very condition of life and communion with Himself, in chapter vi. 53-56. There must be a spiritual appropriation of it, not as a mere doctrine received and accepted, but as forming together with His death, that aliment which nourishes and develops the eternal life imparted to us, in communion with the Father and the Son. Then in chapter xix. 34, we find the witness borne at the moment the blessed Lord's side was pierced; referring to this again in his epistle, chapter i. 7; v. 6, 8. Other precious truths in connection with the blood of atonement we must reserve for a future time.

W. J. L.

* Matthew, alone of the evangelists, mentions the solemn imprecation of the people intent upon the death of Jesus: "His *blood* be on us and on our children" (xxvii. 25). The way in which God, in sovereign grace, could give a meaning of His own to those words, may be seen in John xi. 49-53.

Brief Studies in Prophecy—viii.

The period between the coming of the Lord for His saints and His appearing with them in glory (continued).

LET us now look briefly at the "Gog" of Ezekiel; whom we must carefully distinguish from "Gog and Magog" of Revelation xx. The latter is an enemy who comes against the camp of the saints *after* the millennium, whilst the former is before it.

We read that "The word of the Lord" came to the prophet, saying, "Son of man, set thy face toward Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal" (Ezek. xxxviii. 2). In the word "Rosh" we have the first traces of a country now included in the Russian Empire; but at the time the prophet wrote, it was probably peopled by Scythian tribes, dwelling on the shores of the Black Sea, etc., then spreading themselves abroad in those lands now under the rule of the Czar.

In the last days to which the prophet refers, Israel will have been once more settled in their land, "In the latter days, I will bring thee against my land." They will have been again owned by Jehovah as His people, and will be dwelling safely, just before the millennial reign begins, and Gog comes up fully intending to take a spoil and a prey.

The words of Ezekiel show us that Gog had been the subject of prophetic testimony previously, as we read, "Thus saith the Lord Jehovah; Art thou not he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days many years that I would bring thee against them (*i.e.*, Israel)?" (xxxviii. 17).

We are told that Gog comes out of the "north parts," or the "uttermost north," with his "many peoples"

and "a great assembly, and mighty army." Geographically, therefore, there is ground for believing Gog to be closely linked with the King of the North or Assyrian; and the suggestion made by the late Mr Darby, that he believed Gog to be "the last phase of the Assyrian," appears to be very probably correct. If so, this explains what Ezekiel says as to previous prophetic testimony, for we know that the Assyrian is largely spoken of in the prophets.

When Gog appears, he comes with an immense host, like a storm, and like a cloud to cover the land; but his audaciousness draws down upon him the indignation of Jehovah, who comes in to deliver his people; and Gog perishes with all his host upon the mountains of Israel under the judgment of God.

It is to be remarked also that we find a very distinct reference to the northern invader in the Prophet Joel. He says, "And I will remove far off from you him [that cometh] from the north" (Joel ii. 20). So it is clear that this great enemy of Israel will occupy an important place in the closing scenes just before their final deliverance.

We have already seen that Jehovah's indignation—that is His anger against Israel on account of their idolatry and their sins—ceases with the judgment of the Assyrian. But there will be some lapse of time after the Lord descends from heaven in judgment upon the various actors in the scenes we have been looking at; and the establishment of *full* peace and blessing. In fact, He will reign first in the character of David, putting down His enemies, before He reigns in the character of Solomon in peace and tranquility. We have three periods noted at the close in Daniel xii.—three years and a half, or 1,260 days; 1,290 days; and 1,335 days. The first commences in the middle of the week, when

the covenant with the people, made by the head of the revived Roman Empire, is broken, and their worship is stopped; and it ends with the overthrow of the beast and Antichrist (Rev. xix.). But the *full* establishment of Israel in settled peace in their land does not come about till the close, 75 days later on, or perhaps more. It would seem that the great northern power to which we have already referred, will be allowed to come against Jerusalem on account of the exceeding wickedness of the Antichrist and of the beast, with whom he is linked, and of the apostate part of the nation of Israel. The Prophet Daniel (who never carries us into the millennium as Isaiah and other prophets do, but just up to it and no further) closes chapter xi. with a reference to the "King of the North," who comes down against the seat of Antichrist's power (*i.e.*, Jerusalem) like a whirlwind with his vast armies, overflows many countries, and passes on to Egypt. Tidings, however, out of the east and north trouble him, and he returns to Palestine, here called "the pleasant land," and plants the tent of his palace between the Mediterranean Sea and Jerusalem: but "he shall come to his end and none shall help him." This is very similar to what we have already seen concerning the fate of the Assyrian and Gog. Whether the tidings that he hears are that the Lord has appeared to crush the beast and the false prophet (Rev. xix.), or that the ten tribes, many of whom may be within his territory, are being brought back to the land, it would, perhaps, be unwise to say definitely—though it may be so—but he comes to his end by judgment at the hands of the Lord Himself, and not merely by being defeated in battle by some other power.

Jerusalem will be the centre of a conflict of nations in that day; "Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup

of reeling unto all the peoples round about, and upon Judah also shall it be in the siege against Jerusalem. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all the peoples; all that burden themselves with it shall be sore wounded; and all the nations of the earth shall be gathered together against it" (Zech. xii. 2-3). Again, "For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished: and half of the city shall go forth into captivity," etc. (xiv. 2). This first attack is partially successful; the city is taken and some are carried away captive, but when the second attack is made, the Lord is Himself there, having already crushed the beast and false prophet, and he will go forth and fight against those nations; "and His feet shall stand, in that day, upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east." From that Mount of Olives a cloud received Him out of the sight of His disciples; now He comes to that same place in judgment on the nations, "and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west," etc.: an actual physical convulsion will take place which will open a way of escape for His people (xiv. 5).

And here we would like to draw the reader's attention to the following extract from "Notes on Zechariah" by H. R.:—"In the 'last day,' after the judgment of the Antichrist and the Roman beast, Jerusalem will be attacked by the surrounding nations. This attack will take place, if not under the personal direction of the Assyrian, at least under his patronage. Jerusalem will be taken and sacked; half the inhabitants of the city will be led captive, but the remainder of the people will not be cut off. Amongst those who will be spared there will be the feeble 'Remnant,' a part of which,

the 'two witnesses' of Revelation, had already been martyred. It is the last trial which awaits the unhappy and guilty city.

"Later on, the King of the North or, the Assyrian, comes back from Egypt with his immense army, surrounds the beloved city, and it is then that the events mentioned in verse 3 of Zechariah xiv. take place: 'And the Lord will go forth and fight with those nations, *as when He fought in the day of battle.*' There is an allusion here to what had passed when the Lord, having come out of heaven with all His armies (Rev. xix.), had destroyed those of the beast and false prophet. But now a new event has taken place; 'And His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem toward the east.' Then will be fulfilled what the angels announced to the disciples, witnesses of the ascension of the Lord on the Mount of Olives, 'This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, *shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.*' . . . 'And the Lord *my* God shall come, and all the saints with thee' (Zech. xiv. 5). All that this chapter reveals to us is as the prelude to this great fact: Jehovah, the God of the prophets, *will come.*

"The Word of God presents to us the coming of the Lord under several aspects. After His first coming as man here below, we have His coming from heaven as the Morning Star to receive His own to Himself. Then His coming when He will come out of heaven with His armies, to smite the nations, with the beast and the false prophet. Then His coming when He will be seen by His own on the Mount of Olives and deliver them from the Assyrian. Finally, in our passage, His coming in glory with all the saints to establish the Kingdom and lay the foundation of His

government. This will be the moment when He will sit on the throne of His glory, and when all the nations will be assembled before Him to be rewarded or judged according to His retributive justice (Matt. xxv. 31-46)."

From other scriptures we learn other facts as to this closing period, just before the millennial blessing is established on a peaceful and permanent basis. We find in Isaiah lxiii. and xxxiv., the Lord's return from the terrible judgment which will take place in the land of Edom. This judgment is executed by Jehovah Himself upon the armies of the nations who are assembled against Jerusalem, and who find themselves in Edom on account of the movements of their armies. Edom itself is dealt with by Israel, as we shall see just now. This is the day of the Lord's vengeance for the controversy of Zion. It is the day of vengeance on the Lord's enemies, and the year of His redeemed—the time of deliverance for His people.

Edom, as a nation, had been characterised by pride and bitter hatred against the people of God, and they rejoiced at the calamities which overtook Israel. But if God finds it necessary to chasten His people, He does so for their good; and it is always a wrong thing to rejoice over the evils which come upon God's people, even if they deserve chastening. Three nations are said to escape out of the hand of the desolating King of the North (Dan. xi. 41), namely, Edom and Moab and the chief of the children of Ammon. These nations were borderers on Israel's territory, and connected with them by distant ties of relationship; but they had a special malice against God's people, therefore God uses Israel to deal with them in judgment at the close. Thus we read, "they (Israel) shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab; and the children of Ammon shall obey

them" (Isa. xi. 14). Again, Ezekiel says, "I will lay my vengeance upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel: and they shall do in Edom according to mine anger and my fury; and they shall know my vengeance, saith the Lord God" (xxv. 14). So also the prophet Obadiah brings before us the implacable hatred of Edom against Israel, and their rejoicing over God's chastisement of His erring people: but he shows us also God's deep displeasure against Edom on account of this animosity. Further, it is a remarkable fact that, while a remnant of the other nations will come in for blessing in a future day, Edom will not—"Edom shall be a desolation: every one that goeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss at the plagues thereof" (Jer. xlix. 17); because of their perpetual hatred of God's people, He says, "When the whole earth rejoiceth, I will make thee (Edom) desolate" (Ezek. xxxv. 14). Let us take the moral of it to heart, for we may easily fall into the same kind of spirit as the Edomite. Jeremiah saw the failures and sins of God's people, but he wept over them; Daniel and other godly men confessed them as their own; but the spirit of the Edomite is that of bitter hatred against those who, however they may have failed, are nevertheless the people of God. This spirit is particularly displeasing to Him. F. G. B.

Fragment.—Is the peace of God in the soul disturbed by things down here? No, never! If waters break in stormy currents against a rock, the rock is unmoved; it is only the waters that are disturbed.

The peace of one who is hid in the cleft of the Rock nothing can disturb.

If you and I knew a little more about Christ's ways, we should get a great deal more communion when we come together; we should speak more of those things which we possess in Christ as our portion. G. V. W.

“If it be Thou.”

“**B**E of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid” (Matt. xiv. 27). It was the familiar voice of Jesus, heard above the storm, speaking words of grace and encouragement to His disciples. And as those words fell upon Peter’s ear and produced an echo in his heart, he exclaimed, “Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water.” Had he not seen many touching proofs of the Lord’s grace and power—proofs sufficient to inspire confidence and give the needed courage for the circumstances, however untoward they might appear?

The Lord had just fed the five thousand with five loaves and two fishes; then, as the truly dependent Man, He had gone up into the mountain alone to pray, leaving His disciples to prove, upon the tempest-tost lake, their own powerlessness. But at the fourth watch of the night He came to them walking on the sea. They thought it was an apparition, but Jesus calms their fears with the assurance that it was *Himself*, this was enough. Then Peter says, “Lord, *if it be Thou*, bid me come.”

Everything depended upon that, “If it be Thou.”

He who created all and who, on another occasion, rebuked the winds, saying, “Peace, be still,” could walk on the water whether it was a storm or calm. What was wanted was *faith in Him*.

The Lord then speaks the word “Come,” and as soon as Peter heard it he descended from the boat to go to Jesus on the water. This is just what the saints of God *now* are called to, namely, to walk by faith not by sight. But to the soul governed by unbelief, or reason, or expediency, it might seem unwise—why leave the

boat and attempt to walk on an impossible element like water? But then Peter had just heard that word "Come" from the lips of Jesus; he had the *person* and the *word* of Christ, and this was *everything* for faith. Has not the Lord Himself walked that very path? Has He not marked out the way for His people, as we read in Hebrews xii., "Looking off unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith?"

But Peter's eye got off Christ, and when he saw the wind boisterous he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried, "Lord, save me." It is true the enemy raises up storms, and they are a very real test to the soul; have we not experienced them in the Church of God as well as in our own circumstances? At such seasons the poor human heart clings to something tangible, some "boat," something for sight and sense; anything indeed rather than to walk by faith in that which is unseen, and on the authority of the bare word of God. But let us remember His word, "Be of good cheer; it is I"; let us take courage and look steadfastly to Him who has gone before, instead of at the waves and winds. Christ is sufficient for all times and all circumstances, His power and resources are infinite.

And how the grace of the Saviour is at once manifested towards Peter! In a moment he delivered his poor disciple from his perilous position, for Jesus was so near to Him that He stretched out His hand *immediately* and caught him, with the gentle reproof, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Such is He to us now, as He was to Peter then. His grace is sufficient, His power is infinite, His presence is real and precious to the soul who trusts Him. Soon we shall be where the storms and waves of adverse circumstances shall never come; but *now* is the time of testing, and He wants us to trust Him fully *now*.

Waiting for the Lord—ii.

THE love of Christ shown at the cross in laying down His life as a ransom for us, than which there is none "greater," will never be satisfied till He has His redeemed as near as possible to Himself; and to carry it out *He must come for them Himself*: "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself." What infinite comfort this hope gives to our feeble hearts as we pass through the trials and difficulties which are met with in the path of faith! I am enabled to say to myself: "To-day, perhaps, the Lord Himself will bring me full deliverance and will more than satisfy all my desires in taking me, together with all His own, to Himself in the dwelling-place of eternal blessedness!" Thus also we, like His disciples, enjoy the privilege of constantly waiting for the return of our blessed Lord; and this earnest and constant waiting has the effect of imparting a special tone to the whole Christian life.

Turning now to the First Epistle to the Corinthians, we notice that when the saints were gathered together on the first day of the week, to remember their Saviour and show His death, they were instructed to carry out this service as those who were *waiting for* His return, according to the word, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death *till He come*" (1 Cor. xi. 26).

At that moment, all the gifts will cease to be exercised in order to give place to that which is perfect (1 Cor. xiii. 8-10), and the Lord's own presence will then replace the memorial which He has left us during the time of His absence. In the meantime we have the enjoyment of these things, while waiting for His return.

Let us lay it to heart that the Lord, when He comes, will not be unknown to those who have waited for Him. Already the objects of His love, and walking in communion with Himself, they learn to know Him intimately. Is He not ever with His own, near to them now, as He has said (Matt. xviii. 20)? Moreover, in the assembly gathered in His name, does He not manifest His presence spiritually, as He has promised?

