ALL ABOUT JESUS
VOLUME 1

Ellet J. Waggoner

Introduction

It is with great joy that I release this large collection of articles by E.J. Waggoner (1855-1916), gathered and grouped according the events in the life of Jesus Christ.

When I first pulled all the articles from the Present Truth periodicals, I was surprised to find how much writing Waggoner had done, little of which had been collected and published. Because the larger historical works of A.T. Jones (1850-1923) had been published, along with some of his other books, I had the impression that Waggoner's written contribution to the Adventist gospel message was smaller. How wrong this has proved to be!

My rough estimate is that Waggoner probably wrote twice as much as Jones, and on a wider range of Biblical topics (although Jones specialized in History and Religious Liberty). Comparing these two men to Ephraim and Manasseh, the two sons of Joseph who shared his rich blessing, Waggoner was the Ephraim--the "more fruitful" one. And like Ephraim, Waggoner was also the younger of the two men.

Initially, I was not sure how to organize the many thousands of pages of articles. Eventually, it became clear that both Waggoner and Jones' articles fit into twelve categories: Gospel, Health, Life/Death/Spiritualism, Money/Work, Religious Liberty, Bible, Church, Holy Spirit, Law/Sabbath, Name of God, Prophetic Word, and Education. And I sorted them accordingly. However, it then became clear that the "Gospel" volume for Waggoner would still extend over many thousands of pages.

I was able to separate some articles out into other books, such as the volumes on John, Romans, Hebrews, Prayer, Psalms, Proverbs, Paul and the Early Church. Another series of articles were collected into the small book, The Miracles of Jesus.

This still left me with thousands of pages of articles. Finally, it occurred to me that the bulk of the Gospel articles that were based on the Four Gospels, could fit into a volume on the Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ, similar to Ellen White's book, The Desire of Ages, though obviously not written in such a chronological fashion. It would be more of a devotional/theological book (sorted chronologically), rather than a chronological history.

And so this book came to be. At around 2000 pages, it is a remarkable collection of Adventist religious thought from the 1888 Gospel era. I have divided it into two volumes to make it more manageable:

- Volume 1: The Gospel Events, Parables, and Teachings of Jesus from His birth to the completion of His ministry in Galilee. The "Declaration" of the Gospel.

- Volume 2: The Final Ministry in Judea, Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus. The "Demonstration" of the Gospel.

In placing the articles on the timeline, I have followed the charts on the website, www.gospelparallels.com, and also some materials from our church's Missionary Seminar of 2005 (the charts/maps are by Andreas Dura; the timeline by Günther Cerncic). I believe that the timeline used in the Missionary Seminar charts followed, wherever possible, the chronology used in the book, The Desire of Ages.

I have included a few of the articles from The Miracles of Jesus, and The Lord's Prayer; but in most cases, I have avoided duplicating articles that are already in other collections.

I have not included any of the articles from Waggoner's Studies in the Gospel of John. Although they would have fit within the scheme of this book, since they are complete in themselves (and one article flows to the next), I did not want to break them up. With a few exceptions, I have collected articles in this book that did not belong to a previous series.

The articles chosen for this volume were selected on the basis that they started with a verse from one of the four gospels or were wholly concerned with a Gospel event. There are over 450 articles included, written over a span of about 20 years.

Jesus, as the life and hope of mankind, and especially as the pattern for the final generation, was the burden of Waggoner's writings, and this is the main theme that runs through them all. It is indeed, all about Jesus.

"These are they which follow the Lamb wherever He goes." (Revelation 14:4)

Prologue

The Introductory Teachings of the Gospel of John

John's gospel contains a unique preamble to the life of Jesus.

It focuses our attention on Jesus' divine origin: as the Word of God, as sharing the divine nature of the Father, as the One through whom all things were created, and as the One through whom all things are being redeemed.

Preparation

From the Work of John the Baptist to the Temptation in the Wilderness.

John the Baptist was born 6 months before Jesus, and it is assumed that his ministry began 6 months prior to Christ's as well. That would place it in the Spring of 27 AD.

Jesus came to be baptized of John sometime in the Fall of 27 AD, shortly after he turned 30 years of age.

After His baptism in the fall of 27 AD, Jesus went into the wilderness for 40 days to be tempted.

Early Ministry

From the First Disciples Called to the Miracle at Cana

When Jesus emerged from 40 days in the wilderness of temptation, he returned to where John the Baptist was ministering, and John pointed to Him as "the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world."

Two of John's disciples, Andrew and the apostle John, follow Jesus. They in turn brought their brothers, Simon (Peter) and James. The next day, Jesus found Philip and called him to follow, and Philip brought his friend Nathanael. These six disciples were with Jesus at the next event which was the wedding feast at Cana.

These events took place within the first 3 months since Jesus' baptism. After this, Jesus, his disciples, and his mother, made a trip to Capernaum on the north of the Sea of Galilee, for "not too many days." (John 2:12). There is a gap of a few months in the record during that time, and we don't see Jesus again until His visit to the Passover at Jerusalem in the Spring of 28 AD.

Judean Ministry

After six months of preliminary work, the next year of Jesus' ministry, would center in and around Jerusalem.

All the details of Jesus' ministry in the year around Judea come from the Gospel of John, except for the record of the imprisonment of John the Baptist, which is recorded only in Matthew and Luke.

The imprisonment of John, and the rejection of Jesus by the Sanhedrin (after He healed the man at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath), marked the end of Jesus' ministry in Judea, and He shifted His work to Galilee (which is covered in the sections following this one).

Early Galilean Ministry

Jesus relocated His ministry to Galilee for the next year of public work. The Early Galilean Ministry covers about 5 months of time.

Although the early part of the Galilean Ministry would normally end with the Sermon on the Mount, I have put that in a separate section following this one due to the large number of articles involved.

The Sermon on the Mount

In this masterpiece Jesus laid out the Constitution of His Kingdom. It starts with a new spiritual foundation within the heart, and then extends to the world around.

Because the people were used to a religion of forms, ceremonies and customs, Jesus explained how the real spiritual religion differed from the old ways in His exposition of the Law, Prayer, Alms, Daily Life, and Relationships to Others.

Middle and Closing Galilean Ministry

This section comprises the events of the Middle and Closing Galilean ministries, comprising about 7 months of time altogether, from September 29 AD to March 30 AD.

Just as His rejection by the Sanhedrin marked the close of the Judean ministry, so His rejection by the people, after the feeding of the 5000, when they attempted to make Him a king, marked the closing of this period of Jesus' ministry.

Chapter 1

The Word of God

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made." (John 1:1-3)

Who Is He?

That this Word means Christ, there is no room for doubt.

"The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

Again, John writes of the Word of life, "Which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled." (1 John 1:1)

And when the same writer saw a vision of Christ, "the faithful and true witness," (Revelation 3:14) "called Faithful and True; ... [the] King of kings and Lord of lords," (Revelation 19:11,16) coming to judge the world in righteousness, he saw Him as: "The Word of God." (Revelation 19:13)

The One of whom we are reading, therefore, is the One who dwelt on earth in the flesh as Jesus of Nazareth.

In the Beginning

The Word, the only begotten Son of God, was "in the beginning." When was that? It cannot be located. Let the mind run back to "the beginning" when God created the heavens and earth, and there we see Him. Just before His crucifixion Jesus prayed, "And now, O Father, glorify me with your own self with the glory which I had with You before the world was." (John 17:5)

If we could find the beginning of all created things, "whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers," (Colossians 1:16) we should still see that "He is before all things." (Colossians 1:17)

Yes, He himself is "the beginning of the creation of God." (Revelation 3:14)

Finite minds can never span the space between "the beginning" when the Word was with God, and the present time. "[His] goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting, [even] from the days of eternity." (Micah 5:2, and margin) "[He is] from everlasting to everlasting." (Psalm 90:2)

The Word of Wisdom

Jesus Christ is the One "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ... [He is] the power of God, and the wisdom of God." (Colossians 2:3,22)

The Hebrew word here rendered "possess," is the same as that rendered "gotten" in Genesis 4, where we read that Eve said, "I have gotten a man from the Lord." (Genesis 4:1)

Christ is the only begotten Son of God. In Proverbs 8:22 there is no preposition in the original, so that a more proper rendering of the verse would be, "The Lord possessed me, the beginning of His way, before His works of old." (Proverbs 8:22)

This is indicated in the margin of the Revised Version. Christ was not only in the beginning, but: "[He] is the beginning," (Colossians 1:18) even the beginning of the way of the Father. Without Him there was nothing.

The Word Was God

"Being made so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." (Hebrews 1:4)

The Son must inherit the name and titles and estate of the Father. Whatever titles belong to God the Father belong equally to Christ. They are His by right. By birth, "[He is] heir of all things." (Hebrews 1:2)

The Apostle Paul writes of the glorious appearing "of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ." (Titus 2:13)

The Father himself addresses the Son as God, saying to Him, "Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever." (Hebrews 1:8)

The Word and the Thought

A word is not merely a sound; it is a thing. The ancient Hebrews had but one term for both "word" and "thing." So in the Hebrew Bible the word which is rendered "word" is the same that is rendered "thing." A word is the expression of a thought or an idea. The Word of God is the expression of the thought of God. "No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." (John 1:18)

Christ is the expression of God's thoughts to man; and since the thoughts of God toward us are "thoughts of peace, and not of evil," (Jeremiah 19:11) "[Christ] came and preached peace." (Ephesians 2:17)

Why is it that men do not understand God, but think of Him as stern and hard? Simply because they do not know Christ. It is impossible for anyone to know and believe in the one true God, without knowing Jesus Christ, for: "No man knows the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." (Matthew 11:27)

The Word Spoken

"No prophecy ever came by the will of man; but men spoke from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost." (2 Peter 1:21)

But it was the Spirit of Christ in the prophets. "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently. ... Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify." (1 Peter 1:10-11) "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable." (2 Timothy 3:16)

An inspiration is a breath. Inspiration of God means the breath of God. Scripture inspired of God, is Scripture breathed of God. Thus we read, "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth." (Psalm 33:6)

The Scriptures the Word of God

Since the Scriptures are God-breathed, they are the Word of God. This is what they claim to be. To Jeremiah the Lord said, "Behold, I have put my words in your mouth." (Jeremiah 1:9)

God said, "He that has my word, let him speak my word faithfully." (Jeremiah 23:28)

To Ezekiel He said, "You shall speak my words unto them." (Ezekiel 2:7)

Again, "Son of man, go, get you unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them." (Ezekiel 3:4)

And over and over we find this statement in the prophets, "The word of the Lord came unto me." (Jeremiah 1:4) "The word of the Lord came unto Hosea." (Hosea 1:1) "The word of the Lord that came to Joel." (Joel 1:1) "The word of the Lord came unto Jonah." (Jonah 1:1) "The word of the Lord that came to Micah." (Micah 1:1) "The word of the Lord which came unto Zephaniah." (Zephaniah 1:1)

David, the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, "The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was in my tongue." (2 Samuel 23:2)

Paul thanked God that the Thessalonian brethren received the word which he spoke to them, "not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God." (2 Thessalonians 2:13)

Again he wrote, "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." (1 Corinthians 14:37)

David said to the Lord, "Your word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. ... Your word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against You." (Psalm 119:105,11)

But time and space would fail to repeat all the instances in which the Holy Scriptures are declared to be the Word of God. That is the claim that they make for themselves. Just as surely as they are true, so surely are they the Word of God.