The truth concerning *waiting for the Lord to come for us* is bound up with every detail of the Christian life, as we shall see later on. The believers at Corinth were considered as "waiting for the Lord." In mentioning the resurrection of the saints, the blessed apostle reminds them of what would then take place, "Behold I show 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 trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Cor. xv. 51-52). Animated by this living hope, the believers were to be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; and we too are encouraged in the same way, knowing that our labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Living daily in the presence of Him for whom he waits, the Christian moves thus in a sanctifying atmosphere, and is it not just this which explains the passage in the Epistle to the Philippians, "Our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we *await* the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, who shall transform this body of our humiliation into conformity with His body of glory, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself"?

The believer's living affections are elsewhere than in this world. In the heavenly scene to which he belongs, they are concentrated on Him who is his joy, and for

whom he waits in order to receive the complete and final deliverance in which his redeemed body will also share. The unlimited power which the Lord will display by and bye in the judgment upon His enemies, in making his rights felt when the proper time for that shall have come, He now exercises on behalf of His redeemed, in carrying out all that he purposes to do with them. What confidence that should give us to go quietly forward in the path of faith !

L. P. B.

The Atoning Blood—ii.

IN continuation of our notes upon the New Testament in this connection, having only touched upon Matthew and John—and before returning to the rich and manifold types of the Old Testament—we would first of all draw attention to the fact that Matthew's gospel serves as a sort of introduction to all that follows, by the remarkable way in which the Lord Himself is presented as the source and centre of all blessing. From beginning to end, He is EMMANUEL, God with us. The effect of that on each individual soul drawn to him, is unfolded in John's gospel. Mark takes up another line. There we find that He is Himself the Gatherer, so that the practical formation of what we understand a "gathering" to be, is shown to be His own work: He draws around Himself. Luke gives the consequent personal exercise, by the application of the word to the heart and conscience of those so drawn.

These characteristic differences affect every truth that is treated of. Consequently, it is not surprising to find that "remission of sins" is spoken of in Mark and Luke, much in the same way as it is set forth in the Acts of the Apostles. It was in view of it, that John the

Baptist called the people to confession of their sins. But neither of these two gospels mentions the *blood* of Christ in that connection; nor is there an allusion to it in the account of the dying thief. John, on the other hand, who insists upon the spiritual drinking of the blood, does not mention the *forgiveness of sins*, except in the Lord's final words of instruction to His disciples, anticipating the time when they would no longer be able to refer to Him as they had done during His sojourn with them on earth (chap. xx. 23). Matthew, as we have seen in that one passage, xxvi. 28, brings together the forgiveness of sins and the blood which makes divine forgiveness possible on the ground of righteousness.

Our habit in reading the gospels is no doubt to bring into them the knowledge we have, through grace, of the truths unfolded in the epistles; but it does not require much reflection to understand that the gospel in its fulness could not be preached before Christ had died *and* risen (1 Cor. xv. 14). Nor did any one of the disciples believe the Lord's words when He foretold His death and resurrection, until they were convinced by the actual facts, after they had taken place (John ii. 22; xx. 9). John the Baptist is never said to have preached the *gospel*; he could not do so. His mission was to preach the necessity of *repentance* in view of the coming kingdom, and a final judgment by fire (Matt. iii. 10). Those who listened, and confessed their sins, were baptized by Him, being thus cast upon God's mercy in anticipation of the coming of Him who alone could baptize with the Holy Ghost. But that supposed his death, resurrection, and return to the Father. See Mark i. 7-8; Luke iii. 15-16, vii. 29-30; John vii. 39, xvi. 7. On the day of Pentecost Peter proclaimed these *facts* (Acts ii. 33).

How establishing it is for our souls to observe that each part of scripture preserves its own special character, drawing out our hearts to the blessed Person to whom it all bears witness. In Mark xiv. 24, and Luke xxii. 20, as indeed in Matthew also, the Lord speaks of His blood as the sign and seal of the "new covenant," of which Old Testament types had established the importance (see Heb. ix. 20); but while confirming that, and thus laying the foundation of all future blessing upon earth, the blood of Christ has for the Christian a far deeper meaning. For it ushers us into the present enjoyment of the Father's love, and makes communion with one another possible, in a present known relationship "with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ," without a cloud resting on the conscience through unconfessed and unforgiven sin. This relationship is a blessing not contemplated in the "new covenant," as quoted in Hebrews viii., from Jeremiah xxxi. The simple linking together of "the remission of sins" with "the Blood," in Matthew xxvi. 28, leaves room for all this development in John's writings.

Let us now turn to the Epistles of Paul, where we shall perceive again how distinctive is the character which each bears. In every case where the blood is brought before us, the remission of sins is prominent as well.

1. In *Romans*, the blood is the basis on which God's *righteousness* is brought home to our souls in living power and personal application, presenting to us forgiveness, which we in no way deserve, but which has become a divine necessity, on account of the "propitiation," which God has set forth "through faith in the blood of Christ." We are therefore "*justified* by His blood" (iii. 25, v. 9). Through it, God declares His righteousness for

the remission of "sins that are past," *i.e.*, those committed before Christ suffered; and on the same ground, since, the cross, He shows Himself righteous in justifying all who believe in Jesus.

The importance of this cannot be over estimated; for without it all true self-judgment in the conscience of the believer would be falsified, and forgiveness would be reduced to the worldly principle of lightly passing over sin, which practically amounts to being indifferent to its gravity in God's sight.

The Epistle to the Galatians, written to recall the saints to the main truths of Christianity which they were letting slip through the influence of Judaizing teachers, shows definitely how the curse of God attached to the suffering of the cross, and according to the law, the curse rested on everyone who did not keep it (Gal. iii. 10-13). Either Christ bore that curse *for us*, or He did not. If not, we put ourselves practically with those who, rejecting the gospel, called Jesus accursed (1 Cor. xii. 3). If, on the contrary, we accept the gospel, and own the value in God's sight of Christ's death, we take our place with the dying thief and own Jesus as our "Lord" (Rom. x. 9). If righteousness could come by the law, "Christ is dead in vain" (Gal. ii. 21). The Epistle to the Romans establishes in detail the character of God's *righteousness*, when, through the blood of Christ, He meets us as a Saviour.

2. But the "spirit of *holiness*" must be maintained as well, as shown in Christ's resurrection (Rom. i. 4). And this side of the truth is developed in the Epistle to the *Hebrews*. Here the apostle treats the whole subject on this ground, and the blood has a very large place, especially in chapters ix. and x., where its sanctifying power is set forth, as well as the remission

of sins, which we could not have without it (Heb. ix. 22 ; xiii. 11-12, 20-21).

3. In *Ephesians*, where God's eternal purposes and counsels are presented to us according to what He is in His own being and nature, we have in Jesus Christ redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the *riches* of God's *grace*, "wherein He hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth;" that thus we should be "to the praise of His glory" (i. 5-12).

We do not find *justification* here as in Romans, but instead of it, we read of a "*new creation*" in chapter ii. 10, which has therefore no need of being justified, for all is of God. We are "quickened together with Christ," associated with Him in His resurrection, and actually considered as seated in the heavenly places "in Him." Once "afar off," we are now in Christ Jesus, made nigh to God "by the blood of Christ." Such is the wonderful character and power of the blood! Old things are passed away, all are become new, and all things are "of God" (2 Cor. v. 17-18).

4. The Epistle to the *Colossians* brings in a further thought, namely, that the *peace* made through the blood, shed at the cross of Christ, is the divine basis of the *reconciliation* now enjoyed by the believer. Formerly, an enemy in his mind by wicked works, he is now reconciled to God by Jesus Christ "in the body of His flesh through death" (i. 20-22; and compare 2 Cor. v. 18, and Rom. v. 10). But this is the only place where the *blood* is brought before us in this connection,

and set forth as the divine foundation of this blessing, by which those whose minds were full of enmity can enjoy the fulness of God's love.

It is worthy of note, as an indication of the marvellous perfection of Holy Scripture, that the psalm in which David especially pleads for forgiveness, follows out, in its three sections, the points of view of *Ephesians*, *Hebrews*, and *Romans*, to which the words *transgression*, *iniquity*, and *sin* respectively correspond. The first two verses of Psalm li. give as usual the thesis or subject of the whole. The three words occur there.

"Transgression" is regularly used as viewing sin as an outrage against God's majesty. It is once translated "rebellion" in Job xxxiv. 37; but in Job vii. 21 the usual translation is maintained. This demands God's pardon or forgiveness, and can only be found according to the maintenance of God's attributes. Hence the words, "That *thou* mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest" (ver. 4). This is referred to in Romans iii. 4, but the dealing with the sinner according to what God is in *grace* is the point in *Ephesians*.

The next section (vers. 7-13) deals with sin as a moral stain, giving the sinner a character which unfits him for God's holy presence. This needs the purification which His *holiness* demands, so that the forgiven one may know the *joy* of His presence. This is the point of view of *Hebrews*.

The third, from verse 14, deals with the matter on the ground of *righteousness*; for the sin committed was punishable with death, and, according to the law, no sin-offering was available for it. See Numbers xv. 22-36. The apostle develops this side of the truth in *Romans*.

We have referred above to John's Epistle, and the

testimony borne to the virtue of the *blood* which flowed from the Lord's pierced side. He is looked at in chapter v. 5-8 as the One who has "come" in that way.

Finally, in Revelation, the blood is the theme of eternal praise, the moment the name of Jesus is introduced. He has "washed us from our sins in His own blood"; and by it "redeemed us to God out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (i. 5; v. 9). What joy untold will it be to celebrate it for ever in presence of the Lamb once slain, who is seen in the midst of the throne of God in heaven, and also in the midst of the elders seated round about it! Such is the "New Song."

W. J. L.

God's Righteousness.

IT is very important for the soul's peace and establishment that we should understand what scripture teaches us as to the righteousness of God. Many dear children of God, owing to defective teaching, are tossed about, troubled by constant doubts and fears, looking within for something to rest upon; instead of seeing their place and standing before God in Christ, perfect and complete. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," says the inspired word. When the Christian lays hold of the fact that God looks at him, not "in Adam," but in Christ, made the righteousness of God in Christ, it must bring solid peace to the soul.

Now it is blessed to see that God can and does so look upon us, and that in perfect consistency with His own holiness and justice. Indeed, it has been truly said that God's righteousness is His consistency with Himself—it is that righteousness which is essentially *His*. And all His ways are in perfect keeping with

His holy nature as a God of holiness and truth as well as of love.

Scripture shows that man has absolutely no righteousness to bring to God: "There is none righteous, no, not one." In that sense he is like a bankrupt without any assets with which to meet his creditors. Nor can he obtain righteousness on the principle of law or works or doings. This is the mistake Israel made, to which the apostle refers in Romans x.: "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." Now, God's righteousness is "apart from law," not on that principle at all, but on quite a different one, namely, by faith. And it is "unto all," and "upon all them that believe." Thus Abraham was reckoned or accounted righteous, not on the ground of law or works, but by faith. This principle opens the door to all, Gentile as well as Jew.

Thus, it is a wondrous fact for the soul's comfort and establishment, that God makes the believer to be His righteousness in Christ (2 Cor. v. 21). What a truth it is, that God can look down upon the simplest saint, the one who only believed yesterday, and, seeing him in Christ, He can say, There is My righteousness! Yet so it is, for the word of God declares that this is his standing, unchangeable and unalterable, just as truly as if he were a mature Christian of fifty years' experience.

Then, again, it still further establishes the soul to see that God's righteousness, as manifested in the gospel, is in no way out of harmony with His justice, His holiness, or His truth. He is both "a just God and a Saviour." Job asked the question in his day, 'How should man be just with God?' But it was reserved for New Testament times to bring out the

great truth, that God can be just, yet justify the believer in Jesus. And if we ask, What is the ground of it all? we learn that God has set forth Christ, a propitiation or mercy-seat (the place where the blood of atonement was sprinkled) through faith in His blood. Thus God's righteousness is declared or made known in the gospel, for on the ground of that blood He can be just and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus.

Not one attribute of God's nature as a God of justice, righteousness, majesty, and truth, is impugned or set aside. The blood of Christ—His death—has fully met and satisfied every requirement of God's holiness and justice. His just demands against the sinner have been met, His holy claims satisfied, His nature vindicated, yea even glorified by the work of the cross. And this He has borne witness to by raising His own Son from the dead and crowning Him with glory and honour at His right hand. And, to complete it all, Christ, who is in glory, is made unto us of God, "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

But there is also another truth, of a very practical character, connected with this subject, which is brought before us in Romans viii.

God, having sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as a sacrifice for sin, has condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit. Thus, the believer's sins are *forgiven*; sin (the evil nature which produced them) is *condemned*, and he is set free. He has also received the Holy Spirit to dwell in Him, as a Spirit of life and liberty.

How, then, is his walk and conduct to be made to correspond to his position and standing in Christ? Is

it not that, being thus free from bondage to sin and the law, and having received the Holy Spirit as the needed power, he is now to walk "not after the flesh, but after the Spirit"? And so what the law demands in the way of righteousness is fulfilled in him, whilst at the same time he is "not under the law, but under grace."

This side of the question is very important for it brings in our *responsibility* to answer, in our practical life and walk, to the place and standing which God has given us in Christ.

Brief Studies in Prophecy—ix.

The period between the coming of the Lord for His saints and His appearing with them in glory (continued).

SCRIPTURE clearly shows that the future blessing which is in store for this earth, and which will be brought in under Christ as the true Messiah of Israel, will be preceded by a series of judgments, and will not be brought about by the preaching of the gospel, as some suppose. It is when God's judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness (Isa. xxvi. 9). The gospel of God's grace which is preached now, has quite another object, namely, to bring souls to Christ and to gather *out of* the world a people for His name. It has been truly said that "When the Church thinks of converting the world (instead of gathering out of it to Christ in heaven), it allies itself to the powers of the world. They begin, it is true, by sincerely desiring the conversion of souls; then to arrive at this they join the world and fall into spiritual feebleness. When we rest on the world, we own and affirm its power" (*Coll. Writ.*, J. N. D., xxx. 322).

It is important, too, that we should distinguish between the "day of the Lord," so often spoken of in the prophets, and the "coming of the Lord," for which we wait. The former is a day of darkness, gloominess, and judgment, when God will assert His rights over this world, so long under the dominion of Satan, its god and prince. The latter is the bright and blessed culmination of all the Christian's joys, the climax of his hope, and the cheer and sustainment to his faith as he passes through this Christ-rejecting world, waiting for God's Son from heaven.

This fact, that the kingdom will be preceded by judgment, explains what is a difficulty to some people, that is, what are sometimes called the "imprecatory psalms." Owing to not understanding the difference between the *Christian* and the *Jewish* dispensations, and applying to the one what belongs to the other, some are lead into confusion and error. *We* (Christians) do not look for judgment on the world; on the contrary, our place is rather to suffer, if called on to do so; and to be earnest in seeking the conversion of souls, out of the world. When the Lord comes, *we* leave the world to go to be with Him in heaven. But when it is a question of the *government of the world*, God must act in righteousness and put down evil. Israel will, therefore, rightly look for His judgment on their enemies, because they cannot have their rest and blessing on earth until the wicked are put down.

Another remarkable event connected with the appearing of the Lord in glory will be the return of the ten tribes of Israel. The last notice of them in scripture is given us in that instructive chapter, 2 Kings xvii., where the history of God's patience and forbearance on the one hand, and their sins and follies on the other, is brought before us. It was their sins and idolatry which

were the cause of all the calamities which came upon them, as the word "therefore," which sums it all up in verse 18, plainly shows—" *Therefore* the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of His sight." So also we find in 1 Chronicles v. 26, "The God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul, king of Assyria, and the spirit of Tilgath-pilneser, king of Assyria, and he carried them away . . . and brought them unto Halah, and Habor, and Hara, and to the river Gozan," etc. Remark, it was *God* who stirred up the spirit of these kings; and thus they were deported to Assyria. This is one of the places mentioned in Zechariah x. 10, from which they will be brought back in a future day.

These ten tribes, therefore, were not in the land (with rare exceptions) at the time when Christ was crucified, and for this reason they are not directly guilty of having put Him to death. They do not pass through the conflicts of the three and a half years which we have been considering, but are brought back just at the close. We get some light on this subject in Ezekiel xx., where God says he will gather them out of the countries where they are scattered, with a mighty hand, and will bring them into the wilderness of the people, and will plead with them face to face. There they will be purged from the rebels who are amongst them, separating a remnant, and God will accept them and require offerings at their hands. From Isaiah xlix. 18-23, we learn that the Jews (*i.e.*, the two tribes) will again recognise Israel (the ten tribes), saying, "Who hath begotten me these . . . these, where had they been?" God will put it into the heart of the nations in that day to bring back these lost ones to their land, in order that they may be made ready to receive their Messiah; at least the godly ones amongst them (compare Jer. xvi. 15; Ezek. xi. 16-21; Micah iii. 8;

Isa. xlix. 21).* Infidels and sceptics may say—How can this be, seeing that they had disappeared amongst the other nations? But we know that God has His eye upon them, and in His time the great trumpet will be blown, and they will be once more restored to their land.

We have now arrived, in our brief study, as far as *the coming of the Son of man in power and glory*. “When the Son of man shall come in His glory and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all the nations” (Matt. xxv. 31, 32). Scripture shows that all judgment is committed to the *Son of man* (John v. 22); but it is important that we should clearly understand that those who appear before *this* judgment throne are not people who have died, but *living nations* on earth at that time. Christ will deal with those nations according to the way they treated those ministers or servants whom He sent out during the period of trial and persecution just preceding; and whom He calls here “these my brethren.” Those who received them, in so doing, received Him and will pass into the blessing of the millennial Kingdom. Those who rejected them, rejected Him, and will depart into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. Such is the sentence of the King who sits on His throne.

* “Following upon the events of which we have just spoken (the judgment of the Assyrian, the nations, etc.), a part of the ten tribes of Israel will set out to go back to Palestine, from the farthest parts of Egypt and of Assyria, beyond the desert (Zeph. iii. 10 ; Zach. x. 7-12). The rebels amongst them are judged on the way, as of old when the people went out of Egypt, yet did not see the promised land (Ezek. xx. 30-44 ; Isa. xi. 12-16 ; xxvii. 12-13). The nations who have been evangelised bring back the other part of the dispersed Remnant of Israel. These two parts do not return into their land until “after the glory.” The ships of Tarshish are the first to bring them back (Isa. lx. 1-9 ; lxvi. 20-21 ; xlix. 8-12, 22).—H. R.

Judgment is, indeed, His "strange work," for He delights in mercy; but all rebellion and opposition must be put down before Christ reigns in righteousness and peace. When He comes in glory, His appearing will be sudden and vivid as lightning, and He will gather together His elect (*i.e.* the elect of Israel) from all parts. It will be a solemn day for the world, but a blessed time for His oppressed and persecuted people. The Lord Himself confessed before the high priest, "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

Let us here give a brief resumé of the events of this closing period just before the millennial reign begins. We have the testimony borne in Revelation i. 7, "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen." Chapter xix. of the same book, where we find heaven opened for the last time in scripture, gives us Christ's coming in warrior-judgment, with all the majesty and glory which belongs to Him as King of kings and Lord of lords. His eyes are as a flaming fire—piercing and penetrating—He is the royal Victor, crowned with many crowns, and having a name which no one knows but Himself. Truly Man as well as God, His person is inscrutable, no one could sound the deep mystery of His being; but, revealed in judgment, His name is declared to be the "WORD OF GOD." A sharp sword proceeds out of His mouth, and He treads the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God Almighty. The first stroke of His judgment falls upon the head of the revived Roman Empire (the first beast of Rev. xiii.) and on the false prophet or Antichrist (the second beast of Rev. xiii.) who was linked with him.

These two leaders of satanic power and craft, being taken in the act of open rebellion and war against Christ, are cast *alive* into the lake of fire, without further judgment; the remnant, that is their followers and those who compose their armies, are slain. The judgment of Gog we have already spoken of (see Ezek. xxxix.; Isa. xxx. 31-33; Dan. xi. 45, etc.); and in Joel iii. we have God's judgment on the nations in the valley of Jehoshaphat, where He sits to "Judge all the nations round about."

Here let us pause for a moment. *It is always a solemn and humbling thing to contemplate God's actings in judgment.* Solemn, because who can withstand the Almighty when He arises in vengeance and in judgment? Humbling, when we think what depths of wickedness and folly man is capable of; and *we* ourselves should be the same but for His infinite grace!

F. G. B.

The Christian's Path.

"LOOK not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Phil. ii., 4).

Let us look at Christ; let us contemplate Him, let us feed our souls upon Him in His humiliation; then we shall be formed after His character. We shall see Him in our brethren, and thus it will not be difficult for us to esteem others better than ourselves. If the love of Christ is in my heart, I shall see all that is good in others, and the "I" will be completely forgotten.

"That ye may be blameless and harmless," etc. (Phil. ii., 15-16). The Christian, being in the path of grace here below, *self* ought to be constantly set aside. I say again; *love* likes to serve. In order to serve Christ we must make nothing of ourselves. Our

position here below is very solemn; we have put on the character of Christ in going through this world—this perverse and crooked generation—in spite of the efforts of Satan to make us walk after the flesh. Every Christian, if he is in a good state, that is to say not thinking of himself at all, is an epistle of Christ, known and read of all men.

Do we walk as Christ walked when He was here? Do we remember that we are bought with a price? Let us look at Christ; He went always down. He did not desire to take a place in this world. Where could He find one? If the world is away from God, what path can we follow in it, if His path was that He had no place to lay His head; the world was a desert to Him—and we—we ought to follow Him across the desert.

Herein was the true secret of the path of Christ; and we ought to learn of Him, like Mary did, sitting at His feet to listen to His word. Would you like the world to honour you and regard you with esteem, or would you prefer that it should look upon you as it looked upon your Lord? Be much in His company and you will be like Him in some measure, no matter in what circumstances you may be placed. He never thought of Himself. See Him on the cross, thinking about His mother; in the garden, healing the servant's ear. Did He even give Himself time to eat or to rest? We have no excuse if we allow this *self* to come in; for if we were constantly in His company, the flesh would not raise its head. May our hearts be drawn more and more to Him alone!

J. N. D.

Some Present-day Questions.

HOW do you know that the Bible is the Word of God?

It has been truly said that "The proof of Scripture is in Scripture itself, in the power of the Word wielded by the Holy Ghost. When in that power it reaches the heart and conscience, its character—its divine character—is known, not only in the particular point in which it reaches them, but as to the true power and character of the Word itself. . . . Human testimony may prove the folly of human doubt, and so be useful, but no more; but divine operation alone gives divine faith." Again, "If the Word of God reaches down even to my low estate, it reaches up to God's height, because it comes from thence. The love that can reach even to me, and apply to every detail of my feebleness and failure, proves itself divine in doing so (for none but God could so love), hence it leads me up to Him. As Jesus came from God and went to God, so does the book that divinely reveals Him come from Him and elevate to Him. If received, it has brought the soul to God, for He has revealed Himself in it. Its positive proofs are all in itself. The sun needs no light to see it by."

If some one were to pierce my body with a sword, I should feel its effects, and I should know that it was a sword. The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God. yea, it is sharper than any two-edged sword. It proves itself to be God's Word because it can thus detect, not only the outward acts and doings of the man, but those hidden springs which rule his heart. It goes down to the roots of his whole moral being in a way that nothing else can do. It is said to be

a "critic (this is the exact word used) of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Men do not like this exposure, therefore they want to get rid of the Bible. They judge it, but it will judge them. As our Lord said to the unbelieving Jews in His day, "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."

And not only does the Word thus lay bare the hidden motives of the heart, and expose the utter ruin of man, but it shows how God has divinely met all that ruin, in His own perfect way, in the gift of His own Son. It fully reveals God both as Light and Love. And this perfect revelation of God meets all the deepest needs and cravings of the believer's soul. It comforts him in his sorrows, it sustains him in his trials, it brightens and animates his whole life with the assured hope of future glory. When received, not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which effectually works in the believer; and read under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it carries with it the ever-deepening conviction of its divine source and origin.

Waiting for the Lord—iii.

BUT it is especially in the epistles to the Thessalonians, some of the earliest writings of the apostle Paul, that the attitude of waiting for the Lord is particularly brought before us. The beginning of the former epistle gives us a beautiful picture of Christian life in its first freshness, learned through the gospel; it had been entirely to the Lord's glory.

The divine life in the faithful at Thessalonica was so marked that the writer of the epistle was enabled to bear testimony: "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in

word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance" (1 Thess. i. 5-6).

Not only had these believers become models for those of the neighbouring countries, but their faith was spread abroad in every place to the glory of God. Even the world around was speaking of the wonderful change that had taken place, having observed how they had "turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come" (1 Thess. i. 9-10).

In the case of these babes in Christ, the attitude of *waiting for the Lord's coming* was such a living reality, that the effects of it in their daily life were unmistakeably manifest. Indeed, in the first epistle which was addressed to them, one may remark that this truth was closely interwoven with every detail of the Christian life and walk. These believers thus realised, to the glory of God, the double object of conversion namely, to serve the God and Father revealed to us in the gospel, and then to wait for His Son from heaven, who delivers us from the wrath to come. Consequently, we shall never have to go through "the great tribulation," as we shall have occasion to observe later on.

In chapter iv. of this epistle (verses 16-18) the apostle, by means of a special revelation then given him, was enabled to inform these young saints concerning the special way in which they would be taken up to meet the Lord: "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord." He is about to accomplish in this

manner the faithful promise He made to His disciples before leaving them (John xiv. 1-3). He will come *personally*, and, at that moment, He will raise or change the bodies of His redeemed, and will transform them into the likeness of His body of glory. He will claim His own, the fruit of the travail of His soul, who will be with Him for ever. Does not this thought cause us to rejoice in hope?

But, sad to say, we are constantly in danger of decline if we are lacking in vigilance; and this is true even of those who have, in early days, given cause for the brightest hopes. For this reason we can well understand the suitability of the exhortation addressed in the second epistle to these same faithful ones at Thessalonica, who were so full of rejoicing at the beginning: "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of Christ."

The hope of the Lord's return to take his people to be with Himself is, in truth, a "blessed" one; of this we are reminded in a precious passage in the epistle of Titus. In fact, what object could be presented to the heart more precious than the person of Christ? And we see here, once again, that proper Christian activity is inseparable from waiting for the Lord: "Looking for that blessed hope, and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ."

We have already seen that death is in no way the hope of the believer. The expectation set before him is of a kind altogether different, from the first moment that he is brought to a knowledge of Christ. We have just been reminded that *it is the Lord Himself* for whom we wait; and this is what we learn at the close of Hebrews ix.: "And unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

In this passage, the "many," whose sins Christ has

borne in His own body on the tree, are exactly those who have the privilege of waiting for His coming, when they will be brought into the enjoyment of the *full* deliverance which His perfect sacrifice has wrought for them.

We would repeat that the effective realisation of this hope in the soul forms an integral part of the life of the Christian. Some years ago, a servant of the Lord, when visiting in a part of France, went to see an invalid whom he knew, who had been a long time converted, and who, to all human appearance, seemed to be near his end. Preoccupied with the near approach of death, he was incapable of realising his privileges as a Christian, and could not "rejoice in the Lord." His visitor, observing his state, was led to speak to him of Christ as being personally the believer's hope from day to day. The sick man laid hold of this truth for himself, which, as a ray of light from above, illuminated his dark and depressed soul, so that he was thenceforward able to "rejoice in hope" (Rom. xii. 12). And the blessing did not end there, for, contrary to all expectation, he recovered from his illness, and lived two years longer, animated by the effect of this fresh discovery which had brightened his very existence.

L. P. B.

The Atoning-Blood *iii.*

WE will now go back to Old Testament types, which bring before us other truths in this connection.

At once we meet with two subjects which must be considered separately: one is that which concerns the "first-born," the other the *place* of sprinkling, which, as we shall find in the history, had necessarily to be changed. We may therefore consider in the

first place the truths connected with the appropriation of the first-born to God.

The first intimation of the terrible visitation which was to result in the complete deliverance of the children of Israel from the yoke of the Pharoahs in Egypt, is in Exodus xi. 4-6. The quotation made in Romans ix., from Exodus ix. 16, shows that the king had been specially raised up as an example of the obstinacy characteristic of this world, which, in the unremitting pursuit of self-interest, refuses every divinely given warning as to the end of such a course—and this fact ought to weigh much with us, when we consider what the gospel is, and our surroundings in the world where it is preached.