Christ and the Written Word

Some people imagine that to call the Scriptures the Word of God is derogatory to Christ. They think that since He is the Word of God, the Scriptures cannot be. They forget that this is the very reason why they are God's Word.

Through the Scriptures, which we can see, we become acquainted with Christ, whom we cannot see. The unity of Christ and the written word may be learned by comparing the following: "For this commandment which I command you this day, it is not hidden from you, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very near unto you, in your mouth, and in your heart, that you may do it." (Deuteronomy 30:11-14) "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes. For Moses describes the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which does those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaks on this wise, Say not in your heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what says it? The word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach." (Romans 10:4-8)

The commandment, we are told, is not hidden, nor far off. It is not in heaven, that we should say, Who will go up and bring it to us? nor is it in the deep, that we need to bring it up. The Apostle Paul uses this same scripture, only inserting Christ in the place of commandment.

When Moses said that it was not necessary to go up to heaven to bring the commandment down, it was the same as though he had said that we need not go up to bring Christ down. He has come, and He is risen,--the Word of life,--and the words which He speaks are spirit and life: "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." (John 6:63)

Whoever reads the words of the apostles and prophets as the Word of God, finds Christ.

The Creative Word

"All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made." (John 1:3)

The Norwegian translation expresses the emphatic declaration of the original: "Without it [that is, the Word] is not even a single thing made." "For in Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things have been created through Him, and unto Him; And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist." (Colossians 1:16-17,RV)

And yet there are people who deny that the Son had an existence before He was born a baby in Bethlehem! To deny that is the same as to deny His present existence.

Creation by Wisdom

The Father, addressing the Son, says, "You, Lord, in the beginning have laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of your hands." (Hebrews 1:10)

God "made the worlds" by Him." (Hebrews 1:2) We have already seen that Christ is "the power of God, and the wisdom of God." (1 Corinthians 1:24)

Now read, "The Lord is the true God, He is the living God, and an everlasting King; ... He has made the earth by His power, He has established the world by His wisdom." (Jeremiah 10:10,12)

And then read again the words of wisdom, "When He gave to the sea its bound, that the waters should not transgress His commandment; when He marked out the foundations of the earth; Then I was by Him as a Master Workman." (Proverbs 8:29-30,RV)

The common version has it, "as one brought up with Him," which is also the truth. "The same was in the beginning of His way." (Proverbs 8:22)

He was "the beginning of His way." He was the Architect, the Master Workman, without whom nothing was made.

The Power of God to Salvation

It is not as a matter of mere curiosity that the Scriptures set Christ before us as the power of God,--the One to whom creation owes its existence. It is that we may know His power to save us from sin. The Word of truth is the Gospel of our salvation: "In whom you also trusted, after that you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation." (Ephesians 1:13)

The eternal power of God is seen in the things that are made. "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead." (Romans 1:20)

But the cross of Christ is also the power of God to them who are saved by it. (1 Corinthians 1:18) There is the manifestation of one power by which all things were created and still exist. We have redemption, even the forgiveness of our sins, through the blood of Christ, "Who is the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of all creation; For in Him were all things created." (Colossians 1:15-16,RV)

Christ is Redeemer because He is Creator; the power by which He redeems is the very same power by which He creates.

The Word of Peace

Christ is the Word of the God of peace. So: "He is our peace." (Ephesians 2:14)

When He came to earth, He came speaking the words of God, who said to Moses, "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto you, and will put my words in His mouth." (Deuteronomy 18:18)

So, "[He] came preaching peace." (Acts 10:36)

That was the word that He spoke when the storm was raging on the Sea of Galilee: "He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." (Mark 4:39)

The winds and the waves recognized the word of the Creator. Power over the elements,--creative power,--was manifested in that word "peace." It is the same word which by the Gospel is preached unto us; for Christ says, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." (John 14:27) "These things have I spoken unto you, that in me you might have peace, in the world you shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

The "peace of God" rules in our hearts only when "the word of Christ" dwells in us richly in all wisdom: "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also you are called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." (Colossians 3:15-16)

It is the word that creates, because in Him we have peace, and: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Rest and Peace

Says the Saviour: "Come unto me all you that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

Both peace and rest are found in Him, because "In Him were all things created." (Colossians 1:16)

The firmer our foundation, the more securely we can rest. We rest upon the word of God, and find perfect rest there, because it is the word that created all things. "In six

days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed." (Exodus 31:17)

He rested upon His own word, which is living and active, and which continued to uphold that which was created. The seventh day, therefore--"the Sabbath of the Lord your God," (Exodus 20:10)--is the rest of God. It is the rest which Christ gives to us; for since Christ created all things it was He who at the close of the six days' work rested on the seventh day.

The seventh day is emphatically the Lord's day,--the pledge of the rest that Jesus gives; and our acceptance of it in spirit and in truth is the sign of our accepting the rest that He offers us.

Sanctification by the Word

The Saviour prayed, "Sanctify them through your truth; your word is truth." (John 17:17)

That is the word of Christ, the word by which all things were created. He himself is the Truth (John 14:6), and: "[He] of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption." (1 Corinthians 1:30)

Now hear what the Lord says of His people who had forsaken Him: "I gave them my Sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctifies them." (Ezekiel 20:12)

God has made Christ sanctification to us, and He has given us the Sabbath in order that we may know that He does sanctify us; therefore it follows that our highest knowledge of God in Christ is found in the Sabbath. To know that God has given the Sabbath, and then to reject it, is to reject complete sanctification.

Perfection and Growth

Consider this point further. At the close of each day of creation, "God saw that it was good." Everything was perfect as He went along. But suppose He had stopped at

any point of time before the Sabbath, and done no more; what would have been the result? Evidently an imperfect, unfinished creation.

The Sabbath was the crown, the mark of a perfect and complete creation. So with men. They may have come to Christ, to learn of Him. They may have made great progress in His school. It is all good. Sanctification is through obedience, through the Spirit, and if they are mindful of all that He shows them, they are as perfect through the little that they know as if they had known everything.

But suppose the Sabbath, "as the truth is in Jesus" (Ephesians 4:21), is made known to them, and they reject it. They then stop short in their growth and are imperfect, no matter how excellent they may have been. The saints of God are the planting of the Lord, "that they might be called trees of righteousness." (Isaiah 61:3)

But the tree that stops growing is dead.

Knowing God

"This is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent." (John 17:3)

But we do not know God unless we know Him as Creator, and we cannot know Him at all except as we learn of Him in Christ, by whom all things were created.

It is a terrible error to deny the existence of Christ before He came to this earth in the flesh; but the only evidence of His pre-existence is the fact that He created all things. To deny Him as Creator, is to deny His existence at all. To neglect to honor Him as Creator, is to "neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord." (Hebrews 2:3)

And we cannot honor Him as Creator unless we accept without questioning the word which tells us about His creation work, and of the rest that follows.

And the only way to know this indeed is to share that rest with Him, as we read again: "Hallow my Sabbaths, and they shall be a sign between me and you, that you may know that I am the Lord your God." (Ezekiel 20:12) "Let us [then] go on unto

perfection," (Hebrews 6:1) finding in Christ sanctification and redemption according to the measure of His power as Creator, and rejoicing in the Sabbath, the sign which He has given us of creation perfect and complete.--Present Truth, October 24, 1895--John 1:1-14.

Chapter 2

Light and Life

One of the characteristics of light is that it may multiply itself indefinitely without diminishing itself in the least. A lighted candle may give light to a million candles, and yet its own light be just as bright.

The sun supplies light and heat to this earth, and there is enough for all. Each individual gets as much benefit from the sun now as it was possible for anyone to get when the population of the earth was only half as great as it now is. The sun gives its whole strength to each person, and yet it has as much heat and light as though it supplied no one.

Jesus Christ is the Sun of righteousness, and the Light of the world. The light which He gives is His life. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." (John 1:4)

He says, "He that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8:12)

His life He gives for the world. All who believe on Him receive His life, and are saved by it. Just as the light of the candle is not diminished although many others are lighted by it, so Christ's life is not diminished though He gives it to many. Each individual may have it all in its fullness.

The light shone in the darkness, and the darkness could not overcome it. His light could not be quenched. Satan could not take His light, because he could not tempt Him to sin. So He could lay down His life, He still had as much left. His life triumphed over death. It is infinite life.

So He is able to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by Him. Christ will dwell in His completeness in everyone who will let Him. This is the mystery of the Gospel.--Present Truth, October 6, 1892--John 1:4.

Chapter 3

The Unconquerable Life

"In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shone in the darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not." (John 1:4-5,RV)

The marginal rendering, "overcame," gives us the exact meaning of the text, and conveys a message of great comfort to the believer. Let us see what it is.

Christ is the light of the world: "Then spoke Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8:12)

But His light is His life, as the text quoted states. The whole world was in the darkness of sin. This darkness was due to lack of knowledge of God; as the apostle Paul says that the Gentiles are "darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them because of the hardening of their heart." (Ephesians 4:18)

Satan the ruler of the darkness of this world, had done his utmost to deceive man as to the true character of God. He had made the world believe that God was like a man-cruel, vindictive, and passionate. Even the Jews, the people whom God had chosen to be the bearers of light to the world, had departed from God, and while professedly separate from the heathen, were enveloped in heathen darkness. Then Christ came, and "The people which sat in darkness saw a great light, and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death, to them did light spring up." (Matthew 4:16) "His name [was] Emmanuel,--God with us." (Matthew 1:23) "God was in Christ." (2 Corinthians 5:19)

God refuted the falsehoods of Satan, not by loud arguments, but simply by living His life among men, so that all might see it. He demonstrated the power of the life of God, and the possibility of its being manifested in men.

The life which Christ lived was untainted by sin. Satan exerted all his powerful arts, yet he could not affect that spotless life. Its light always shone with unwavering brilliancy.

Because Satan could not produce the least shadow of sin in the life, he could not bring it within his power, that of the grave. No one could take Christ's life from Him; He voluntarily laid it down. And for the same reason, when He had laid it down, Satan could not prevent Him from taking it up again. Said He: "Therefore does my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." (John 10:17-18)

To the same intent are the words of the apostle Peter concerning Christ: "Whom God has raised up having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that He should be held of it." (Acts 2:24)

Thus was demonstrated the right of the Lord Jesus Christ to be made a high priest "after the power of an endless life." (Hebrews 7:16)

This endless, spotless life Christ gives to all who believe on Him: "As you have given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as you have given Him. And this is life eternal, that they might know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent." (John 17:2-3)

Christ dwells in the hearts of all those who believe on Him: "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20) "That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." (Ephesians 3:16-17)

Christ, the light of the world, dwelling in the hearts of His followers, constitutes them the light of the world. Their light comes not from themselves, but comes from Christ, who dwells in them. Their life is not from themselves, but it is the life of Christ manifest in their mortal flesh. "For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." (2 Corinthians 4:11)

This is what it is to live "a Christian life." This living light comes from God in a never-failing stream. The psalmist exclaims: "For with You is the fountain of life; in your light shall we see light." (Psalm 36:9) "And He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. ... And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that hears, say, Come. And let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Revelation 22:1,17) "Whosoever drinks of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." (John 4:13-14) "Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoso eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, has eternal life;and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, dwells in me, and I in him. As the living Father has sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eats me, even he shall live by me." (John 6:53-57)

This life of Christ we eat and drink by feasting upon His Word, for He added, "It is the Spirit that quickens; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit, and they are life." (John 6:63)

Christ dwells in His inspired Word, and through it we get His life. This life is given freely to all who will receive it, as we read above; and again we read that Jesus stood and cried, saying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." (John 7:37)

This life is the Christian's light, and it is that which makes him a light to others. It is his life; and the blessed comfort to him is that no matter how great the darkness to which he has to pass, no darkness has power to put out that light. That light of life is his as long as he exercises faith, and the darkness cannot affect it. But all, therefore, who profess the truth of the Lord, have the confidence that can say, "Rejoice not against me, O my enemy; when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me." (Micah 7:8)--Present Truth, August 25, 1892 John 1:4-5.

Chapter 4

The Word of Life and Light

After mentioning the Word which was in the beginning with God, and which was God, by whom everything was created, the apostle continues: "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through Him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lights every man that comes into the world." (John 1:4-9)

The Life of the Word

Christ is the Word, and: "[He] is our life." (Colossians 3:4)

His life is the life of God, for: "The Word was God." (John 1:1)

And, "[God is] from everlasting to everlasting." (Psalm 90:2)

So Christ's power as Priest is "the power of an endless life." (Hebrews 7:16)

On earth He was simply the manifestation of the life of God: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." (1 John 1:1-2)

Life in the Word

We have previously seen by comparing Deuteronomy 30:11-20 and Romans 10:6-10 [See the first article in this section, The Word of God--Present Truth, October 24, 1895], that Christ is in all the Scriptures, so that they are indeed the Word of God. Whoever reads the Scriptures without finding Christ in them, reads them in vain; he gets only the outward form, or shell.

But he who takes the Scriptures for what they are in truth, the Word of God, finds that they have the very life of Christ. "The words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit, and they are life." (John 6:63)

To feed upon the Word, is to eat the flesh and blood of Christ.

Life from the Word

Christ, who is the Word of Life, said: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." (John 10:10) "He that has the Son has the life, and he that has not the Son of God has not the life." (1 John 5:19,RV)

In the love of God for the world, Christ was sent, "that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

He that rejects Christ has eternal death for his portion. To say that a man may live forever without Christ, even though it be in misery, is to deny the necessity of Christ's sacrifice for man. It may be said that the claim that men who reject Christ may live forever does not deny the necessity for His sacrifice, since that was necessary in order that men might have righteousness. But, "the Spirit is life because of righteousness." (Romans 8:10)

Christ gives righteousness only in giving His life. "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him." (Romans 6:6-8)

The Life of Faith

"The just shall live by faith." (Romans 1:17)

No Christian will deny that righteousness comes from Christ alone: "By the obedience of One shall many be made righteous." (Romans 5:19)

But this obedience of Christ, by which we are made righteous, is the obedience of Christ's own life in us: "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but

Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20)

Righteousness by faith is nothing but life by faith. "Conditional immortality" is only conditional righteousness, that is, conditional on faith in the crucified and risen Saviour.

The Life of Righteousness

Life and righteousness come from Christ; but since Christ is in the Word which the prophets and apostles wrote, it follows that life and righteousness come through obedience to what is written. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4)

God's Word is the truth: "Sanctify them through your truth: your word is truth." (John 17:17)

And the Apostle Peter says to the saints of God, "You have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit." (1 Peter 1:22)

Every word of God is life, and a single word is sufficient to give life, if that is all one has; but the very fact that every word is life, shows that the willful neglect or rejection of one word of God is the rejection of His life.

The Reality of This Life

This is shown in the resurrection of Lazarus, and of all the others who were brought to life by the word of Christ. When the poor palsied man, whose life was almost gone, was brought to Jesus, the Lord gave him righteousness by His word, saying, "Your sins be forgiven you." (Matthew 9:2)

And then, in order to show the reality of the new life which was conveyed to the man in those words, Jesus caused him to rise and walk in perfect health. "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; But these are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life through His name." (John 20:30-31)

Hearing and Living

Jesus calls and says, "Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live." (Isaiah 55:3)

When the dead hear the voice of the Son of God, they live: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. ... Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." (John 5:25,28-29)

So it was with Lazarus and the others. The moment they heard the word, life was theirs. They obeyed the voice that told them to arise. It was impossible that they should hear the word and not arise.

So hearing, in the Scripture sense, is obeying. He who really hears the word of God, obeys it. Not to obey, is to refuse to hear. So whoever does not turn away his ears from hearing the law, but who listens to God's words all the time, and who is careful not to let one of them escape his notice, will inevitably possess the life and righteousness that is in them. As he lives by them here, so will they be his life in the world to come.

The Life that Creates

"In Him was life." (John 1:4)

So, "In Him were all things created," and, "in Him all things consist." (Colossians 1:1,17,RV)

All things are created in Him, because life is in Him. By the power of His life were they created, and do they exist. "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." (Acts 17:28)

Not only are men His offspring, but all the rest of creation as well: "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God." (Psalm 90:2)

Here we read of the mountains having been "brought forth:" literally, as given in some versions, "Before the mountains were born." God's breath is life; and "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth." (Psalm 123:6)

Since all things are created in Him, because in Him is life, and it follows that: "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Redemption is a new creation by the power of the life which is given to us on the cross.

The Light of Life

"The life was the light of men." (John 1:4)

This is most literally true, for since all things were created and still exist by His life, the light of the sun, moon, and stars is simply the light of His life. In this, as in the resurrection of the dead, the Lord teaches us by those things that we can see, of those things which we cannot see.

As the light of the sun is not diminished by being shared by hundreds of millions, so Christ's life is not lessened although He gives it to many. As each one gets the full strength of the sun, so each soul gets the fullness of Christ's life. Jesus said, "I am the Light of the world; he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8:12)

Light from the Word

In the Word is light, and since it is the same Word that we find in the Scriptures, it must needs be that: "The opening of your words gives light." (Psalm 119:130,RV)

We do not get light on the Word. That would be like getting light on the sun. The light is there already; all that is needed is to open it, and the light will shine forth. "Your Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." (Psalm 119:105)

Then follow the Word; for: "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." (1 John 1:7)

Light In Darkness

"And the Light shines in darkness." (John 1:5)

When Christ came, then was fulfilled the word of the prophet, "The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up." (Matthew 4:16) "Darkness was upon the face of the deep. And God said, Let there be light, and there was light." (Genesis 1:2)

Just as God commanded the light to shine out of darkness, so He shines in the darkness of our sinful hearts, "To give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:6)

The place for light to shine is in the darkness. So when darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people, Christians, into whose hearts light has come, are to hold forth the Word of Life and: "shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life." (Philippians 2:15-16)

The Incomprehensible Light

"The darkness comprehended it not." (John 1:5)

Darkness can never comprehend light. There is nothing in common between them.

"What communion has light with darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14)

Darkness does not become light, but light shines in darkness, and drives it away. But the word "comprehend" means to contain, to enclose, as in Isaiah 40:12 "Who has

measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?", where we read of the dust of the earth comprehended in a measure. Darkness cannot shut in the light. As nothing is hid from the heat of the sun, so "the Sun of Righteousness" shall dispel all the darkness, and bring in the perfect day. "But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall." (Malachi 4:2)

In that day when the darkness is for ever dispersed, those who have loved darkness rather than light, will be scattered with it, so that no place will be found for them; but the children of light will "shine forth as the sun." (Matthew 13:43)

Light for All

Jesus is the Light of the world; so He is the true Light, "which lights every man that comes into the world." (John 1:9)

Or, as some render it, "In coming into the world, He lights every man."

The point is that all do have the light. To them that sit in darkness light is sprung up. That life-giving light has shone upon all, and is still shining. "By the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." (Romans 5:18)

God's love embraces all the world, and every man in it. To all He has given "His unspeakable gift." (2 Corinthians 9:15)

What a sad awakening it will be at last when men realize what was within their grasp, and what they let go. Let all give good heed to the words of Christ: "Yet a little while is the light with you; walk while you have the light, lest darkness come upon you. ... While you have the light, believe in the light, that you maybe the children of light." (John 12:35-36)--Present Truth, November 21, 1895--John 1:4-9.

Chapter 5

Accountability for Light

Of Jesus Christ is written, "That was the true Light, which lights every man that comes into the world." (John 1:9)

The light is His life. "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men," (John 1:4) because this life has been given to every man that was ever born into this world, the light has been manifested to every man. Every man, therefore, who is not saved will be "without excuse;" for the light has enlightened every man. "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." (Romans 1:20)

The most benighted heathen, without the written law and revelation, nevertheless receives life from Him, and the very life by nature gives him sufficient knowledge of the law of God, so that in the Judgment his conscience will witness for or against him. "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another; In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." (Romans 2:14-16)

The man who knows least of the will of God knows better than he has done, and is conscious of guilt. And it is not for not knowing that he will be condemned, but for not believing and doing what he knew. God is just. The condemnation is not that men did not know, but "that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light." (John 3:19) "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." (Luke 12:48)

It is the law of the kingdom of heaven. Great light brings greater responsibility. When the Word reveals God's will to a person, who sees it for the first time in his life, he can never go on in the old way, turning from the light, and be the same that he was before the fresh light came to him. "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin." (John 15:22)

The record concerning the cities of Galilee illustrates this principle of accountability for light rejected. Jesus came and dwelt in Capernaum. "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up." (Matthew 4:14-16)

Here Christ lived and wrought most of His mighty works. The region was populous and one in which to reach men of all nations. Says Dean Farrar, in his Life of Christ: "Through this district passed the great caravans on their way from Egypt to Damascus; and the heathens who congregated at Bethsaida Julias and Caesarea Philippi must have been constantly seen in the streets of Capernaum. In the time of Christ it was, for population and activity, 'the manufacturing district' of Palestine, and the waters of its lake were ploughed by 4,000 vessels of every description, from the war vessels of the Romans to the rough fisher-boats of Bethsaida, and the gilded pinnacles from Herod's palace."

But the great light was seen, and the people rejected it. It was not convenient just then to receive it, and they lapsed again into the shadow of death; but now into denser darkness than before. And so Christ pronounced the woe upon these busy cities, Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. "And you, Capernaum, which are exalted unto heaven, shall be brought down to hell; for if the mighty works, which have been done in you, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you." (Matthew 11:23-24)

Yet Capernaum, the religious center of the North, prided itself on its scrupulous performance of religious forms, and its formal piety. But in rejecting the "great light" that had arisen, it sunk lower than Sodom, which sinned so terribly and yet without as great light as Capernaum.