Pharoah had been raised up in order that God's power might be shown, and His name published "throughout all the earth." His "power" is shown, not only in judgment, which is His "strange work" (Isa. xxviii. 21), but also in the exercise of His sovereign grace. Judgment is deferred as long as possible, in spite of solemn warnings given from time to time; but when it does at last fall upon the guilty, God still uses it to show what sovereign grace can effect.

The supreme example of this is the cross of Christ. When Adam listened to his wife's suggestion, and with the full conviction that she was subject to the sentence which she had already neglected and set aside, he, with his eyes open, took his place with her (1 Tim. ii. 14). But God, in pronouncing judgment upon the deceiver, made known there and then that the woman's seed should bruise the serpent's head. That necessarily supposed that the sentence of death would *not* be immediately carried out. Adam, laying hold of this, called his wife's name "Eve" which means *living*; and God, in sovereign mercy, bore with him 930 years

before He gave effect to the sentence of death under which His creature lay. He waited more than three thousand years longer, before the promised "First-born Son" (Matt. i. 25) came into this world. Such was His patience!

But that is not all. When the blessed Lord, on the occasion of the desire of some Greeks to see Him, had before His soul the needed and only way by which universal redemption could be accomplished, He returned in principle to the sentence pronounced in the Garden of Eden, while praying that His Father's name should be glorified. The answer to that prayer, audible, though not understood by the hearers, led to His saying:—

"This voice came not for Me, but for your sakes. *Now* is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out; and, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men (*i.e. Gentile* as well as *Jew*) to Myself." He spake this, signifying by what death He must die. The "death" of the *cross* was the only one to which the "curse" of God was attached (John xii. 20-23, 27-33; Gal. iii. 8-14); and that, as the apostle shows, is the one which alone could meet our need.

The "woman's seed" (Gal. iv. 4-5) was there, ready to have "his heel bruised," and in that fact, He foresaw the judgment of the world and the casting out of Satan. Yet again another two thousand years have nearly run their course, whereas, so far, Satan has not been cast out of heaven! (compare Luke x. 18 with Rev. xii. 7-11). Such, we repeat again, is the patience of God! But "*the time is at hand.*"

The same principles of God's dealings appear through the whole scheme of the scriptures of truth, and we find ourselves in the presence of Him for whom "one

day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day" (2 Pet. iii. 7-9). Those who get the victory over Satan, do so "through the BLOOD of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony"; and they love not their lives unto the death. "Life out of death" characterises not only the salvation of their souls, but also their actual experience in the world of which Satan is "the prince" (John xii. 31; xiv. 30; xvi. 11).

Is it not then from this point of view that we must read the account of the judgment on the "first-born" in Egypt, from the first-born of Pharoah who was sitting on the throne, to the first-born of the menial behind the grindstone, and all the first-born of cattle (Exod. xi. 5)?

One way of deliverance, and only one, was presented to God's chosen people. Their faith was to act upon it, without any explanation being given as to why the *blood* was to be used. There is not a hint in all the passage of forgiveness of sins; for the law had not yet been given, and sin is not laid to anyone's account where there is no law (Rom. v. 13). The first use of the blood is for another object. It was to be sprinkled on the two side posts, and on the lintel of every doorway, while the whole household within was partaking of the passover lamb (Exod. xii. 7-8).

Let us note here the double type. The blood outside was for God alone to see, for the visitation was to take place in the night when every first-born in all the land of Egypt would be smitten (vers. 12-13), whereas inside, the roasted lamb was to be partaken of as the needed nourishment of the people about to leave for ever the land of Egypt.

But though the deliverance was keenly felt by every family in Israel, it was only the *first-born* in every house that was personally affected by it. And the

consequence was that everyone so delivered belonged to God, and had to be separated to Him: "Every first-born is mine" (chap. xiii. 2). In the future, every father in Israel had to say: "By strength of hand the Lord brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage; and it came to pass, when Pharoah refused to let us go, the Lord slew all the first-born in Egypt. . . . Therefore I sacrifice to the Lord every male that openeth the womb, and every first-born of my children I redeem" (xiii. 14-15).

After the law had been given on Mount Sinai, and the tabernacle was set in order in the midst of the camp, the effect of this redemption was openly set forth by means of the consecration of the Levites to the service of God. They were not to be counted with all the other tribes of Israel, but set apart in order to represent all the first-born. This we see in Numbers ii. 33; iii. 12-13.

The number of the Levites, from a month old and upward, was set down at 22,000; the number of the first-born in Israel 22,273. The excess had therefore to be specially redeemed according to the formula given in Leviticus xxvii. 6, at five shekels ahead. And in this particular way all were consecrated to the service of God, whether at the tabernacle or the altar (Ezek. xliv. 10-11).

We find then two great principles as to their consecration to God: first of all as saved from judgment by the sprinkled blood; secondly, as represented substitutionally by the Levites. Personally saved from death, they were reckoned as having passed through it to God. And that was particularly set forth in the case of the domestic animals, of which the first-born had to be sacrificed on God's altar. An ass, being improper for that, was represented by a lamb, or, as an alternative,

had to be put to death (Exod. xiii. 13). This last case served to emphasise the truth of passing through death.

The Levites had no inheritance among the other tribes of Israel. When the tithes of the whole people were properly paid, their maintenance was fully provided for, and certain towns were set apart for their habitations in all the tribes of Israel so that they might have the opportunity of teaching the people, and preserving amongst future generations the knowledge of God and His law (see Joshua xxi.; 2 Chron. xvii. 8, etc.). But in principle, they represented the "first-born" saved from imminent judgment.

And for us, this is most valuable. Every Christian in the present economy of grace is considered as one of God's "first-born." The only mention of the "Church" in the Epistle to the Hebrews is in this connection (xii. 23). Their names "are written in heaven"; that is to say, their place is already assured there, by the presence of their Redeemer at the right hand of God (compare Luke x. 20 with Heb. ii. 10-15; vi. 19-20; ix. 28). They are looked at as being in a sense "seated *in* Christ," though not yet actually *with* Him (Eph. ii. 6); and the purpose of God to have "many sons in glory," cannot be realised without their being there. Before leaving his disciples, the Lord left with them the assurance that they must be with Him (John xiv. 1-3).

Is not that also the meaning of Romans viii. 29? We are made not only "heirs" but "joint-heirs with Christ," and the Holy Ghost is given to that end as the *earnest* of the inheritance of glory to come (Eph. i. 13-14). How wonderful is this! It seems to open up a relationship and place of blessing with Christ, of which the description of the "Bride" in Revelation xxi., gives further intimation. In this sense

the "brethren" spoken of are all reckoned as being "first-born." Christ is pre-eminently *the* First-born (Ps. lxxxix. 27; Col. i. 15, 18). He is so, not only as the Author of Creation, but also as the First-risen from the Dead, and consequently the Head of the Church. And, as a consequence, those who are associated with Him, as the fruit of His sufferings, have their place and title with Him. This fact is embodied in the first message sent by Him to His disciples after His resurrection: "Go to my brethren, and say unto them: I ascend to my Father *and* your Father, and to my God *and* your God" (John xx. 17).

What manner of persons ought we then to be! Objects of such grace, the fruit of eternal counsels in Christ, we are left here for a little while to show forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. The more we ponder the scriptures, the more we are forced to the conclusion that God, in His infinite mercy, will have His perfect redemption linked up in our souls with the blessed *relationship* in which He is pleased to set us—His blessed Son is the only one who was and is ever in His bosom, and consequently alone able to declare the Sonship which He deigns to make ours also. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John i. 18). "Ye are all sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii. 26).

We trust the reader will bear with this rapid and meagre sketch, written at odd moments. In consulting the passages indicated, he will find for his soul an increasing sense of God's wonderful grace towards poor sinners like ourselves. We reserve the sprinkling of the blood for a future article, if the Lord will.

W. J. L.

Brief Studies in Prophecy—x.

The Millennium.

THE various acts of judgment to which we have referred, prepare the way for the millennium by the putting down of evil and what is opposed to God. But before we enter upon our subject, let us briefly consider the state of the people of God in that day, preparatory to Christ's reign.

We have already seen that there will be a faithful remnant of Israel, as well as a company of Gentiles, who will identify themselves with them, preserved and kept by God's power, and who will be looking for the Messiah, in spite of all the machinations of their enemies. Though Israel should "abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim" (Hos. iii. 4), yet, afterwards they will return and seek the Lord, and David (type of Christ) their king. What a remarkable testimony this is to what has actually taken place, and what will yet take place! They will say, "Come, let us return unto the Lord; for He hath broken, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up. After two days will He revive us; and the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight" (Hos. vi. 1, 2). The "third day" is the day when God intervenes in power. We find a figurative representation of this future restoration of the nation in Ezekiel, in the vision of the "valley of dry bones" (chap. xxxvii.). God brings life and blessing to His once torn and scattered people. And it is worthy of note also that, when Hezekiah, after his deliverance from the Assyrian, was sick unto death, and prayed to the Lord for his

recovery, the prophet was sent to him with the message ; “ Behold, I will heal thee : on the third day thou shalt go up into the house of the Lord ” (2 Kings xx. 5). He is here, no doubt, a type of Israel, delivered through God’s marvellous interposition ; raised up to life again, so to speak, and going up to worship in His house “ on the third day.”

But the prophetic testimony which speaks of that blessed day for Israel, when they shall be restored to their own land is so abundant, that it would be quite beyond our space to refer to it in detail. One thing which is very striking about it is that these promises of future blessing are often abruptly brought in, just after speaking of the chastisement God had to bring upon them for their sins. Frequently they are introduced with the words “ I WILL,” do so and so. This shows us that the blessing of the people is on the ground of pure grace and sovereign mercy ; it is also a touching evidence of God’s willingness to forgive, yea, His delight to bless, wherever there is real repentance and self-judgment. And the work of repentance and contrition on account of their terrible guilt in crucifying their own Messiah, produced by the Spirit of God acting in the hearts of the godly remnant of Israel in that day, will be very deep and real. We have a very striking picture of this in Zechariah xii. 10-14. It is not, there, a question of outside enemies or circumstances, but one between the soul and Christ Himself. What bitter sorrow they will feel as they “ look on Him whom they have pierced,” and realise, as they have never yet done, what they have been guilty of. Every family mourns apart, and their wives apart ; such is their individual contrition ; and, by a strong figure of speech, even the land is said to mourn.

The title “ millennium ” means simply the thousand

years, and is quite correct so far as it goes ; because, as we learn from Revelation xx., Christ's reign over the earth will last for that space of time. It will be a reign of righteousness and peace ; "A king shall reign in righteousness," "and the work of righteousness shall be peace ; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places" (Isa. xxxii). Being a reign of righteousness, wherever evil shows itself during the millennium, it will be dealt with in righteous judgment at once. The glorified saints will be associated with Christ in His reign. The seat and centre of government will be Jerusalem, which "shall be safely inhabited." To it those who are left of the nations shall go up year by year to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. The temple will be built on Mount Zion, not on Mount Moriah as of old.

Many of the psalms give us notes of praise and triumph which will be sung in that day to celebrate the Lord whose mercy towards His people endureth for ever, and whose praises will be found connected with Zion, the place of God's own choice and of His triumphant grace toward Israel.

But it would carry us much beyond the scope of this paper to look at more than two or three passages. In Psalm lxviii. we find : "A mount of God is Mount Bashan, a many-peaked mountain is Mount Bashan. Why do ye look with envy, ye many-peaked mountains, upon the mount that God hath desired for his abode ? (Zion), yea, Jehovah will dwell there for ever." And Psalm, cxlv., looks on to that millennial day when Christ Himself will lead the praises of His people in the midst of the assembly of Israel. So also Isaiah xi.

gives us a beautiful description of that time when the "Branch out of the root of Jesse" shall judge the poor in righteousness and maintain the right of the meek with equity, and under whose beneficent sway blessing and peace shall fill the land. Chapter xii. contains the song that shall be sung in that day, when Jah, Jehovah (the existing One objectively, as well as the One who is in special relationship with His people) will be the strength and salvation of His delivered people. It closes with the words: "Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee." Such is the exulting praise which shall go up to Him in that day from His redeemed people, for His rich and abounding mercy. *Then* "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."

There will be a manifest, visible display of the glory of God in the heavens, just as the pillar and the cloud marked His presence in the tabernacle of old. Thus we read in Isaiah iv. 5: "And Jehovah will create, over every dwelling-place of Mount Zion, and over her assemblies, a cloud of smoke by day, and the shining of a flame of fire by night, for over all the glory shall be a canopy." So, too, we find in Revelation xxi., that "the holy city, Jerusalem" (as it should read) comes down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, and her shining was like unto a stone most precious, as it were a jasper stone, clear as crystal. It does not derive its light from the sun and then give it out to the earth; but, in a fuller way than the pillar of fire and the cloud, the glory of God enlightens it, and the light thereof is the Lamb. In this holy city, Jerusalem above, there is no temple; God's presence there is

manifested, not shut in; but in Jerusalem below, the temple will be rebuilt, as we see by the account given at the close of Ezekiel. Though the Lord will open the millennial reign in person, yet He will not, we believe, reign exactly *on* the earth during that time, but *over* the earth, in connection with it. We would gather from Ezekiel xlv.-xlviii., that there will be a representative, on vicegerent (as we would say) who will represent Him, in the centre of God's government at Jerusalem, and who is there called "the prince."

Satan, long practised in deceiving men and tempting them to sin and rebellion, and who is undying in his hatred against Christ, will be bound and cast into the bottomless pit or abyss. The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad and shall blossom as the rose. The effects of the curse will be, to a certain extent, removed; and it seems probable that death will not be, unless for positive acts of disobedience and sin against God—"the youth shall die an hundred years old, and the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed" (Isa. lxx. 20).

But it must not be supposed that the heart of man is one whit changed, even by the manifestation of such glory, unless where the regenerating grace of God has wrought; and in many cases they will doubtless yield but a feigned obedience. So, at the close of this time of blessing, God allows one last test. Has one thousand years of righteous rule and unalloyed goodness on God's part changed the heart? Alas! it is not so. No sooner is Satan loosed out of his prison for a little season, than he gathers together the nations of the earth as the sand of the sea, around Jerusalem. This last act of rebellion is met by God's summary judgment: fire comes down from God out of heaven and devours them (Rev. xx).

F. G. B.

Prophetic Questions and Answers—i.