Sharing with Jerusalem in the rejection of the light, Capernaum and the coasts of the sea shared in the general desolation that fell upon the land which had filled up the cup by centuries of apostasy. Of the region now, a visitor, Archdeacon Farrar, says: "The shores are now deserted. With the exception of the small and decaying town of

Tiberias-crumbling into the last page of decrepitude--and the 'frightful village' of Mejdel (the ancient Magdala) where the degradation of the inhabitants is best shown by the fact that the children play stark naked in the street--there is not a single inhabited spot on its once crowded shores. One miserable, crazy boat--and that not always procurable--has replaced its gay and numerous fleet."

The ruins here piled about amidst the rocks and brambles bear mute testimony to the fulfillment of such portion of the woe as pertains to this world. And in the day of account the fearful record of rejected light must be faced by those who might have walked in it.

The mighty works wrought in Galilee are written that we might believe and have life: "But these are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life through His name." (John 20:31)

They trusted in following the ways of the fathers, the traditions of the elders, and refused to walk forward in the light.

Nowadays we hear much of the enlightenment of the Reformation. But the light that shines from the Word since the Reformation set it free, and since God's providence has so multiplied it and made it possible for all to study it, only throws upon people of this generation the greatest responsibility that has ever come to a generation since Jesus walked among men in Galilee.

The light still shines. The Reformation is not ended. As Jesus said to the people in that day, so He says to all now, "Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walks in darkness knows not where he goes." (John 12:35)--Present Truth, August 6, 1896--John 1:9.

Chapter 6

The Power to Become Sons

"As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." (John 1:12)

What power is it, that He gives those who receive Him, in order that they may become sons? Evidently the power by which He himself is the Son of God. The power of sonship is "the power of His resurrection;" (Philippians 3:10) for He was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." (Romans 1:4) "We declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God has fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, You are my Son, this day have I begotten You." (Acts 13:32-33)

Adam was the son of God "which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God." (Luke 3:38); but in Adam all died, and therefore the only way in which men can become sons of God again is by being born again--by a new life, by rising from the dead. This new, resurrection life Jesus gives to all who receive Him. "The exceeding greatness of God's power in us who believe is according to the working of His mighty power, Which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places." (Ephesians 1:19-20)

Think what this means to us: nothing less than that to us as we now live in the flesh is given a power the same as that which brings the dead to life. This power is "very present" and real. It is for use, and not for show. Since we have it, why not make the most of it?--Present Truth, January 1, 1903--John 1:12.

Chapter 7

Born of God

The child does nothing in order to be born; but does many things because it has been born.

Even so we can do nothing that will cause us to be born of God; but, having been born of God, we necessarily show forth the works of God. "As many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become the children of God, even to them that believe on His name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:12-13,RV)--Present Truth, October 27, 1904--John 1:12-13.

Chapter 8

Believing and Receiving

Christ, the Word, who was in the beginning with God, and who was God, in whom all things were created,--as the life and the light of the world, "was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name; Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:10-13)

Worldly Ignorance

"He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not." (John 1:10) "The world by wisdom knew not God." (1 Corinthians 1:21)

The wisdom of this world does not reveal Christ, but conceals Him. No man can ever learn of Christ by worldly wisdom. It is Mr. Worldly Wiseman that turns Christian out of the right way. [A reference to The Pilgrim's Progress, "The First Stage," by John Bunyan] "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." (1 Corinthians 3:19)

The Depths of Ignorance

"The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel does not know, my people do not consider." (Isaiah 1:3)

Therefore the wisdom of this world does not rise to the level of the intelligence of brutes. Yes, it sinks men below the level of brutes, when it is given full chance to develop; because when men "became vain in their imaginations, ... Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four footed beasts, and creeping things." (Romans 1:21-23)

It is impossible that men should rise above the object which they worship, and the description which follows the scripture just quoted shows that the worshipers of beasts

and creeping things did actually fall below them. But all that was simply the full development of worldly wisdom.

True Wisdom

The Bible does not discredit wisdom or science. It is only "science falsely so called," (1 Timothy 6:20) and the boasted wisdom of the world, which is not wisdom at all, but only foolishness, that is spoken against. "The Lord gives wisdom; out of His mouth comes knowledge and understanding. He lays up sound wisdom for the righteous." (Proverbs 2:6-7) "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." (Job 28:28) "If any man wills to do His will, he shall know." (John 7:17)

It is by faith that we understand. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." (Hebrews 11:3)

The Cross and Knowledge

Wisdom comes from God alone. To know Him embraces everything that is worth knowing or having. "Thus says the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; But let him that glories glory in this, that he understands and knows me." (Jeremiah 9:23-24)

But by the Spirit of the Lord, Paul said, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." (Galatians 6:14)

Since we can glory only in the knowledge of God, and only in the cross, it follows that it is only in the cross that we can learn to know God. The world knew not Christ, because they wanted glory without the cross. Whoever shuns or rejects the cross, refuses to know God.

Whenever in anyone's Christian experience a cross presents itself, and he refuses to accept it, he thereby says, "I know as much of the Lord as I wish to," and then he begins to lose even that which he has.

His Own

"He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." (John 1:11)

In the Greek there is a clearly marked distinction between the two expressions, "His own," the first being neuter, and the second masculine. The "His own" to which He came is distinct from the "His own" who did not receive Him. The English does not show this difference, except by a more full rendering, as is given in the Revised Version: "He came unto His own, and they that were His own received Him not." (John 1:11)

He came to His own inheritance, but His own people rejected Him. Jesus set this forth most clearly in the parable of the vineyard which was let out to husbandmen, who killed the heir when he came. See Matthew 21:33-44.

The Inheritance

"The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof, the world, and they that dwell therein." (Psalm 24:1)

The earth was given to man in the beginning, for a possession. But it was given to a perfect man, not to a fallen man. Man lost it when he fell. But Christ has purchased it. "Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory." (Ephesians 1:14)

We see Jesus, because of death, "crowned with glory and honor," (Hebrews 2:9) just as man was when the dominion was given him. It is His by right, although those to whom it has been entrusted for a little while cast Him out when He came to it.

Rejected of Men

"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not." (Isaiah 53:3)

Mark this, He not only was despised, but "He is despised and rejected of men." It is a thing still going on. Multitudes of those who delight to be called by His name, are rejecting Him. How? In rejecting His cross. They are willing that He should suffer, but they are not willing to suffer with Him; and in rejecting the cross, they are rejecting Him.

The World Unchanged

The world is not converted, and never will be. There is an everlasting difference between Christ and the world. "The friendship of the world is enmity with God. Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." (James 4:4) "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust thereof; but he that does the will of God abides for ever." (1 John 2:16-17)

Therefore the world ever rejects Christ. The world is as much opposed to Christ today as it was eighteen hundred years ago. His people are chosen "out of the world": "If you were of the world, the world would love his own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." (John 15:19) "Who gave himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." (Galatians 1:4)

Believing and Receiving

"As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God." (John 1:12)

And who are they who receive Him? "Them that believe on His name." (John 1:12)

Whoever believes, receives. Whoever receives Him becomes thereby a son of God. Therefore everyone who is not a child of God is rejecting Christ.

What Infidelity Is

What is infidelity? Many people think that it consists in a railing against God and Christ and the Bible. But there are thousands of infidels who have never said a word against Christ, and who would be shocked at the suggestion that they do not believe the Bible.

The word "infidelity" is the Anglicized form of the Latin infidelitas, through the French infidelité, meaning unfaithfulness. Infidelity is simply lack of faith. Now whoever has faith has Christ, for the text says that those who believe Christ receive Him: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." (Ephesians 3:17)

Therefore that man in whose heart Christ does not dwell as "the hope of glory," (Colossians 1:27) is an infidel, even though he be a professed Christian. "Know you not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be reprobates?" (2 Corinthians 13:5)

Instead of reviling those who do not profess to be anything except infidels, it becomes professed Christians to keep the exhortation of the Spirit, "Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith." (2 Corinthians 13:5)

Waiting to be Received

Jesus, "the faithful and true witness," says, "Behold I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." (Revelation 3:20)

How shall we open the door? Simply believe Him. If we believe Him, we receive Him. How often He has knocked, and we have sent word that we were "not at home." Let us no longer be false to our most faithful Friend. Let this day be our day to receive. "Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." (Hebrews 3:15)

From Servant to Son

When we receive the Lord Jesus, then He dwells in us. His presence transforms us. Remember that we receive Him by believing Him. We feed upon Him by taking the Word. "By the exceeding great and precious promises, [we become] partakers of the Divine nature." (2 Peter 1:4)

Thus it is that receiving Christ makes us sons. "If children, then heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." (Romans 8:17)

In the parable of the vineyard (Matthew 21:33-44), the servants slew the heir, in order that they might seize on the inheritance, and thereby they lost it and their own lives as well. If they had only known the day of their visitation, and had received the heir, they might have received the adoption of sons. "Wherefore you are no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." (Galatians 4:7)

How little those who reject Christ, in order to win the world, know what they are losing! In rejecting Him that they may win all, they lose all.

Born of God

Those who in simple faith receive the Lord thereby become sons of God. Not only are they called sons, but they are actually sons, since they are made "partakers of the Divine nature." (2 Peter 1:4) "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:13) "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides for ever." (1 Peter 1:23)

This receiving of the Word makes God our Father as actually as is the father by whom we were begotten according to the flesh. Just as our earthly parents transmitted to us their nature, so in the new birth God transmits to us His nature, and this is "renewed day by day," (2 Corinthians 4:16) while we believe it.

We are heirs of God himself, and therefore all that is His. With what joy, then, the true believer may sing:

Blessed assurance--Jesus is mine!
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God;
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.
--Fanny Crosby (1820-1915), Hymn: Blessed Assurance.

--Present Truth, December 12, 1895--John 1:10-13.

Chapter 9

The Word Made Flesh

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

We have already learned that the Word "was in the beginning with God, ... and the Word was God." (John 1:2,1)

Therefore when we are told that "the Word was made flesh" we know that it is the same as though it said, "God was made flesh."

This is most sacred ground, and no one should presume to think of it, much less to speak or write of it in any other language than that of the Scriptures itself. Untold evil has resulted from the attempt to define and explain God in human creeds.

Which Flesh? "All flesh is not the same flesh; but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fishes." (1 Corinthians 15:39)

Of course there is no chance for thought that the Word was made any other flesh than that of men; but the point to be noted is that there is but one flesh of man, so that when the Word was made flesh, He took a nature common to all man, high and low, rich and poor. "[He was] made of the seed of David according to the flesh." (Romans 1:8) "[He is] the Man Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 2:5)

The Nature of the Flesh

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like." (Galatians 5:19-21)

No man has any reason to despise another. Whenever we hear of a brutal crime, or see a man grossly degraded by sin, we may know that it is simply the natural working of the flesh which we share in common with him.

It needs this view before us, to enable us to comprehend the wonderful love that would lead the pure and holy God to come into such flesh. But this was the very flesh which the Word was made.

Yet Without Sin

Although the Word was made flesh, even our own sinful flesh, "[He was] full of grace and truth." (John 1:14) "[He was] in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." (Hebrews 4:15) "[God made Him] to be sin for us, [yet He] knew no sin." (2 Corinthians 5:21)

He was made to be sin, yet: "[He] did not sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." (1 Peter 2:22)

It is these two things combined that make Him a sympathizing Saviour, in whom we may freely confide. No one can sympathize with another's failings, if he has not been tempted in the same way.

Moreover, those who are guilty of any sin are the quickest and fiercest to condemn others for the same sin. Sinners excuse sin, but have no sympathy for fellow-sinners. It is only those who are cleansed from sin, who can exercise charity for the erring. Christ was tempted to the uttermost, and was always pure from the slightest taint of sin; therefore we may trust Him as one who knows and who cares.

Able to Help

"In all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He himself has suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted." (Hebrews 2:17-18)

And: "[He is] able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through Him." (Hebrews 7:25)

People sometimes imagine that because Christ never sinned, He cannot so fully sympathize with us in our sin; but that is just why He can. He knows the strength of temptation as no one else does, for He felt all the power of Satan.

The one upon whom the enemy exerts all his power in vain, knows the extent of that power more than the one does who yields to it. The man who pulls against the tide knows its strength better than the one who floats with it; and the man who successfully breasts the current knows its strength better than the one who is swept back by it. So Christ not only knows all our need, and cares for it, but He is able to deliver.

For Whose Benefit?

It is quite commonly assumed that the Word was made flesh in the person of Jesus of Nazareth eighteen hundred years ago, in order that He might learn man's condition and needs, and thus be able to sympathize with and help them. That this is a mistaken idea can be seen by a moment's reflection, as well as by plain statements of Scripture. The Psalmist says, "He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust." (Psalm 103:14)

Again, "O Lord, You have searched me, and known me. You know my downsitting and my uprising. You understand my thought afar off. You compass my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, You know it altogether." (Psalm 139:1-4)

It is He upon whom men must depend for a knowledge of themselves. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins." (Jeremiah 17:9) "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walks to direct his steps." (Jeremiah 10:23)

All this was as true eighteen hundred years before Christ as eighteen hundred years after. God knew men as well, and sympathized with them as much, four thousand years ago as He does today. When the children of Israel were in the wilderness, "In all their affliction He was afflicted." (Isaiah 63:9)

The prophet could say of a truth, seven hundred years before Christ, "Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." (Isaiah 53:4)

God was in Christ, not that He might know men, but in order that man might know that He does know them. In Jesus we learn how kind and sympathizing God has always been, and have an example of what He will do in any man who will fully yield to Him.

Still in the Flesh

"Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; And every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God." (1 John 4:2-3)

To confess Christ, it is not enough to believe that He once lived and suffered and died and rose again. We must confess not merely that He did come in the flesh, but that He "is come in the flesh." He is a present Saviour.

As in all the afflictions of the Israelites of old He was afflicted, so now: "We have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." (Hebrews 4:15)

He still feels everything that touches us, for He is still in the flesh. Even in the heavenly places. He is still "the Man Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 2:5)

He is our forerunner, that is, one of the brethren who has gone before to prepare a place for the rest. When He comes again, He will come in the flesh for His flesh did not see corruption and the same flesh that went into the grave also ascended to heaven. "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens that He might fill all things." (Ephesians 4:10)

In Every Man

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us;" (John 1:14) literally, "tabernacled in us." But since all human flesh is the same, and Christ took the flesh common to humanity, to show how closely God is identified with the human family, it

follows that He is in all, just to the extent that any will allow Him. Remember that "the life was the light of men, and that it ... lights every man that comes into the world." (John 1:4,9) "He is not far from everyone of us," (Acts 17:27) which means that He is very near to everyone of us, so near that: "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." (John 1:28)

The demonstration of the fact that the Word is in all flesh, is seen in that all know themselves to be sinners, and that even the wickedest men have at times prickings of conscience, and desires and even determinations to live better. This is the work of the Spirit, Christ's representative, striving with them.

Still further, we have the words of Moses, in Deuteronomy 30:11-14, quoted by the Apostle Paul in Romans 10:6-8. From these two texts we learn that "the Word" of which Moses speaks is Christ, the same Word of which John writes. (See the first article in this section, The Word of God--Present Truth, October 24, 1895) So we read, "The Word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart." (Romans 10:8)

This is not spoken to those who are perfect, but to those who are being exhorted to hear and do the commandments of God. "The Word is very near you, in your mouth, and in your heart, that you may do it." (Deuteronomy 30:14)

It is not there because we have done it, but in order that we may do it. Therefore it must be in every man, since God is no respecter of persons, desiring that all shall repent and live. Yet again we read, "Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know you not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be reprobates?" (2 Corinthians 13:5)

The reprobate is the one who is rejected as worthless. But God does not reject anyone who has not first rejected Him. He will never leave any man who has a desire for His presence. He does not leave men to themselves until they drive Him away. Christ, therefore, the Word who is God, is in every soul that comes into the world, lingering there until ordered out.

Confessing Christ

We have read that every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God. Now read once more Romans 10:6-8, which tells us that the Word, even Christ, is very near us, in our mouth, and in our heart, "But the righteousness which is of faith speaks on this wise, Say not in your heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what says it? The word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved." (Romans 10:6-9)

To confess Christ, therefore, is to acknowledge that He is in us with power, even the power of the resurrection, and that He has a right to be there, having purchased us by His death; and that means to yield ourselves to Him fully (for He will not use any force), that His life may be manifested in us in its perfection, and not fitfully in the intervals when we do not repress it. "In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." (Proverbs 3:6)

Then we may say, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20)

Free Course for the Word

We have read that the Word is very near us, in our mouth and in our heart, waiting for recognition. What is wanted is "That Christ may dwell in [the] heart by faith." (Ephesians 3:17) "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." (Romans 10:17)

If we hear the Word and believe it, then Christ, the Word, dwells in the heart by faith; and in those who believe it works effectually.

But in spite of the fact that the Word is living and active, powerful, it can do nothing in us contrary to our will, because it is love. Therefore upon us depends whether or not the Word shall work effectually in us.

So the Apostle Paul asked the brethren to pray for him and his companions, "that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you." (2 Thessalonians 3:1)

The Word is living water, and must be allowed unhindered flow, or else it ceases to be life to us.

Holding Back the Word

In Romans 1 we read of men who "hold the truth in unrighteousness." (Romans 1:18)

That does not say that they merely have the truth in unrighteousness, but that they hold it. It ought to be allowed to run; they hold it back. If that repressing is persisted in, the Spirit of the Word will finally be driven out, and the light that is in men will become darkness. But if we confess our sins, as the Word shows them to us, the Word of God will grow mightily, and prevail. "And many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed." (Acts 19:18-20)

The Practical Result

We have seen that Christ, the Word who is God, is inseparable from the written Word. If we believe the Scriptures, Christ dwells in the heart by faith. The mystery of God made flesh is to be repeated in us. "Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Colossians 1:27)

This is the mystery of the Gospel. Since Christ is in the Word, when it is received in faith, we have the Word made flesh, even our flesh, by yielding ourselves to do all the requirements of the Word. Christ said, "I delight to do your will, O my God; yea, your law is within my heart." (Psalm 40:8) "[He is] the same yesterday, and today, and for ever." (Hebrews 13:8)

Therefore if He dwells in our heart by faith, He will render in us the same obedience to the law that He did of old.

- The righteousness of the law will be fulfilled in us. "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." (Romans 8:4)

- We shall be doers of the Word, and not hearers only. "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." (James 1:22)

- Its precepts will be things of life, vitalizing our flesh. "My son, attend to my words; incline your ear unto my sayings. Let them not depart from your eyes; keep them in the midst of your heart. For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh." (Proverbs 4:20-22)

- We shall live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4)--Present Truth, December 19, 1895--John 1:14.

Chapter 10

And Yet Have Believed

What a joyous satisfaction the Apostle John takes in referring to the personal presence of the Saviour with himself and his fellow-disciples. In the 14th verse of the 1st chapter of his Gospel he says: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

In the 1st chapter of his first epistle he reiterates and amplifies the same thought with an added emphasis of feeling, born of years of meditation and experience, filled with a loving recurrence to the memories of his personal human association and fellowship with Jesus. With what joyful assurance he says, "We have seen with our eyes, ... we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life. The life was manifested and we have seen it, ... [it] was manifested to us. That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you. ... This then is the message that we have heard of Him, and declare unto you." (1 John 1:1-3,5)

To all those who read and hear these glad words of John is addressed that promise which Christ incorporated in His gentle rebuke to Thomas, "Blessed are they that have not seen; and yet have believed." (John 20:29)--Present Truth, July 23, 1896--John 1:14.

Chapter 11

Grace for Grace

Speaking of Christ the Word who was in the beginning with God, and who is God, the Creator of all things, the beloved disciple, His intimate friend, says by inspiration, "And of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace." (John 1:16)

Some versions give it, "grace upon the grace," or "grace instead of grace," all conveying the one idea that when God gives He simply adds to His own gifts. That is, God bestows good things upon us, not because we have done something to merit them, but because He has already given us good things.

There is no one who has not received much from the Lord: "He gives to all life, and breath, and all things." (Acts 17:25) "He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil." (Luke 6:35) "[He] gives to all men liberally, and upbraids not." (James 1:5)

Now the very fact that we all, no matter what our past life has been, have received gifts from the Lord, instead of indicating that we have no right to expect more from Him, gives us the strong claim upon Him. He gives for His own sake. He gives, not as payment for what we have done for Him, but as a reward for our willingly receiving what He has already given us.

Therefore when we begin to realize that even when we have been warring against God, He has been heaping good things upon us, and we exclaim, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" (Psalm 116:1)

The answer comes: "Take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord." (Psalm 116:3)

That is, if we would repay the Lord for His benefits to us, we can do nothing except take them as freely as He gives them, and ask for more. We say, "Lord, what shall I do to repay You for all your gifts?"

And He replies, "Take some more." "He delights in mercy." (Micah 7:18) "[He] has pleasure in the prosperity of His servant." (Psalm 35:7)

He gives us good things because He is good, and His nature can be satisfied only by doing good. Let no one, therefore, hesitate to call upon the Lord. Let not a sense of unworthiness cause you to fear to come before Him, for: "His mercy endures for ever." (Psalm 118:2)

Let us say, "I love the Lord because He has heard my voice and my supplications. Because He has inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live." (Psalm 116:1-2)--Present Truth, September 5, 1895--John 1:16.

Chapter 12

Christ and Moses

"For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." (John 1:17)

There seems to be a strange prejudice against Moses, on the part of a great number of professors of religion. If anything is quoted from his writings, the reply is, "Oh, that was written by Moses;" or, "That is in the law of Moses;" as though that fact were sufficient impeachment of its authority. Doubtless the reason for this prejudice is found in the text above quoted: "The law was given by Moses."