Q. Do you see any fulfilment of prophecy in the recent war in the Balkans, or is it likely that the change which will take place in the map of Europe will contribute to such fulfilment?

A. In reply to your question, I would remark that in England and elsewhere, pamphlets, which have appeared since the outbreak of the Balkan War, have sought to prove that that war is *the fulfilment* of prophecy. These pamphlets present the inroads made by Mahometanism, the formation of the Turkish empire, and eventually its being driven out of Europe, as matters predicted beforehand in the Book of Revelation.

For anyone who has some intelligence in prophecy, these ideas are erroneous. The Revelation (*i.e.*, from chap. iv.-xix.) only speaks to us of events which follow the rapture of the Church to heaven, where it may be seen as represented by the "twenty-four elders" (chap. iv.-v.). This removal of the saints not having yet taken place, all that concerns the history of the world, since the establishment of the fourth universal monarchy of Daniel vii. (*i.e.*, the Roman Beast who is wounded to death (Rev. xiii. 3)), and until its re-establishment in another form in the last days, does not come into the prophetic field of the Book of Revelation. The most that might be said in the way of continuous historic development, gathered from the description of the various successive forms of the Roman power, is that in the seventh king of Revelation xvii. 10, there may be an obscure allusion to Napoleon I., whose ambition led him to attempt openly, but in vain, the re-formation of the fourth empire, previously destroyed

by the barbarians. But, even before him, Charlemagne and Charles V. had attempted the same thing. Mahometanism, in spite of the important part it played at the commencement of modern history, has nothing to do with all this, and one can easily understand that its origin, as well as its formation and development, should be entirely passed over in silence in the Revelation.

The main point of the apocalyptic disclosures is, unquestionably, the revived Roman Empire, and not the Assyrian power. We do not, of course, mean to imply that the angels bound at the river Euphrates (ix. 14), and the drying up of that river (xvi. 12), have nothing to do with the territory occupied by the Assyrian, or with the present Turkish power; but the Revelation views the Euphrates as the eastern limit of the ancient Roman Empire, and also of the same Roman Empire as it is to be revived in a future day. But we may note that in Revelation ix. 16, as well as in the second passage referred to (Rev. xvi. 12-14), the horsemen and the kings of the East are said to come from the other side of the Euphrates, against what is now Turkey, and likewise against what was, and will yet again be, the eastern Roman Empire. Anyway, the drying up of the Euphrates has nothing to do, as some think, with the Turkish Empire in the *West*.

But notwithstanding this, it is quite possible that the driving back of European Turkey into Asia Minor may, in measure, prepare the way for the appearing again of the Assyrian on the scene; or perhaps, in view of Psalm lxxxiii. 8, we might rather say, the future head of the Assyrian confederation, who plays a very extensive part in the prophetic history of the Old Testament (see, for example, in Isa., and Dan. viii.

and xi.). Even if this expulsion of Turkey, which as yet seems far from certain, had already taken place, it would at best only be a preparation for future prophetic events. It cannot in any case be a definite sign of the near coming of the Lord, even if a possible indication, amongst many others, that this moment is drawing nearer. We know that after the coming of the Lord, the first decisive step towards the accomplishment of events prophetically made known, will be *the return of the Jews to Palestine*. This return, which may be more or less near, has not yet taken place. The nations which actually "tread under foot" Jerusalem and the holy place (Rev. xi. 2), are represented by the authority of the Sultan; but how long will that be the case? Will Palestine fall into the hands of some other nation? Will the Sultan, to whom Asia Minor now belongs, and who, owing to this fact, might become the king of the North, be replaced, in this territory, by some other power? Will "Gog," that is Russia, become the supporter of the Sultan, and will the Czar constitute him the leader of the Assyrian confederation? Will the identification of the Sultan with Russia, his hereditary enemy, be an event likely to take place? It is possible; but all these are questions which it is not within our powers to solve.

The only conclusion that we can arrive at from the events which are now passing before us is, that the expulsion of Turkey from Macedonia into Asia Minor may possibly contribute to form the "Assyrian" of prophecy; but that is very different from being its fulfilment. That fulfilment, as we have said, will only begin after the return of the Jews to their land.

The answers are by H. R., Vevey.

Gleanings and Meditations.

“**P**EACE with God” (Rom. v. 1). There is much force in that word “therefore” with which this chapter begins. It refers us back to the ground of our place, as given us in the end of chapter iv. Christ was “delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification.” Faith lays hold of this, and the believer stands before God *justified*.

Thus the death and resurrection of Christ is the keystone of the arch on which the believer’s peace rests. It is not something within himself—his feelings, his thoughts, his doings; nor is it even the work of the Holy Spirit within him, essential as that is in its place. The true ground of peace is a work done outside of us, done for us on the cross—it rests simply and solely, as we have said, on the death and resurrection of Christ.

And remark, it is peace *with God*—a God of holiness, righteousness, and truth. Moreover, it is a peace which never changes; it is as solid and durable as the foundation on which it rests. God has publicly demonstrated, before every created intelligence, His estimate of the value of the death of Christ, by raising Him from the dead and crowning Him with glory and honour at His own right hand. And now all the glory of God shines in the face of Jesus Christ, and we can look upon that face (by faith) without a veil (2 Cor. iii. 13-18). Every ray of that glory, as it shines upon the face of the risen Saviour, is a proof of God’s acceptance of His sacrifice, offered up once for all upon the cross. And, wondrous to say, every ray of that glory too is an evidence of our acceptance in Him! This leaves no room for doubts, fears, or misgivings, for all is divinely settled for the believer by God Himself, according to the requirements of His own glory.

The Need of Souls.

ANY Christian who is interested in the work of God (as all ought to be) must feel deeply the pressing need of the present moment. Are we at all alive to it as we ought to be? Does it lead us to earnest prayer and crying to God as it should? On every hand souls are perishing around us. The activity of the enemy in the spread of false doctrines—non-eternity of punishment, unbelief in the Bible, and a general unsettling as to foundation truths—is appalling. Oh that we might wake up to more earnest and united prayer and pleading with God for souls!

Then just consider the need amongst God's people. Anyone who devotes time to visiting from house to house must feel the great need in this direction also. Large numbers, whom one would fain believe have divine life, are without settled peace or assurance of salvation. Many know not the blessed peace which belongs to the Christian as a child of God, whose happy privilege it is to look up by faith and cry, "Abba, Father." Are we endeavouring to help such, or are we so fond of our own ease that we do not care to take the trouble to seek them out?

There is a vast work to be done by visiting and tract distribution, and this is open to both sisters and brothers. Just try it persistently for a while in the locality where you live or elsewhere, in your spare moments, and you will be surprised how God will open up the way.

But oh! let us awake and be in earnest. Time is passing, souls are perishing, saints are hungering for the bread of life, Christ is coming. Let not the weak and scattered condition of God's people hinder. A

responsibility rests on all who have been brought into the enjoyment of the truth to seek in every way to make it known. And what an encouragement it is to remember that this is in full keeping with the desire of the Saviour-God Himself! His heart goes out to a lost world, and surely we should respond to His desires. And the good Shepherd, too—the Lord Jesus—desires that His sheep should be fed and taken care of, for He loves them all and died for them.

Let us embrace every opportunity for service, and let us pray earnestly for revival and blessing both of saved and unsaved souls.

Waiting for the Lord—iv.

IN the times we are passing through, described as “perilous” in the Epistle of Jude, what a mercy it is to possess the Word of God! It denounces the evil existing all around in Christendom in spite of its profession, and gives warning of certain and impending judgment, but at the same time instructs us as to the path we should walk in, and affords the needed encouragement for going forward. In verses 20-21 we read: “But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

How often do we find blended together in the Scriptures the word and prayer, those two means of preservation and blessing provided for keeping us in the love of God, in the midst of surrounding ruin and heartlessness! But in this epistle the coming of the Lord to take His saints to Himself is particularly presented as an act of *mercy* on His part. Blessed deliverance will it be indeed for those whose eyes and

hearts are directed heavenwards! No room is left for doubt as to its being speedy, for "Yet a very little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Heb. x. 37).

But while it is true that the judgment of God will burst suddenly upon the political and religious world, everywhere marked by man's unfaithfulness, we have the blessed certainty, as already noticed, that those whom Christ has redeemed will not have to pass through "the great tribulation," or "the wrath to come" mentioned in 1 Thessalonians i. 10. They will be saved from this solemn trial of those that "dwell on the earth" (Rev. iii. 10). The Lord's promise, which He renews to His beloved saints in the address to Philadelphia, must first receive its fulfilment, because, as He says, "Thou hast kept the word of My patience." And He adds the special warning and encouragement, "Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." This is surely a clear proof that the Lord can in no way neglect His promise, nor forget His redeemed whom He loves. He reassures them as to the future, in reminding them that their hope is on high, and that it is impossible for Him to disappoint them.

At the end of the book of Revelation we may observe that on three occasions, and in a differing connection, the Lord says, "I come quickly." These words evidently recall the promise given to His disciples when He was just about to leave them (John xiv. 1-3); and they are indeed well suited to comfort our hearts, and to keep us vigilant and faithful in all things that He has entrusted to us (Rev. xxii. 7, 12, 20). The last repetition is indeed His closing word to the Church on earth, and is evidently His answer to the Spirit-given cry of the Bride in verse 17; it is not only another assurance of His coming, but reminds us

again that it cannot be far off: "Surely, I come quickly." Do not our overflowing hearts at once reply in unison, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus"? Is it not our ardent desire to see Him, and be with Him for ever?

May our hearts be evermore turned in this direction, and our lives respond to this cherished hope, so that we may appear as men who, with girded loins and lamps burning, are waiting for their Lord (Luke xii. 35-36).

L. P. B.

The Atoning Blood—iv.

AS already mentioned, the place of sprinkling the blood deserves our special attention. The more we weigh the simple testimony given by the Lord Himself in Matthew xxvi. 28, and its unfolding in John's writings (see pages 153, 167), the more surely our hearts turn instinctively to the fact that nearness to God and rest for our souls in the presence of His holiness is a consequence of, and flows from, the value of the BLOOD in His sight. Paul's epistles confirm this, as we have seen. All conscious relationship with God depends upon it.

In other words, the Blood meets our *need*, and the nearer we are brought to God, the more that need must be consciously *felt*. Types help greatly to enable us to understand this, but the personal apprehension and enjoyment of it is another matter. We find no *song* that celebrates it, until we open the last book of the Bible, when those redeemed to God are seen in the presence of the Lamb, in virtue of whose precious blood they fall down before Him who is in their midst, and own His worthiness (Rev. v. 6-10).

The song is "new" and is reserved for the moment when all types have found their final accomplishment in the deep realities to which they refer. No blood of

bulls, or lambs, or goats could ever suffice to bring this out in its completeness (Heb. x. 4). But when sin is really "taken away" (John i. 29), then the song can rightly go up to Him who sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

The deeper the sense of God's requirements in righteousness and holiness is felt in the soul, and that in His immediate presence where everything is brought to light, the deeper becomes also that ineffable rest which is the portion of those gathered around the Lamb in the midst of the throne, where also the eternal efficacy of His blood is consciously enjoyed.

Children brought up in the knowledge of Scripture truth are accustomed from their early years to hear that God seeks them, and that "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." But their sense of sin is very slight, and rarely begins to be deepened without some humiliating and often bitter experiences. Until need is felt, the deliverance sought for can scarcely be known. As a rule we measure it by our own feelings, rather than by God's claims upon us. The Scriptures present the matter just the other way about. And hence the peculiarly important character of the Old Testament's types, whether historical or ceremonial.

We begin of course with the former; indeed the ceremonial types only properly came in when outward relationship with God was already established, and the nature of His claims on a redeemed people had to be declared and enforced. That simple fact may serve to explain why there is no mention of atoning blood in the book of Genesis. Man was under the sentence of *death* from the moment of his fall (Gen. ii. 17; iii. 3); and that must needs be owned by anyone desiring to draw near to God in worship, as was done by Abel

when he presented the fat of the firstling of his flock upon his altar. That too was the character of every *burnt offering*; for there was no sin offering until after the law was given. "Sin is not imputed when there is no law" (Rom. v. 13). Every burnt offering in the book of Genesis, as also in that of Job, was of this character. It set forth that the offerer was a sinner under the sentence of death, approaching to a holy God for his acceptance, but not referring to any particular failure in his life, or sin which had to be confessed.

But the moment God was separating a whole people to Himself, "taking to Himself a nation from the midst of another nation," and that by His own personal intervention, the necessity of being sheltered from judgment by the sprinkled blood was established once for all (Deut. iv. 34.) By faith Moses "forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible; through faith he kept the passover and the sprinkling of the blood, lest He that destroyed the firstborn should touch them" (Heb. xi. 27-28). This is the first mention of the blood in the chapter which details witnesses of faith. God would not let the people take a step out of Egypt before teaching them its application.

Later on, when delivering to them the precepts of the law, before ever the tabernacle was made, Moses sprinkled both the book and all the people, saying, "Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you according to all these words" (Exod. xxiv. 4-8; Heb. ix. 18-20).

In Egypt, the sprinkled blood was the only guarantee from imminent judgment. And while it had a representative value applying to the whole land, it is evident that only one in each family was personally affected by it. Where no blood was to be seen on the lintel

and two side posts of the doorway, "there arose on that night a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house in which there was not one dead" (Exod. xii. 29-30). This is surely of the greatest importance. God was coming in judgment which was unsparing; the firstborn in every family was affected by it, and the sprinkled blood, which God alone could see in the darkness of that terrible night, was the divinely appointed means of deliverance from His judgment. Everyone in Israel was thus made to understand and feel the seriousness of having to do with God, at the very time when He was personally "come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians" (Exod. iii. 7-8).

When the law was delivered at Mount Sinai, and the tabernacle afterwards constructed to be the dwelling place of the God of Israel, the blood of the sin offering had to be put upon the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and the blood of the ram of consecration upon Aaron and his sons, who had to minister in the priests' office. The blood of the burnt offering was also sprinkled upon the altar and upon them all (Exod. xxix. 12, 16, 20-21; Lev. viii. 15, 19-30). The divine comment is, "Almost all things are by the law purged with blood, and without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. ix. 22).

We, through grace, enjoy a richer portion. "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God!" (Heb. ix. 12-14). Christ has entered into heaven itself now to appear in the presence of God for us. He has gone there in the power of His own blood—characterised by it—according to its infinite

and eternal efficacy, both as delivering us from the judgment we deserved, and also as making us fit for God's holy presence, in order that the worship and priestly service of Christians may be carried out for God in a way worthy of Himself.