The prejudice against Moses is not against him primarily, but against the law, with which he was so closely associated. We do not find people taking exceptions to other portions of Scripture, on the ground of their authorship. Men do not say, "Oh, that was given by Paul," or, "That is in the writings of Jeremiah," when passages are cited from those writers. And the reason doubtless is that in the writings of Moses are found the things that most directly cut across the man's ideas and practices. "The law was given by Moses," (John 1:17) and therefore Moses is discredited. The law is not despised because Moses wrote it, but Moses is discredited because he wrote the law.

No matter what men may think of Moses and his writings, neither he nor they are in the least discredited in the Bible. To those who spoke slightingly of Moses, the Lord said, "Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all my house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold; wherefore then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" (Numbers 12:6-8)

Again, after the death of Moses, it is recorded, "There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, In all the signs and the wonders, which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, And in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses showed in the sight of all Israel." (Deuteronomy 34:10-12)

Almost the last word of the Old Testament refers to the very last days of the earth's history, when "the works that are therein shall be burned up," (2 Peter 3:10) and the righteous saved; and to the people at that time is given this exhortation: "Remember the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments." (Malachi 4:4)

And then Elijah the prophet is promised, to bring these things to remembrance so that utter destruction may not come upon the earth. The above text presents the fact that the law of Moses is not something that originated with him. "Remember the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel." (Malachi 4:4)

Throughout the books of Moses we find the teaching prefaced thus, "And the Lord said unto Moses." Accordingly Moses said to the children of Israel, "Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do so in the land where you go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." (Deuteronomy 4:5-6)

So we find that Moses, like all the other prophets, spoke only the words of the Lord. He made no claims for himself, and nothing originated with him. It is customary to speak of him as a great legislator, but he was such only because he acted as the mouthpiece of the Lord.

The law was given by Moses in the same way that precepts were given by the other prophets, and by the apostles. Peter said that he himself wrote, "That you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour." (2 Peter 3:2)

But the Apostle Paul said, "The things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." (1 Corinthians 14:37)

He thanked God that the Thessalonians received the word which he preached, not as the word of men, "but as it is in truth, the word of God." (1 Thessalonians 2:3)

The apostles did not give commandments on their own authority, but from God.

While the Lord spoke the ten commandments with His own voice, in the hearing of all the people, the details of the law were communicated to them only through Moses. He it was who wrote them in a book, for the permanent use of the people (for none could look upon the tables of stone in the ark); and to him we are indebted for a knowledge even of the fact that they were ever spoken by the Lord.

To throw discredit upon Moses, is to throw discredit upon Christ. The Lord spoke thus unto Moses, concerning Christ, "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto you, and will put my words in His mouth; and He shall speak unto them all that I shall command Him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which He shall speak in my name, I will require it of him." (Deuteronomy 18:18-19)

And Christ said to those who did not believe Him, but who professed to believe Moses, "Had you believed Moses, you would have believed me; for he wrote of me. But if you believed not his writings, how shall you believe my words?" (John 5:46-47)

So whoever slights Moses, thereby rejects Christ.

Grace and Truth

Turn again to the statement that the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. That is not an intimation that there is a contrast between the law and the truth, for the law is the truth, as we read, "Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and your law is the truth." (Psalm 119:142)

The contrast is between the power of Moses, and that of Christ. The contrast is the same that would be between Christ and any other man than Moses. The greatest man that ever lived is only a man, while Christ is God, having life in himself.

In order to get the full force of the words which we have quoted from the 1st of John, we should read from the fourteenth verse to the eighteenth. With these connect the first verse. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His

glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth. And of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." (John 1:1,14-18)

Neither Moses nor any other men can put truth in the hearts of men. The righteousness of God is that which we are exhorted to seek: "But seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matthew 6:33)

And that righteousness is expressed in the law of God: "My righteousness is near; my salvation is gone forth, and my arms shall judge the people; the isles shall wait upon me, and on my arm shall they trust. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished. Hearken unto me, you that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear not the reproach of men, neither be afraid of their revilings." (Isaiah 51:5-7)

Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. Men may preach, but He alone can put the righteousness and truth of God into the hearts and lives of men.

The law was given by Moses; but although the law is righteousness and truth, no man ever yet obtained righteousness and truth from the law. All the law can do is to tell us what we ought to do; but it does not work out its own requirements for us, and in us.

It is a grand thing to declare the law to men; it is a most wonderful thing to be used as a speaker for God, to declare His word faithfully; but the best man who ever lived could not save a single soul. "But grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." (Psalm 119:142)

Remember that the law is the truth. "Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and your law is the truth." (Psalm 119:142)

So the law comes by Jesus Christ, but it comes with grace.

He says that the law is in His heart: "Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do your will, O my God: yea, your law is within my heart." (Psalm 40:7-8), so that when He dwells in the heart by faith "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God." (Ephesians 3:17-19), the law is necessarily there; and thus the truth is in the inward parts, as the Lord desires "Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom." (Psalm 51:6) Moreover since in Him is life "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men." (John 1:4), it is manifest that when the law comes into us in Christ, it is life to us. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." (Romans 8:2)

Christ is the declaration of God. The exhortation to us is, "Be you therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matthew 5:48)

God says, "Be you holy, for I am holy." (1 Peter 1:16)

But no man has seen God at any time, and therefore how can we know how to be holy as He is holy? "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." (John 1:18)

Christ is in the bosom of the Father. That is His home. He is with God, because He is God. All the attributes of the Godhead are His, "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." (Colossians 2:9) "And of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace." (John 1:16)

That is, in Christ all the fullness of God is conveyed to us "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God." (Ephesians 3:17-19), and consequently all the righteousness of God.

Now it is evident that no man, however good, could do this for us, because in the first place no man can have any goodness except what is necessary for himself, and, in the second place, no man can live in another. No man can live another's life for him.

Only Christ, who gave himself for us, and who is able to live in us, can bring into our lives the righteousness of God, making His life our own.

Grace and Truth from the Beginning

And now comes the most important question,

- When did grace and truth come by Jesus Christ?

- At what particular time in the history of the world does Christ bring the righteousness of the law into the hearts of believers?

- Is it only since His first advent, and His resurrection?

- Did God lay upon men before Christ came, the burden of getting righteousness out of the law by their own efforts, and only since His crucifixion give to men the blessing of righteousness through Christ?

What says the Scripture? The 1st chapter of John is sufficient to settle the matter for us. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. ... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. ... And of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." (John 1:1-4,14,16-18)

What is the Word? The Word was God. Who is the Word? Christ is the Word. When was the Word? "In the beginning was the Word." (John 1:1)

How far back does that reach? "But you, Bethlehem Ephratah, though you be little among the thousands of Judah, and yet out of you shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth has been from of old, from the days of eternity." (Micah 5:2,margin)

Where is Christ always? "[He] is in the bosom of the Father." (John 1:18)

What always dwells in Him? He is always "full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

The law is ever in His heart: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever." (Hebrews 13:8)

What then is the necessary conclusion? Simply this, that there has never been a time since the existence of man, when the righteousness of the law could not be fulfilled in everyone who would allow Christ to dwell in his heart by faith.

The Entering of the Law

But let us particularize. We will take the days of Moses, and the very time of the giving of the law. Surely if we can find that the righteousness of the law came through Christ then, and through Him only, the question will be settled for all time. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." (John 1:17)

Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit, said of Moses, "This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the Angel which spoke to him in the mount Sinai, and with our fathers; who received the lively oracles given unto us." (Acts 7:38)

The Angel that spoke to Moses in the mount Sinai was the Angel in whom is the Name of God, even the Lord Jesus Christ. "Behold, I send an Angel before you, to keep you in the way, and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. Beware of Him, and obey His voice, provoke Him not; for He will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in Him. But if you shall indeed obey His voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto your enemies, and an adversary unto your adversaries. For my Angel shall go before you, and bring you in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites: and I will cut them off." (Exodus 23:20-23)

That angel was to go before the children of Israel, and lead them into the promised land; and we read that: "They drank of that spiritual Rock that followed [went with] them; and that Rock was Christ." (1 Corinthians 10:4) "The law was ordained by angels in the hand of a Mediator." (Galatians 3:19)

And there is but "one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 2:5)

Christ, therefore, was in Mount Sinai, and gave the law to Moses, to give to the people. "Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; that as sin has reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 5:20-21)

The law could only make sin to appear "exceeding sinful": "Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." (Romans 7:13) "By the law is the knowledge of sin." (Romans 3:20)

Therefore the giving of the law could only make prominent the sins which already existed by the law. "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law." (1 Corinthians 15:56)

The law makes sin to abound, not because the law is sin, but because it is the declaration of perfect righteousness. "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." (Romans 5:20)

Where does sin abound? Where the law is. Where was the law? It was most emphatically at Sinai. Then when was sin made to abound? Most certainly at Sinai. But what superabounds wherever sin abounds? "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." (Romans 5:20)

Then what was in infinite abundance at Sinai? The grace of God, which is by Jesus Christ. And what does grace do? "By grace are you saved." (Ephesians 2:8) "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us,

by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." (Titus 3:5-7)

So we find that in the very giving of the law, by which is the knowledge of sin, the grace of God which brings salvation from sin, was present. For Christ was there, the giver of the law to Moses, and He is always full of grace. Grace and truth come by Jesus Christ.

Very forcible are the words of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians concerning this matter. He says that: "God has made us sufficient to be ministers of the new covenant; not of the letter, but of the Spirit: for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." (2 Corinthians 3:6)

Men are associated with Christ in the work of salvation: "As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God." (2 Corinthians 5:20) "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." (Colossians 1:29)

God does the work, the apostle says of his desire to "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also labor, striving according to His working, which works in me mightily." (Colossians 1:28-29)

Ministration of Death and Life

Following on in the 3rd of the 2 Corinthians, we find the apostle making a contrast between the ministration of death and the ministration of life; the ministration of the condemnation, and the ministration of the righteousness.

The law was death, and so it is still to every sinner. Moses ministered only the law to the people, and therefore his was the ministry of death. Yet it was with glory, for as he talked to the people the skin of his face shone so that they could not bear to look upon it. "The ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away." (2 Corinthians 3:7) "And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in

Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses knew not that the skin of his face shone while He talked with him. And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him. And Moses called unto them; and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him: and Moses talked with them. And afterward all the children of Israel came nigh: and he gave them in commandment all that the Lord had spoken with him in mount Sinai. And till Moses had done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face. But when Moses went in before the Lord to speak with Him, he took the veil off, until he came out. And he came out, and spoke unto the children of Israel that which he was commanded. And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone: and Moses put the veil upon his face again, until he went in to speak with him." (Exodus 34:29-35)

But the ministration of the righteousness was there also, for Christ was there in His glory, with grace "according to the riches of His glory." (Ephesians 3:16)

So we read, "Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech; And not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished; But their minds were blinded; for until this day remains the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ." (2 Corinthians 3:12-14)

The veil over the face of Moses was indicative of the veil that was over their hearts. If their hearts had not been veiled by unbelief, he would not have needed to veil his face from them. "Which veil is done away in Christ." (2 Corinthians 3:14)

Not now merely, but whenever the heart turns to the Lord. It was at that very time done away in Christ. For Moses, "[who] endured as seeing Him who is invisible," (Hebrews 11:27) and who talked with God face to face, did so without a veil over his face. He took the veil off when he went into the mount to talk with the Lord. That which was possible for Moses, was possible for all the people, if they had possessed the same faith that he did. For read what the apostle says further: "Now the Lord is that Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Corinthians 3:17-18)

Instead of "open face," read "unveiled face," as in the Revised Version, and the thought is preserved, for the references to the face of Moses, which was veiled.

The veil, however, as we have seen, was on account of the children of Israel. Moses put a veil on his face, to save them the trouble of putting veils on all their faces. It was the same as if all the people had veils upon their faces.

For himself no veil was necessary, for He talked with the Lord with unveiled face. Now that the veil was significant of the unbelief that was in their hearts, and was made necessary because of that unbelief, we learn definitely from the next chapter, in which the apostle says: "If our Gospel is veiled, it is veiled in them that are perishing; In whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them." (2 Corinthians 4:3-4,RV)

The veil, therefore, is unbelief, and that was the great trouble with the Israelites. "And to whom did He swear that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief." (Hebrews 3:18-19) "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." (Hebrews 4:1-2)

Christ was with them, "full of grace and truth," (John 1:14) but they did not believe, and consequently they were not saved. Moses believed, and he entered into close communion with the Lord, and his face was transformed by the heavenly glory. If they had believed, then they could have viewed the glory of the face of Moses, and even greater glory, for the progress is "from glory to glory," (2 Corinthians 3:18) in an increasing measure. What is the glory of God? It is His righteousness: "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)

Sinning is coming short of the glory of God; therefore righteousness is the attainment of His glory. In the account of the first miracle that Jesus performed after He began His earthly ministry, we read, "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory." (John 2:21)

This miracle, like all others that He did, was one of helpfulness. It was done for the purpose of supplying need. Therefore we learn that the glory of God is manifested in helping the needy. The glory of God is shown in His grace. So John says of the Word which dwelt among us, "We beheld His glory, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

Those who are made children of God, are "To the praise of the glory of His grace." (Ephesians 1:6)

Therefore the glory of God which transfigured the face of Moses, was an indication of the change in character that would be effected by the glory of His grace, in all who believe.

Moses himself received the law not only in his hands, but in his heart, through the grace of Christ, with whom he conversed in the mount. If the children of Israel had possessed the same faith, they also would have found the same grace and truth by Jesus Christ. Then Moses would have been as much a minister of the new covenant as anyone can be.

Not all the Israelites were unbelieving. There were seventy elders who were permitted to see the glory of God, and they at least would be able to look upon the face of Moses. So God made him, as well as the apostles, sufficient to minister the grace of life.

In closing, note that fact that the law was ordained "in the hand of a Mediator," (Galatians 3:19) namely, Christ, who is the "one Mediator between God and men." (1 Timothy 2:5)

What does that signify? Simply that although the law in itself is death to any man, God did not leave men to deal with it alone. He did not give the law to them by Moses, simply, leaving them to meet it face to face in their own strength; He gave it to them in Christ, in whom it is life, if they would but receive Him.

Christ receives the curse of the law again himself, and passes the blessing of it along to all who believe in Him. He takes the death sting from it, so that in Him it becomes "The law of the Spirit of life." (Romans 8:2)

The law is in the heart of Christ: "I delight to do your will, O my God: yea, your law is within my heart." (Psalm 40:8) "Out of the heart are the issues of life." (Proverbs 4:23)

Therefore the life of Christ is the law of God. It is not a substitute for the law of God, but it is the very law of God. His life on earth was the manifestation of the law as life; it was a specimen of the life which He will live in everyone who will receive Him. He does not change. "[He is] the same yesterday, and today, and for ever." (Hebrews 13:8)

Therefore His life today is the same that it was eighteen hundred years ago.

Looking to Sinai we see a statement of the law of which Christ is the Mediator; looking to Judea we see the same law in action; and looking to Calvary we see the life flowing for us, by means of which the law may dwell in us.

He is the Mediator of the new covenant, to write the law in the hearts of men; for He dwells in the heart by His Spirit, and thus becomes the Medium through whom the righteousness of the law is wrought out in men.--Present Truth, November 30, 1893--John 1:17.

Chapter 13

Knowing the Certainty

The beginning of the book of Luke is on this wise: "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto you in order, most excellent Theophilus, That you might know the certainty of those things, wherein you have been instructed." (Luke 1:1-4)

In the Revised Version the third verse is slightly different, thus: "It seemed good to me also, having traced the course of all things accurately from the first, to write unto you." (Luke 1:3)

It is most certain that Luke himself was not an eyewitness of all the things which he narrates, for he begins back before the birth of John the Baptist, and relates the story of his birth, as well as that of Jesus. He also tells the details of the temptation in the wilderness, of the transfiguration, and of many other things which occurred when he could not have been present. Therefore his "perfect understanding of all things from the very first," (Luke 1:3) was not through personal acquaintance with the events as they occurred. If we take the reading of the Revision: "Having traced the course of all things accurately from the first," (Luke 1:3) to mean that he had compared and sifted the different accounts, then we throw discredit upon his narrative; for how could Theophilus or we ourselves have the certainty of our knowledge increased by the narrative of one who himself received it second hand?

What shall we do, then? Shall we doubt the accuracy of the Gospel of Luke? Not by any means. We shall take the most consistent course, namely, to believe that he received his knowledge by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, which is really what he himself claims.

It is a fact, which the one who reads only English can verify by consulting Young's Analytical Concordance, that the Greek word which is rendered in the common version

by, "from the very first," and in the Revision by, "from the first," may properly be rendered, as it often is, by the words, "from above."

In the following texts the words italicized are from the same word that is used in Luke 1:3. The reader will see that in these cases no other rendering would be admissible. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above." (James 1:17) "This wisdom descends not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish." (James 3:15) "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." (James 3:17) "Jesus answered, You could have no power at all against me, except it were given you from above." (John 19:11) "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again [from above], he cannot see the kingdom of God. ... Marvel not that I said unto you, You must be born again [from above]." (John 3:3,8)

In the last two texts the marginal reading is "from above," the same as in the others. It is true that the word which is thus rendered occurs in one case in the Bible, where it must mean, "from the beginning," namely in Acts 26:5 "Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee." (Acts 26:5); but the texts above quoted are sufficient to show that "from above" is a perfectly proper rendering. There is nothing whatever to forbid its being so rendered in Luke 1:3, thus: "It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from above, to write unto you in order, most excellent Theophilus, That you might know the certainty of those things wherein you have been instructed." (Luke 1:3-4)

This is not only allowable, but is the only really consistent rendering. It is only from above that one can receive "perfect understanding" of anything, and especially of such things as Luke narrates; and it is only by wisdom "from above" that we can have certain knowledge of the truth of those things.

Luke simply states the fact that he wrote by inspiration of the Spirit, which alone can make us "know the certainty" of those things which we believe.--Present Truth, January 18, 1894--Timeline: Nativity-1 (The Announcement to Zacharias)--Luke 1:1-4.

Chapter 14

Power of Elijah

The angel Gabriel said of John the Baptist: "Many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." (Luke 1:16-17)

When we think of the power of Elijah our minds rest on the wonderful miracles that were wrought by him. He shut up and opened heaven, brought down fire, divided the waters of the river, and raised the dead.

John "did no miracle," yet all the power that Elijah had was manifested in him. In what way? In the word that he preached. The power of God is not always shown in what are commonly called miracles.

He who has the word of God dwelling in him, has the miracle by which alone all miracles were ever performed.--Present Truth, February 1, 1894--Timeline: Nativity-1 (The Announcement to Zacharias)--Luke 1:16-17.

Chapter 15

Two Questions

When the angel Gabriel appeared to Zacharias in the temple, and told him that his wife Elisabeth should have a son, who should be great in the sight of the Lord, being filled with the Holy Ghost, and who should turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, Zacharias said: "Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years." (Luke 1:18)

For this question he was made dumb, and was unable to speak until after the birth of the son.

Six months later the same angel came to Mary, in Nazareth, and told her that she should bring forth a son, who should be named Jesus, who should be great, and should be called the Son of the Highest, and that He should reign for ever over a kingdom that should have no end. Immediately Mary asked, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" (Luke 1:34)

No reproof was given for this question, but it was answered at once.

Why were these two questions so differently received? Evidently because they were prompted by entirely different motives. This plainly appears when we closely consider them.

Zacharias said, "Whereby shall I know this?" showing that he doubted the message. He wanted proof of the words of the angel of the Lord. He was punished for unbelief.

Mary's question, on the other hand, showed that she fully believed the message, but that she wanted further information. She said, "How shall this be?" She believed, but wanted to know what part, if any, she had to act in the matter, and her desire for more light was granted.

In these two cases we have illustrated two classes of questions that are asked:

1. There are many questions that show unbelief as fully as could be done by any positive statement. Such questions are wicked and ought never to be asked, as God does not answer them.

2. There are other questions that show the desire of a believing soul to receive more light and knowledge. Such questions always receive an answer from the Lord.

The promise is that: "If any lack wisdom, and ask for it in faith, it shall be given them." (James 1:5)--Present Truth, August 17, 1893--Original title: Front Page--Timeline: Nativity-1 (The Announcement to Zacharias), 2 (The Annunciation)--Luke 1:18, 34.

Chapter 16

Highly Favored

When the angel Gabriel came to the virgin Mary, to announce to her that she should be the mother of Jesus, he said, "Hail, you that are highly favored, the Lord is with you." (Luke 1:28)

Who would not be glad of such a salutation as that? Well, the blessedness of it is that these words are addressed to us,--to each one who reads these lines. We need not give them all away to the virgin Mary. Let us see if this is not so.

Favor is grace. Both words, as they are found in the English New Testament, are from the same Greek word. The margin of the Revised Version has, as an equivalent for "highly favored": "...endued with grace."

Now let us not forget that the grace or favor of God is not bestowed upon us because of our goodness, but to save us. The grace of God brings salvation. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by His grace." (Romans 3:23-24)

It was while we were dead in trespasses and sins, that the great love of God was shown in saving us by His grace. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ, (by grace you are saved;) And has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." (Ephesians 2:4-8) "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." (Titus 3:3-7)

And so it is true of us, that we are highly favored. "[God has] blessed us with all spiritual blessings ... in Christ." (Ephesians 1:3)

We turn again to the margin of Luke 1:28, and find the reading "graciously accepted." The angel said, "Hail, you that are graciously accepted." (Luke 1:28)

That is true of us also, for we read that: "[God] made us accepted in the beloved," (Ephesians 1:6) endued us with grace. The Lord says to us, "O Israel, return to the Lord your God, for you have fallen by your iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord; say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously." (Hosea 14:12)

Thus we learn that our finding favor with God, or being graciously accepted by Him, is not because of our righteousness. He accepts us in order that He may give us goodness. God has highly favored each one of us, in common with all mankind.