And let us note as to this two things which are often forgotten. In the first place, all Christians are "priests" in God's sight—a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices (like Aaron and his sons), and again "a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people," as Peter states, referring to Exodus xix. 5-6. That was true in principle of the whole nation of Israel according to God's intention on their behalf. Our responsibility then is to "show forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light," and who has made us a people for Himself (1 Pet. ii. 5, 9-10; Hosea ii. 23). The other point is a practical one, of the first importance; namely, that no one can rightly exercise this service whether towards God or man, who is not assured in his own soul that he is already sanctified by the blood of Christ (Heb. ii. 11; ix. 14; xiii. 12).

In this connection, it is interesting to notice in Psalm li. that the desire and felt need for going out towards others, *i.e.*, for carrying the gospel to sinners, is consequent on the sense of purification divinely wrought out, in the heart as well as outwardly. As a result of all this sanctifying work, accompanied with spiritual power and the joy of known salvation, the psalmist adds: "Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways and sinners shall be converted unto Thee" (ver. 13). It is easy to perceive that verses 7-13 form a complete section in this blessed psalm.

It must not be supposed, however, that Christian priestly service is limited to congregational worship or intercession for others. The Apostle Paul, like Peter,

employs the term definitely in connection with the gospel also. Grace was given to him by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the nations, "carrying on as a sacrificial service, the message of glad tidings of God, in order that the offering up of the nations might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Ghost" (Rom. xv. 16, R.V.). The gospel and the ministry were for the saints, as well as for the world at large (Col. i. 5-6, 23, 25, 26-27). Even the preaching of the "mystery" committed to Paul had this double character (Eph. iii. 6-11).

There remains another special sprinkling of the blood, mentioned in Exodus xxx. 10, and, modified after the failure of the priesthood, in Leviticus xvi. The general thought, already noticed, characterises both these, namely, that the blood had its proper place and application *where the service was carried on*. There could be no service acceptable to God, no approach to Him, without it; and it would seem that the service in connection with the *golden* altar, which is indeed the basis of communion, looks on to what will yet take place on earth during the Lord's millennial reign.

The failure of the priesthood on the very day of their consecration, practically closed the holy of holies, and Aaron could no longer enter there in his robes of glory and beauty. Another service was specially provided "after the death of the two sons of Aaron when they offered before the Lord and died." And it is to this chapter xvi. in Leviticus that the account in Hebrews ix. refers. On the tenth day of the seventh month, the golden censer replaced the golden altar, which could not be carried into the holiest of all, when the incense was required to fill the inner chamber where the ark was, and the blood was to be sprinkled both before the mercy-seat and upon it. Aaron had to go in alone,

clothed with special holy garments provided for the occasion.

Sprinkled *on* the mercy-seat, the blood surely set forth that it alone could meet the claims of God's holiness, considering "the uncleanness of the children of Israel," amongst whom He dwelt. And the sevenfold sprinkling *before* the mercy-seat testified to the divine basis of all His dealings in grace with the people, according to His estimate of the value of the blood that cleanseth from all sin. Was it not in view of this that Balaam, in spite of himself, had to say of Israel's God, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, nor seen perverseness in Israel; the LORD his God is with him. . . . According to this time" (*i.e.*, at the *end* of their wilderness journey) "it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!"? (Num. xxiii. 21-23). May the Lord lead us to a deepening apprehension of what it is to be "His workmanship,"—once far off, but now made nigh by the blood of Christ! (Eph. ii. 10-13).

W. J. L.

Some Present-Day Questions.

"**D**O you think," said an inquirer to us recently, "that a God of love would send any of His creatures to hell for ever?" The question is an exceedingly solemn one, and very common in the present day.

But there are two erroneous ideas underlying the question as it is often put. First, God did not create man to send him to hell—far from it indeed. He created him to be, as His creature, in the enjoyment of happiness; responsible to represent Him in the creation where he was placed. Secondly, hell was not

“prepared” for man, but for the devil and his angels (Matt. xxv. 41).

But alas, man listened to the voice of Satan and sinned and fell; so God had to drive him out from the garden in which he was placed; though even then He gave him tokens of redeeming grace. And from that day to this, man has become more and more hardened in sin. Who is to blame for this? Is it not man himself?

“But,” we replied to the inquirer (who, no doubt, had an honest difficulty), “look at it in this way—Man has sinned against God; but God, in His wonderful love and grace, instead of sending him to hell for his sins as he deserves, has provided a Saviour at the immense cost of the giving up of His own Son. And this Saviour, at the cost of His life’s blood and sufferings on the cross, has procured a full salvation for the sinner who believes. But if the sinner will *not* have this salvation which God offers so freely, who is to blame? God is a God of infinite love, but He must judge sin because He is a God of infinite righteousness and holiness also.”

Oh, yes, reader, so it is. Just think for a moment of the tremendous cost it was to God, who did not spare His only-begotten Son. Then, reflect for a moment on what the sufferings of the cross must have been to Jesus, when even the anticipation of them caused Him to sweat as it were great drops of blood, falling down to the ground. And if such was the anticipation, what must the reality have been, when it drew from His soul that bitter cry, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” Think of what those three hours of darkness were to Him; when creation veiled its face, as He, the holy sin-bearer, bowed beneath sin’s awful load, and the judgment of a sin-hating God! Ah, but

who could penetrate the mystery of that solemn hour? Who could gauge the depths of that cup of indignation which He drained to the last drop, as He said upon the cross, "It is finished"? Even the believer, who shares its blessed results, can but look on and wonder, and worship and praise.

And if man, a sinner, for whom it was all done, says to God, "I will *not* have this Saviour," if he prefers his sins and the world and Satan's bondage to the Christ of God, if he deliberately spurns the Saviour whom a God of love has provided at such a cost, who then is to blame? Yea, if he even "neglects" so great salvation, he surely brings down upon himself the heavy guilt of so doing. At the "great white throne" of judgment, no creature will dare to say that God has acted unrighteously; but even to-day, before the day of judgment comes at all, none can truly say that this is so.

Then, again, it is well to remember that it is not a question of what *we* may think, or how it appears to *us* that God should or should not act as to the future punishment of the wicked; the whole question is, *What does the Word of God teach?* God is infinitely above man and we may well say, as Elihu did to Job, "God is greater than man. Why dost thou strive against Him? for He giveth not account of any of His matters." We know that He is "of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon iniquity," and we see the measure of His utter abhorrence of sin in His judgment of it in the cross of Christ.

We may well learn a lesson from the attitude of the Apostle Paul in Romans xi. 33-36. After speaking of what to us appears the critical and difficult question of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility, and putting God in His true place and man in his, he closes with a magnificent note of worship, as his soul

is filled with the sense of the infinite wisdom and knowledge of God, whose judgments are unsearchable and His ways untraceable. And so it is all through the inspired volume. If we take the book of Revelation, which gives us such a wonderful and solemn view of God's judgment upon evil, ending in the "great white throne" and "the lake of fire," as well as of the future blessing reserved for the redeemed, we shall find at the close that John was about to worship at the feet of the angel which showed him these things. Of course this could not be, seeing he was but an angel, but it shows the attitude of John's soul in view of the revelations given. This is most important in these days when man sets himself up as competent to judge God's actings, and when his will asserts itself and seeks to displace God and His rights and authority in so many ways.

But the work done at the cross—that stupendous transaction which stands alone, not only in the history of time but of eternity itself—is *eternal* in its issues and results. It brings eternal blessing to the saved; it involves eternal punishment for the lost. We find "everlasting punishment" spoken of in the very same verse as "everlasting life" (Matt. xxv. 46), and the very same word for "everlasting" or "eternal" is applied to both. It is a most solemn and serious fact indeed, but the one is as true as the other.

And, if we who believe felt the weight of these great realities as we should, what earnest desire it would awaken within us for the conversion of souls! What pleading with God for the salvation of sinners! How much more of our time we should spend in His service than we do! May God, in His mercy, revive His work in the blessing and conversion of souls!

Prophetic Questions and Answers—ii.

Q. While quite believing that the coming of the Lord, for which *we* wait, is not dependent on signs and the fulfilment of events, can we gather from the present condition of things (in the Church and in the world) any indication as to whether His coming is near at hand?

A. At the present moment it is indisputable that Protestantism is characterised, *ecclesiastically*, by the spirit of Laodicea more than by anything else. We see large numbers who have known the truths of the Reformation, returning to traditions and Catholic superstitions. There is also a terrible increase in the number of antichrists (1 John ii. 18); the coming apostasy (2 Thess. ii. 3) is already indicated at this time by Atheism, the return to magic arts, to the worship of satanic spirits, to Buddhism, and the loosening of all moral ties.

Politically, we are face to face with the Eastern Question, which is becoming more and more absorbing, and which involves the future of Europe, in spite of the fruitless efforts of governments to maintain the "*status quo*." We may also observe the increase of Zionism, which, however, only anticipates in unbelief the return of the Jews to Palestine (Isa. xviii.). In the West, the mixture of the clay and the iron in the various governments is a conspicuous feature (Dan. ii.); whilst anarchy is being openly proclaimed both as a fact and as a doctrine. At the same time there is a slow but gradual resuscitation of Italy, with Rome for its capital; and geographical changes are accomplished with alarming rapidity, overturning the world, whilst Europe is under arms and perpetual rumours of wars keep men's minds in perplexity.

All this, and many other features besides, would lead us to believe that the last days are at hand. But the full development of these things will not come about before the coming of the Lord, for which we are daily called to wait. "He who hinders" the development of the man of sin (2 Thess. ii.), preventing at the same time the solution of the Eastern Question and the reappearance of the Roman beast of Revelation xiii. 1-8, will continue so to do until the calling away of the Church, which might be just at this moment whilst I am writing, or perhaps to-morrow.

It is not that these events are leading up to the coming of the Lord; but rather, as a consequence of His coming, the terrible catastrophies of which we now see but the foreshadowing, will be rapidly let loose upon the world.

(The answers are by H. R.—Vevey.)

Brief Studies in Prophecy—xi.

Eternity.

WE now enter upon the last and final stage of all; beginning with that great session of judgment called the "great white throne." The account given at the close of Revelation xx., is one of the most solemn and impressive within the whole compass of God's revelation given us in the Bible, and we do well to feel this as we ponder over it.

We have already remarked that the saved who had died, had been raised at the coming of Christ for His saints (Heb. xi. 13 and 40; 1 Cor. xv. 50-57; 1 Thess. iv. 16). The saved ones who were slain during the period immediately preceding the millennium, were raised also in order to enjoy the blessing of that day

(Rev. xx. 4); both these are included in the "first resurrection." But the unsaved, or "rest of the dead," had remained in their graves "until the thousand years were finished." After this they are raised by God's almighty power, whether from the grave or from the sea. A "great white throne," which is distinctly and essentially a throne of *judgment*, is set up. *Where* this throne is set we are not told, for heaven and earth have fled from the face of Him who sits upon it. And, as the epistle of Peter tells us, "the heaven shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat: the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." Solemn, most solemn consideration for man with all his boasted advancement, as well as for all who have nothing beyond this world! And here we pass out of *time*, which is measured for us by every sunrise and sunset, into a limitless and boundless *eternity*. The clock which marks each passing hour in this world, will be no longer required then.

And *who* is it that sits on this great white throne of judgment? This is a question about which people have very confused thoughts, but as to which Scripture leaves no room for uncertainty. It is the Son, the once-rejected Saviour. He Himself has said, "The Father judgeth no one, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father" (John v. 22). Yes, every one *must* honour the Son; either by bowing to Him *now*, in the day of grace, as the Saviour, or *then*, in the day of judgment, as the Judge.

Who will appear at this throne? Clearly it is not a judgment of *living* people such as we find in Matt. xxv., where they are separated as sheep from goats, etc. No! the passage plainly states that it is "the dead, great and small," who are found here. It is the dead

out of Christ, the unsaved dead, and only they. At this throne everything is done in perfect righteousness and justice, and the judgment is according to works. We must all be before God either *in Christ*, in all the worth and value of what He has done; or we must have to do with God as unsaved, standing on our own merits. Now to appear in our own merits involves certain condemnation, for our works could not stand the searching light of that day. Moreover, this is not a throne of grace, or sprinkled blood to meet the sinner's need, but of stern unbending judgment and nothing but judgment. The day of grace will have passed away for ever, and the issue for every soul will be final, according to the demands of the righteousness and glory of God. Against the sentence there given there can be no opposition, and from it there is no appeal.

The dead are judged out of those things written in the books. This conveys to us, in a figurative manner, the idea of records of works, known to Him who searches all hearts; and these works are not perfect before God. Then the book of life is referred to; but mark, it is not in order *to write* anyone's name there! Could it be that any of ~~their~~ names were written in that book? No, this could not be, since none of those whose names are inscribed by God Himself in the book of life, appear at this throne. These saved ones had long since been raised from their graves and had shared with Christ in His reign of a thousand years, and therefore they do not appear at the great white throne at all. And what is the solemn end of it all? It is to be "cast into the lake of fire." It is true that men do not like to hear of this, and Satan is doing all he can at the present time to hide and obliterate the fact; but it is a remarkable thing that we find this

very expression, "the lake of fire," three times in this part of Revelation (chaps. xx. 14, 15, and xxi. 8).

Death and Hades are looked at as personified; and they are also cast into the lake of fire. Death is the last great enemy to be destroyed. No one, not even the wisest or the greatest or the most powerful of men, has been able to stand against it; and no man of science has ever found a remedy for it. There it stood from the day that Adam fell, like an unstormed fortress of the enemy's power, until the Lord Jesus Christ died, and by His death delivered those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. And, as we have before remarked, the true believer *may* never die, for Christ may come within his lifetime! But, taking man as such, its sway was universal, and its power was paramount and complete. However, at the point at which we have now arrived in our brief study, death has no more place, because all men have disappeared from the scene—the saved to share the blessed abode of the new heavens and the new earth, the unsaved to the lake of fire. Lastly, Hades, the unseen, the state of departed spirits—has yielded up its last occupant, in order that such may appear at this resurrection of judgment. It has also, therefore, ceased to exist; and (solemn thought!) there remains now ETERNITY—a fixed state; a timeless, endless, infinite duration for ever and ever, incomprehensible to the mind of man.

F. G. B.

Gleanings and Meditations.

THE TREASURE (*Matt. xiii. 44, Luke xii. 34*).

In the first of these two passages of Scripture, we have the treasure hid in the field, which a man having found went and hid, and then sold all that

he had and bought the field. How touchingly this tells us of what the Lord Jesus has done! He laid aside His glory and came down here; gave up even His rights as Messiah, and died on the cross in order to acquire the right of ownership over the whole world, for the sake of the treasure which was in it, namely, His Church, His people. What made this treasure so precious to Him? First, because it was the gift of the Father and therefore dearly valued as such; secondly, because of the price He paid for it, even His life, His blood. The next verse (45) gives us a somewhat similar, but slightly different thought. There, it is a merchantman who is seeking goodly pearls, and when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had to purchase it. This man was a connoisseur, a judge, he knew a valuable pearl when he saw one, and he was seeking such. To possess *this one* he parted with everything he had. So the Lord Jesus: He not only purchased the field, that is the world, but, so precious was His Church in *His* eyes that, in pure and divine love, He gave up everything to become possessed of it.

But in Luke xii., it is quite another thing. *There* we read of a treasure; also this treasure is above, in the heavens, where no thief can approach, neither moth nor rust corrupt. It was pure grace which led Christ to see in His people (so unlovely in themselves) that which was precious in His eyes. But not so with *us*. For there is, to the eye of faith, such a beauty, a loveliness, a perfection in Him, as can win and captivate the hearts of His redeemed. Thus it was with Paul. Giving expression to the true and Spirit-taught feeling of the Christian's heart, he could say, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea

doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." How far have *we* trodden this path? How far does Christ really fill and satisfy our hearts?

And remember; the heart follows the treasure. If I were acquainted with a miser who had a box of gold secreted somewhere, and I were to say to him, "Do you often think of that box of gold?" he would reply, "It is my most valued treasure, my thoughts revert to it constantly as the compass-needle to the pole." And if the poor passing things of this world can so govern the hearts of men, shall not the Christ to whom we owe our present blessing, our future glory, yea our all both for time and eternity, awaken a response to His grace in our hearts and govern our lives as we wait to see Him face to face?

* * * * *

"When I see the blood, I will pass over." God's love towards His people has found the means of satisfying the requirements of His justice; and at the sight of that blood, which answered everything that was perfect in His being, He could "pass over," consistently with His justice and even His truth. Note, it is not said, when *you* see it, but when *I* see it. The soul of an awakened person often rests, not on its own righteousness, but on the way in which it sees the blood. This is not the ground of peace. Peace is founded on *God's* seeing it. He cannot fail to estimate it at its full and perfect value as putting away sin.

J. N. D.

Waiting for the Lord—v.

AS a fitting conclusion to our meditations, we would notice a difficulty which is sometimes presented, as to the believer's proper hope, with which we have been occupied. It is this:—The early disciples, even the blessed apostle Paul himself, and countless other believers since his time, *have been waiting for the Lord Jesus to come and take them to be with Himself*, according to His promise in John xiv. 3; and notwithstanding this, they have left this present scene without experiencing the blessed accomplishment of that promise.

This is, of course, true. Nevertheless, we must not forget that they lose nothing; for they will all share in the reward promised by the Lord to those whom He has seen waiting and watching for Him. They will be found amongst the number contemplated by Him when He said, "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that He shall gird Himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them" (Luke xii. 37). What joy it will be for them, and also what satisfaction for the heart of Christ, who will not forget even the least thing done for Him!

Besides, we may ask, what have they lost by leaving this world to be with Christ, in the rest and the fulness of joy of His presence? On the contrary, the blessed apostle was able to say, "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord" (2 Cor. v. 8). And again, when thinking of the blessedness of serving Christ in this world, even in view of martyrdom, he says, "I am in a

strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better" (Phil. i. 23).

Infinitely blessed indeed is the portion which the Lord delights to give to those of His redeemed whom He sees well to gather to Himself whilst waiting for the resurrection of life and glory. With Jesus in the closest intimacy, they still wait, but at rest, while looking forward to that for which we also wait in the midst of a scene of conflict here below—namely, that blessed moment of the reunion of *all* the saints around their Saviour, whose image they shall bear for ever. What a glorious moment!

How much we need the "grace" of the Lord, with which the New Testament closes (Rev. xxii. 21)! We cannot but feel it; but how precious to be able to count upon the constant succour of our God and Father, so that we may be kept faithful to the end!

"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen." (Jude 24-25).

L. P. B.

The Atoning Blood—v.

WE have already referred (p. 209) to the important change, as to the order and place of sprinkling of the blood, introduced on the occasion of the failure of the priesthood as explained in the opening verses of Leviticus xvi. This demands some further elucidation, and is of the deepest interest to us, as throwing light upon the character of grace in itself, and particularly in relation to God's governmental dealings to which all are necessarily subject.

In the first place, the failure of Aaron's two eldest sons, which caused their death on the very day of their consecration, is only one case out of many, all going to prove that everything committed to man's hand has been ruined by him from the start, but that God always makes use of the opportunity thus furnished, to direct the hearts of His saints to His resources in grace, as the only possible foundation of their faith and hope.

Adam's disobedience in paradise deprived him of the peaceful enjoyment of a scene where everything had been prepared for his happiness, in communion with his Creator, and consequently he was never able to enjoy the rest of the seventh day with God, in a perfection which left nothing to be desired. When God came down in the cool of the day to commune with him, he hid behind the trees as soon as he heard His voice. Adam had then to be driven out, lest he should take of the tree of life in his fallen condition, and thus perpetuate a state in which Satan replaced God as the director of man's thoughts. But the judgment pronounced on the serpent contained in it the final deliverance, to be wrought by "the woman's seed" at the cross—He who knew no sin became obedient unto death, in order to deliver us from sin, and from its effects, and open up, as for the dying thief, the paradise of God in companionship with Christ. (Gen. iii. 15; Phil. ii. 6-9.)

Again, the first commandment of God's holy law was broken in the most outrageous way at the foot of Mount Sinai, before ever the divinely-made tables which recorded it could be brought into the camp of Israel; but, in answer to Moses' intercession, God proclaimed remission of sins on the very spot where the proclamation of His law had filled the people's hearts with terror, so that they said to Moses, "Let not God speak with us

lest we die" (Ex. xx. 19 ; xxxiv. 1-9). Far, far indeed, were they from understanding that "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul," and that life-giving power is in His word (Ps. xix. 7 ; cxix. 25, 50 ; 1 Pet. i. 23).

But even in Israel, "a people near unto God" (Ex. xix. 4, 5 ; Ps. cxlviii. 14), the most elementary principles of holiness required that approach to God could be only conditional, and in the way ordered by Himself. Only one family out of the twelve tribes, that of the Levites, was set apart by special consecration to the service of God and His tabernacle ; and of these, only the priests, Aaron and his sons, were allowed to serve at the altar or inside the tabernacle. Any Israelite could bring his sacrifice inside the court, as far as the brazen altar, but further than that he could not go ; and only the priests were allowed to arrange the sacrifice on the altar and sprinkle the blood in the ordered way. The very privilege of approach carried with it a sense of distance from God ; and this had been exceedingly marked at the time when the law was proclaimed from Mount Sinai, by the bounds set all around it, and the injunction that if even a beast touched the mountain, it was to be stoned or thrust through with a dart (Ex. xix. 12, 13 ; Heb. xii. 20, 21). It was death to approach ; only Moses could go up, and that by God's express command ; but all the people heard the voice of God, and Moses was careful to remind them what a privilege it was (Deut. iv. 32, 33).

Under the law, any sin against the commandments of God had to be punished with death. The example given is that of a man found gathering sticks on the Sabbath Day, an offence apparently of the most trivial nature, according to our thoughts. But that set forth all the more evidently the inflexible character of the

law, and the awful responsibility in which the people were held under it (Acts xv. 10). No sin offering was provided for any direct violation of the law. This is clearly shown in Numbers xv. 22-36, referred to by the apostle in Hebrews x. 28. Sin offerings were for sins of ignorance only, that is, for wrong into which anyone might be betrayed unconsciously, not understanding at the time the nature or the gravity of the offence.* The way in which such sins of ignorance were dealt with, in Leviticus iv., shows clearly how responsibility is measured by the position of the one who has failed, and how the holiness of the God of Israel who dwelt amongst them was affected by it.

In every case of the kind, the ordered sacrifice, bullock, goat, or lamb, had to be brought to the altar, and the offerer had to signify his identification with the offering by laying his hand upon its head. Death as "the wages of sin" was thus brought home to him, and through the death of the victim in his stead, was God's forgiveness secured—blessed type indeed of the efficacy of Christ's atoning work.

In ordinary cases the expiatory service was accomplished at the brazen altar in the court. The blood was poured out there, the fat was burned upon it, and some of the blood was carefully put upon the horns of the altar, ever pointing upwards to God, as if to recall His words spoken on the first occasion of the blood being used as a token: "When I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to

* This is a great help in understanding the Psalms of David, written on the occasion of the great sin of his life, for which no sacrifice was provided at all, death being the penalty unsparingly imposed. And this was brought home to him by Nathan's parable, which led the king himself to pronounce the sentence (2 Sam. xii. 5, 13). Does not this set forth unmistakeably the absolute *forgiveness* set forth in the gospel? See Romans iv. 6-8.

destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt" (Exod. xii. 13).

But there were two especial cases in which that did not suffice. The first was that of the anointed priest, "if he do sin according to the sin of the people" (ver. 3); and the other was when the whole congregation of Israel sinned through ignorance, and the matter was "hid from the eyes of the assembly" (ver. 13). In this case again, as soon as the sin was known, a young bullock was to be brought to the altar of burnt offering where the blood was poured out, and all the fat burned upon it. But in both these instances the blood, instead of being put upon the horns of the brazen altar, had to be carried into the tabernacle and sprinkled seven times before the veil of the sanctuary; besides that, it had to be put on the horns of the altar of sweet incense before the Lord, inside the tabernacle (vers. 6, 7, 17, 18). The whole of the carcase was then to be carried outside the camp to a clean place where the ashes were poured out, and there burned with fire upon wood (vers. 12, 21). This service is referred to in Hebrew xiii. 11. In neither case was there any entering inside the veil. God was, so to speak, shut in, His throne hidden behind it; but the more important the offence, the nearer to Him was the blood taken, showing how the very possibility of His continuing to remain among His failing people was called in question; but at the same time the remedy was forthcoming in the "blood which cleanseth from all sin" (1 John i. 7). It seemed as if God would cause the sense of His presence and nearness to be felt accordingly as the sinner's need was seen to be greater.

And what a wonderful conclusion to these precious lessons is found in the service of the great day of atonement, when the high priest, as representing the whole

congregation of Israel, had to go in alone, carrying the incense in the censer inside the veil, as well as the blood which he had to sprinkle both on and before the mercy-seat. Nothing could answer to God's thought of grace towards those who by nature are "far off" from Him, short of His very seat or throne of grace, between the cherubim, bearing the mark of His own provision for the sinners in the atoning blood. In Christ Jesus we who once were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ (Eph. ii. 13).

How blessed indeed to know in its full completeness, through the finished work of Christ, those realities of which the ordinances of the God of Israel for His people were but feeble types! And how wonderful is the nearness to God opened up to us by the presence of Christ in the holiest, whither He has entered, and is even seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having purged away sins by His own death! May the Lord enable us to answer to the exhortation of drawing nigh (Heb. x. 22). And let us not forget that this does not refer to a special service or act once a week, but to the habitual state of our souls in communion with Him who has wrought all for us, and in whom we stand before God.

There can be no greater privilege than to be brought nigh to God, no place where holiness can be so learned in its deep reality. But the Holy Spirit has been given us, in order to take of Christ's things, and reveal them to us, whether it be as to His blessed person, or as to the efficacy of His work. And "he that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk even as He walked" (1 John ii. 6). All true worship must be in spirit and in truth—truth learned in the inward parts (Ps. li. 6; John iv. 23, 24). And the Holy Ghost is the divine power for learning it through the Word.

When sin in any form does come in, even if it be sins of ignorance, full confession has to be made in order that the sense of divine forgiveness may be enjoyed, and communion restored (1 John i. 9). In view of the Lord's speedy coming to take us to Himself, may we keep in reality near to Him and separate from the world (John xvii. 15-19).

W. J. L.

“Tell Jesus.”

(Matt. xiv. 12 ; John xii. 20-22 ; Mark vi. 30.)

THE spiritual weakness and the difficulties among Christians to-day, are traceable directly to two things, namely, the shelving of God's written Word, and the neglect of prayer. As to the first—Church history plainly shows that no lasting success can ever spring from any movement or service which is not built up on biblical lines. As to the second—the present lack of interest in the gospel in these lands and the low attendances at Christian meetings generally are, beyond doubt, the result of our unbelief in the use and efficacy of prayer.

While the death of Christ has cleared and cleansed us as to our dark *past*, and has secured our *future* in rest and glory, the *present* is one full of needs, needs which can be supplied only through prayer. Prayer and the reading of the Word are twin sisters and are God's provision for the Christian's path. It is the divine privilege of every believer to have happy intercourse and communion with God as to the details of his life ; yea, it is a necessity for his spiritual progress.

The examples of this intercourse, in the gospels, are most interesting and will repay a brief note.

I. “*Tell Jesus*” in *trial*. In Matthew xiv. 12 we

see John's disciples smitten with great grief. King Herod had beheaded their beloved master, and made an aching gap in their hearts. They would never see John's face again, nor hear his voice, and the sun of their lives had set in death. In such distress, what could they do? They "took up the body and buried it, and went and *told Jesus*." There only could they find relief.

Ah, no one ever told out his sorrow in His divine ears, but found in Him sympathy and succour.

Life at times may seem a blank, but here is One who fills with His love the deepest wounds of our hearts. "He *is able* to succour them that are tempted," and no one else can sustain us in life's losses and crosses like Himself.

II. "*Tell Jesus*" the needs of souls. In John xii. 20-22, we read that the disciples came across some inquiring Greeks. They at once, and very wisely "tell Jesus," feeling that He only had the wisdom to meet their case. He readily meets their need, and answers them in a way they could never have expected. It proved an unfolding of how man was to be saved, and his soul's need satisfied:—that, as the corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die before any fruit can come, so He, the Son of man, must die before any anxious Greek can obtain life.

Let it be burnt into every Christian's heart and every seeking soul, that no man ever had or will have salvation, but through the death of the crucified and risen Christ. The needs of the unsaved and saved alike to-day are very great, and are keenly felt. But none are too deep for Him to meet, and none but He can solve them. Relief for those who serve, and light for those who seek, can only come by our doing what the disciples did—"Go and tell Jesus."

III. "*Tell Jesus*" *what we do and what we say.* In Mark vi. 7-10, the twelve disciples are sent out, two by two, on a missionary tour, and that with remarkable effect. They preach, they cast out devils, they anoint the sick and heal them. And to note what took place on their return is most instructive, so becoming is their conduct and so fine their example to us.

No stirring meetings are held to celebrate their successes, nor does the town crier publish the news, etc., but simply this—"The apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and *told Him all things*; both what they had *done*, and what they had *taught*" (ver. 30).

It should be the same to-day. This blessed exercise of telling Jesus works both ways. It restrains and constrains us. Did we value and practise it more, what a remedy it would prove for the ills which beset Christian service! Both the pulpit and the pew sadly need it.

The aimless gossip, the foolish talking behind one another's backs, and all the things which now hinder Christian fellowship, would then be banished. The scenes witnessed in the professing Church to-day—her unholy alliance with the world, her worldly and questionable schemes to attract the world, her ways of raising money for her home and foreign needs, and many other things, would then make her blush with shame. Would some of the things which are now prominent in the preaching and teaching be allowed? Would the present widespread error as to Christ and His work, the denial of the divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, etc., from press and pulpit be ventilated? To be sure it would not. Did we cultivate the wholesome habit of telling Him *all things*, both what we have *done* and have *taught*, they would cease for ever.

We could not do them nor tell them to Him without finding His réproof.

On the positive side, prayer—to “tell Jesus”—moves Him who moves the universe. It draws down heaven’s power for earth’s service. It makes the weakest disciple a victor in the fight. The writer will never forget a remark once made by a coloured brother, now gone to his rest. “Show me,” said he, “a man of prayer, and I will show you a man of power.”

Without prayer the finest sermons, the clearest teaching, and the best-laid plans miss their mark. As it was with the apostles so it is still, there must be intercourse with the Lord Jesus by earnest believing prayer, or there can be no communion with Him, nor success in any work or word of ours.

The Lord Jesus was evidently affected by this third scene, and the result for the disciples was very striking. While every believer should emulate their action, this will not of necessity bring us into smooth seas. It proved to them the very reverse. For the Saviour made the moment of their happy triumph a starting point for a further and deeper test of their faith. (Mark vi. 30-44). He lead them “apart into a desert place to rest a while.” A great concourse of people from countryside and city follow them out. Presently, night draws nigh. Concern about the hungry, homeless multitude moves the disciples to say, “Send them away.” But Jesus answers, “Give *ye* them to eat.”

There is a new challenge to their faith; they had the power to heal the sick, raise the dead, and work wonders, but could they feed this famished crowd? No. They had to feel, and feel keenly, that they could not. Resting on past victories would not do here. They had to learn that for every new emergency they must

have afresh His power working with them and for them. May we, too, learn the lesson and not shun His discipline nor His testing of our faith, however deep. It is so good for us, and brings Him glory.

The whole circumstance serves to bring out that, notwithstanding their great experiences, their hearts entered but little into His love and pity for needy souls. How like them we are! May the gracious Lord plant deeply in writer and reader the delight to "tell Jesus" as to all we do and say! May He strip us of every selfish thought, so as to feel that without Him we can do nothing! We shall then, by His Spirit, walk and work and win.

W. R.

"One New Man."

HOW few, even of those who value their Bibles, understand anything of the importance, in the ways of God, of that great change of dispensation which is expressed in the words of Ephesians ii. 15, "to make in Himself of twain *one new man*, so making peace."

The rejection by the Jews of their Messiah, and the subsequent testimony to His death and resurrection, opened the way for the offer of grace to the Gentiles, as expressed in Paul's words in Acts xiii. 46; xxviii. 28. But beyond all this there is the further revelation of that secret which God had hitherto reserved to Himself, and which he divulges in His own due time, of forming out of the two opposing elements, Jew and Gentile, an absolutely new thing—"One new man."

The scriptures clearly show that the Jew is to be blessed as such in a future day, and the Gentiles through them; but by the cross of Christ peace has been made and is proclaimed; and the middle wall of

partition is broken down, to reconcile both Jew and Gentile in one body to God. The "far off" Gentile and the "near" Jew, being both "made nigh by the blood of Christ," have "access by one Spirit to the Father." They are brought into the family of God by a way that annuls for ever the distinctions that hitherto existed, recognised and indeed conferred by God though they were, to occupy a new place and enjoy a totally new relationship, where all distinctions are effaced—nothing less than a new creation in Christ Jesus.

One can imagine a Jew converted by the preaching of Peter on the day of Pentecost, and an Ephesian converted through the preaching of Paul some years after, meeting together and happily conversing on their common faith and common salvation. They speak together of the forgiveness of sins, of redemption by the blood of Christ, of the inheritance reserved, undefiled and unfading, to which they were journeying, and the privilege they enjoyed of offering sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving to the blessed God now known to both as *Father*.

By and by the Ephesian brother alludes to the additional fact that now not only are such blessings and privileges to be enjoyed by all believers in Christ, but that the old distinction that the Jew was bound to observe had been altogether obliterated, and that an entirely new standing was given to both, all believers being made one in Christ. Thus "Jews and Gentiles are found together in the same new position in Christ. His resurrection has put an end to all those distinctions: they have no place in a risen Christ. God has quickened the one and the other with Christ."

One can quite imagine with what wonder and amazement the Jewish believer would hear of this. "Peter never said anything about this," we can imagine him

saying, "nor is there anything of the kind in his epistle, which we have received since his decease, and have been studying together." The Ephesian Christian now speaks to him of Paul's epistle to Ephesus (which perhaps the Hebrew brother had not seen), and together they ponder with reverent and prayerful spirit this further revelation of the mind of God about His people in this dispensation.

Peter's first epistle, as is well known, speaks of living stones "built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." But he does not speak of Jew and Gentile being brought together into this place, where such a distinction is no longer to be known; "where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is *all, and in all*" (Col. iii. 11). The chosen vessel to make this known was Saul of Tarsus, and in the epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians he (Paul the apostle) unfolds this great mystery.

It is only with the barest outline of this wonderful subject we are now dealing, to call attention to a side of the truth of Christianity often overlooked.

This striking fact of Jew and Gentile gathered together in one body constituting the assembly of God upon earth, is the special place where angels learn the all various wisdom of God (Eph. iii. 10). And the fact thus established forms the basis of the unity of the Spirit which we, as Christians, are exhorted to keep.

Then it is also connected with the wonderful truth of the new creation, of which Christ in glory is the Head. It is not *all* the truth that there are converted Jews and converted Gentiles bound together by the common ties of salvation and life; but, "if any one be

in Christ there is a new creation, the old things have passed away; behold all things have become new; and all things are of the God who has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. v. 17, 18, N.T.).

Here is a brotherhood indeed that eclipses the highest thought and desire of the best-devised schemes of man. No mere unity of purpose and aim—no hope that is limited by the best we as men can do for one another—not even what people call union of hearts, only, but a divine and therefore perfect tie of brotherhood, of which the Holy Spirit Himself is the power. A great and blessed family, where God is truly known as *Father*, and into which every individual has been born, "not by blood, nor by the will of man, but of God" (John i. 13).

When man was created and set up in dominion over the first creation, it is written, "And God said, Let us make man in our image after our likeness, and let them have dominion" (Gen. i. 26). About the new creation Scripture is equally explicit as to its origin and character, and immense moral changes flow from this unfolding of the purpose of God as well as what we have called the dispensational change. But to confine ourselves to the particular point now before us, we have only to turn to Ephesians iv. 2, 3, and there we are exhorted to be renewed in the spirit of our mind, "having put on the new man, which according to God is created in truthful righteousness and holiness"; and Colossians iii. 10, "having put on the new man, renewed into full knowledge according to the image of Him that has created him" (both passages N.T.).

Let us remark that exhortations as to our walk and conduct flow from this new and blessed place in which the believer is set before God; and a most important thing to observe as to it all is, the exalted place it gives

to the Lord Jesus. *The new man is Christ*, Head of the New Creation, and the Last Adam.

The pattern and model of this new creation is the Second Man, the Lord from heaven. To Him all the members will be actually conformed by and by in God's due time; and they are even now being morally transformed by the Holy Spirit; "into the same image from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. iii. 18).

Is it not said that the Christian has "put on Christ" (Gal. iii. 27)? And again, "As is the heavenly (One), such are they also that are heavenly" (1 Cor. xv. 48). The formative power for a heavenly character and walk in Christ, kept before the soul by the power of the Holy Spirit, whose blessed office it is to reproduce, in this world, from such poor failing things as we are, some of the excellencies of the Heavenly One. May the Lord grant us grace for this!

T. R.

Brief Studies in Prophecy—xii.

Eternity (continued).

THE *new heavens and the new earth*. In our last paper we considered the solemn events, closing into eternity itself, in reference to the unsaved and the ungodly, and we now turn to the brighter and happier theme of the eternal destiny of the saved. "We, according to His promise," says the apostle Peter, "look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." It has been remarked by some one that righteousness "reigns" throughout the millennium, but it "dwells" during the eternal state.

We have seen that the closing verses of Revelation xx. give us the final issue of judgment for the lost; then we have in the first eight verses of chapter xxi. the eternal state of blessing for the saints. Here we find that God dwells with men, in the scene which He has Himself prepared for the eternal habitation of His saints. But before this could be so, every trace of sin and evil must be for ever removed from the whole universe. Now this, as we know, will be effectuated in virtue of the far-reaching efficacy of the blood of Christ, the Lamb of God, who taketh away the *sin* of the world. Not a trace of that sin, which so marred everything, will sully God's fair creation then. In this eternal state of bliss everything will be in perfect harmony with the holy nature of God; and His love told out in all its unmingled fulness shall, so to speak, expand itself without hindrance and fill the scene. The saints will not then need to be ever on their guard lest they should defile their garments, but will walk the courts of the heavenly city with perfect freedom and unalloyed bliss.

As we have said, God *dwells* with men; this was His purpose from the beginning. He *visited* Adam in Eden, but sin came in and marred everything. As soon as redemption was accomplished, in type at least, in the paschal lamb and the deliverance through the Red Sea, then God spoke of His habitation. Yet God could not fully rest in a scene where sin and Satan's power were—a world departed and alienated from Him.

But *here*, in this eternal state of sinless perfection, it is not a question of man tested, as in Eden, and liable to fall; on the contrary, everything stands on the immutable basis of the value and efficacy of the precious blood of Christ—everything is now reconciled to God; and here God *dwells* with men. The "Holy City, new

Jerusalem," comes down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. It would seem that this "new Jerusalem" is itself "the tabernacle of God," and if that be the *Church*, as it appears to be, this would show that the Church will retain its near and privileged place even in eternity itself.

Let us remark here that it is a question of "God" and "men"; we have got out of all simply dispensational names such as "Jehovah" with Israel, "Father" with his people now, etc. *Then* Christ will have finished His millennial reign, and the last enemy having been destroyed, He will have delivered up His mediatorial kingdom to God, even the Father, that God (Father, the Son, and Holy Ghost) may be all in all. Distinction of nations, too, of which we have seen so much previously, will have ceased to be. It is no longer a question of Jews, Gentiles, etc., but of "men." The whole order of things will be changed. Instead of sorrow and tears, so familiar in this world, *God Himself* shall wipe away all tears. Death cannot enter the scene—what breaks, what sorrows it had caused for ages! In fact, sin and everything which it had brought in, and which had followed in its train, will have passed away for ever.

In conclusion, may we not praise and bless God as we consider the wonderful harmony of Scripture, throughout all its wide and far reaching range? Like a panorama of great events, God makes all these things to pass in review before the eye of faith in His word. Not, indeed, in order to gratify our curiosity as to the future, but that the student of prophecy may learn profitable moral lessons for his own soul's blessing. To discard or neglect the study of prophecy would surely be a serious loss.

Prophecy, indeed, began with the Fall in Eden, when the seed of the woman which was to bruise the serpent's

head was promised. Then it conducts us, in its wide range, along through past events (recorded on the pages of holy writ with perfect accuracy, long before they occurred, but which have now become matters of history), right on through the successive ages, until, finally, we find ourselves carried into eternity itself. God has, speaking reverently, taken us into His confidence; He has revealed all these things to us in His word for our present profit and blessing. To His name be the praise and glory. Amen!

F. G. B.

Heaven's Joy.

WILL it be the glory bright
 Of those realms of endless light?
 Streets all paved with crystal gold,
 Gates of pearl of price untold,
 Harps, and thrones, and diadems,
 Palaces, and costly gems?
 All, and more than this, is given,
 But 'tis not the "*joy of heaven.*"

One there is, and One alone,
 Every ransomed saint will own
 As the central fount of bliss;
 Heaven were empty without this.
 Jesus, Lamb of God, Thou art
 Now the centre of my heart;
 While by faith Thy face I see,
 While I live and feed on Thee!
 E'en in this sad, weary waste,
 Often heavenly joys I taste:
 Thou the *joy of joys* wilt be,
 Of my heaven's eternity.

J. G. D.

Gleanings.

CHRIST is my happiness and my joy ; but it is in the path of His will that one finds the enjoyment of His love. In fact, however feeble I may be, I find in Him the source of deep and ineffable joy, having also a character of peace which is linked with the revelation of Himself to the soul. And because it is Himself, it leaves no room for the idea of change. Reasoning is out of place here, for “ *I know* whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.” Besides, it is Himself who constitutes our treasure. May God keep us near to Him !

It can hardly be said to be merely a *conviction of faith* which enables me to know that happiness: the only true happiness, is in *Him*. When one has found, in spite of many imperfections during a long series of years, that His love is always faithful, and that one actually enjoys His love, doubtless this is faith, in a sense, but it is more than that: we abide in Him, however feeble we may be, and He abides in us, and we find our rest in Him. All else is but a chimera, a passing shadow, which passes away with the breath of the life occupied with it, and often even before that, and it is only vanity even while we possess it. God will have us walk by faith, which turns into knowledge by daily communion with Himself. The apostle could say, “ *I know* whom I have believed ” (2 Tim. i. 12).

J. N. D.