There are thousands of people who would think themselves the most highly favored mortals on earth, if Queen Victoria should take special notice of them, and especially if she should make them her special personal care.

But God has done that very thing to each one of us. We are favored with His own personal presence and protection. Happy are they who have, through faith in His word, come to a consciousness of the fact, so that they can say that they have found favor.

No Special Favorites

In spite of the scriptures quoted in the preceding article, or rather, through ignorance of them, we are prone to think that Mary was highly favored because she was sinless. If that were true, then there would be no message to me in the angel's word to her. But, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)

And this includes Mary as well as me. What a subtle scheme of the devil's to undermine the faith and hope of sinners, is that dogma of the immaculate conception of the virgin Mary. It takes all the hope and joy for many thousands of people, out of that angelic message. How glad I am to know that this dogma is a doctrine of the devil, and that, sinner as I am, God has graciously accepted me as He did Mary.

It is natural for people to feel somewhat bitter towards those who are partial in their dealing, or whom they suspect of being so. Therefore people who did not know the Lord any better than to suppose that He has His special favorites, feel rebellious toward Him, and stubbornly repel His advances. They think that He is altogether such a one as themselves. "God is no respecter of persons." (Acts 10:34)

He does not choose out a few persons, and shower favors upon them, and turn a cold shoulder to others, as not being in that exclusive "set." All such action on the part of men is utterly opposed to the wisdom from above, which is "without partiality": "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." (James 3:17)

There is no partiality with God. He is willing and anxious to do for every man all that He has ever done for any man, yea, all that He does for His only begotten Son.--Present Truth, January 25, 1894--Timeline: Nativity-2 (The Annunciation)--Luke 1:28.

Chapter 17

The Lord is With You

"The Lord is with you." (Luke 1:28)

These were the words the angel Gabriel used in his greeting to Mary. Could he say the same to us? He could, for the Lord has said it. "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matthew 28:20)

Long before the angel appeared to Mary, the Lord had said, "Fear not; for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you; yea, I will help you; yea, I will uphold you with the right hand of my righteousness." (Isaiah 41:10)

So we may be sure that the Lord is with us now and always. He says, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5)

The birth of Jesus of the virgin Mary, was in fulfillment of a prophecy, referred to in Matthew. It said, "A virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." (Matthew 1:23)

Jesus, then, is "God with us." So that the very words to Mary, "God is with you," are the assurance to us that the Lord is with us. The Lord was with her, in order that He might be with us.

If we believe the words of the angel, as addressed to Mary, we must believe that they mean us as well.--Present Truth, January 25, 1894--Timeline: Nativity-2 (The Annunciation)--Luke 1:28.

Chapter 18

How Shall This Be?

When the angel said to Mary that she should bring forth a son, even Jesus, she asked, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" (Luke 1:34)

It was not a question of unbelief; she did not doubt but that it would be done, but she wished to know how it was to be brought about, so that she might know what was expected of her in the matter. The angel replied, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon you, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you; therefore that holy thing which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God." (Luke 1:35)

Here again we find ourselves on common ground with Mary. Jesus said to His disciples, including us, "Behold I send the promise of my Father upon you." (Luke 24:49)

This was the promise to pour out His Spirit upon all flesh. The Spirit is the power of the Highest, and Jesus told them to wait in Jerusalem for it, or until they were endued with power from on high. He tells us also that God will give the Holy Spirit to as many as ask Him. "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" (Luke 11:13)

The Holy Ghost came on Mary with power, in order that she might bring forth Jesus. The Spirit comes upon us in order that its fruit may be seen in us, namely, "Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance." (Galatians 5:22-23)

The power by which all these graces are to be developed, and their opposites repressed, is the power by which Jesus was born of the virgin Mary.

But what could she do to bring the event about, or to help it along? Just nothing, but submit. She could not do anything to bring it about, but she could have stopped it altogether, by not being willing to submit. Her part was willingly to yield to the power.

Notice that this power by which Jesus was born of the virgin Mary, and by which Christ is to be formed in us the hope of glory, is the same power by which the work of creation was wrought. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light; and there was light." (Genesis 1:1-3)

The creation was effected by the Spirit and word of God. By that same power was Christ begotten of the virgin. Mary said, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to your word." (Luke 1:38)

All she had to do was to be willing for the word of the Lord to accomplish its purpose, and to be fulfilled. So with us; yielding to the word of God, will result in its truths being brought forth in our lives.

Whoever yields without reserve to every word that he finds in the Bible, being perfectly willing that every precept and requirement shall be fulfilled in him, will have wrought in him a work equal to that of creating the heavens and the earth. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:10)--Present Truth, January 25, 1894--Timeline: Nativity-2 (The Annunciation)--Luke 1:34.

Chapter 19

Celebrating Christ's Birth

Many people think that it is almost infidelity, or even sacrilege, not to celebrate the birthday of Christ, even though no man has the slightest knowledge of the day or the month when it occurred. They would ask, "Shall we not devote at least one day in the year to thinking of the miraculous birth of the Saviour?"

We would reply, not one day only, but every day. Let us see how this may be. The birth of Jesus was by the Holy Spirit. The angel said to Mary, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon you, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you; therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God." (Luke 1:35)

By that same Spirit's power Christ dwells in the hearts of all who believe. The Apostle Paul prayed to God for us, "That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man, That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." (Ephesians 3:16-17)

That is the only way that we can have real life, for Christ is our life: "Christ, who is our life." (Colossians 3:4)

Christ in us is the hope of glory: "Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Colossians 1:27)

Now the birth of Christ is nothing to anyone in whom His birth is not repeated. Indeed, he in whom Christ's life has not sprung up, does not know of a certainty that He was ever born, and that He was crucified and raised. These things are known only by faith, and faith brings the life of Christ into our mortal bodies. No one can certainly know anything about Christ's birth, if he does not know Christ himself; and we know Him only by His life. "And this is life eternal, that they might know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent." (John 17:3) "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and

heard declare we unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." (1 John 1:1-3)

"And we know that the Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." (1 John 5:20)

The birth of Christ, therefore, can be known and celebrated only through the new birth. But this is not accomplished once for all. That is to say, the new birth is not an event of one hour or one day, to be ever after looked back upon and celebrated. "Whosoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." (1 John 5:1)

Note that he is born while he is believing. The new birth is complete only as it is continually progressing. To this end are the words of the Apostle Paul, in: "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." (2 Corinthians 4:10-11)

Here we have Christ formed within, the real life of Christ. Now read, "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." (2 Corinthians 4:16)

He in whose heart Christ's life is not daily renewed, cannot celebrate His birth, because he knows nothing about it. The birth of Christ is not a thing of memory, but of present experience. We commemorate it not by observing days, but by putting on the new man, "which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him." (Colossians 3:10)--Present Truth, December 28, 1893--Timeline: Nativity-2 (The Annunciation)--Luke 1:35.

Chapter 20

The Word of Power

When the angel Gabriel announced to Mary the coming birth of Jesus, and how it was to be brought about, he said, "No word from God shall be void of power." (Luke 1:37,RV)

Every word of God is living, and active; every word is life, so that man may live by every word that comes from the mouth of God. Therefore the Lord says: "As the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and returns not there, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goes forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." (Isaiah 55:10-11)

His word cannot return to Him void, because it is power and life; it will produce life, just a surely as the rain causes the earth to bring forth fruit. Therefore all that ministers and teachers of the Gospel have to do, is to let the word of God dwell in them, so that they can speak it, and God will see that it reaches those who need it. "He that has my word, let him speak my word faithfully. Is not my word like as a fire? says the Lord; and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?" (Jeremiah 23:28-29)--Present Truth, December 28, 1893--Timeline: Nativity-2 (The Annunciation)--Luke 1:37.

Chapter 21

All Things Possible

"With God nothing shall be impossible." (Luke 1:37) "Ah Lord God! behold, You have made the heaven and the earth by your great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for You." (Jeremiah 32:17)

Knowing this fact, we may with confidence obey the exhortation: "Commit your way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass." (Psalm 37:5)

And yet we often hear men say, "I know I ought to serve the Lord, but it is impossible. I should like to keep the Sabbath, but it is impossible in my circumstances."

Such words come from lack of confidence in God's power to work in us to will and to do His good pleasure, whenever we yield to His will. Or it may be from a secret fear that if we do yield to Him He will bring it to pass.

When the father of the afflicted child cried out in agony to the Lord, "If You can do anything, have compassion on us, and help us," (Mark 9:22,RV)

Jesus exclaimed, "If you can!" (Mark 9:23) to show him that a doubt as to the Lord's power to do whatever He pleased was not to be entertained for a moment, and then added, "all things are possible to him that believes." (Mark 9:23)

Some people take refuge under the rendering of the old version, "If you can believe," and say that it is impossible for them to believe. But that is not true. "God has dealt to every man the measure of faith," (Romans 12:3) by revealing His own faithfulness. No man has ever yet known God to lie, and therefore it is easy to believe Him. His faithfulness is written in the heavens: "Your mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and your faithfulness reaches unto the clouds." (Psalm 36:5)

It was impossible for the children of Israel to cross the Red Sea; but by faith in God they passed through it as on dry land. It was impossible for them to take Jericho; but by faith the walls of Jericho fell. So let those who have difficult duties to perform remember those "Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness,

obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong," (Hebrews 11:33-34) and remember that the same God who worked in them is as powerful today as He ever was.--The Present Truth, June 13, 1895--Original Title: Front Page--Timeline: Nativity-2 (The Annunciation)--Luke 1:37 .

Chapter 22

The Son of the Highest

When the angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she should have a Son, whose name should be Jesus, Saviour, he said of Him: "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: And He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end." (Luke 1:32-33)

There are many who adore Jesus as the great and mighty Son of the Highest, who do not experience the joy and blessedness that they should from the knowledge of His greatness, because they adore Him as one far off, separated from them by infinite space, and not as One near at hand, a personal companion.

But while He is the Son of the Highest, He is the Son of man, and it is as such that He always referred to himself.

Christ is not to be worshiped as the heathen worship their gods. The heathen set their gods upon a pedestal, and think of them as enjoying themselves together apart from men, and having no interest in common with them.

It is true that they attribute all human passions to their gods, but all these emotions are for their own kind, and not for men. No heathen ever thinks of his god as a being who loves him or has any manner of sympathy with him; the god is to him a being whose anger is to be appeased, or at the best, whose indifference is to be overcome, and his favor bought.

But Christ appears among men first of all as man. His appearance in the world was as a babe in Bethlehem, "born of a woman, born under the law." (Galatians 4:4,RV) "[He] was born of the seed of David according to the flesh." (Romans 1:3)

It is "the throne of His father David," (Luke 1:32) that is to be given Him. His greatness is in His humility: "Being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross. Wherefore also God

highly exalted Him, and gave Him the name which is above every name." (Philippians 2:8-9,RV)

It was not for His own sake that Christ, the Word, who was in the beginning with God, and who was God, came to this earth. It was not to win anything for himself, for as God all creation was His.

But man had lost his dominion of glory and honor which he had in the beginning as the son of the Highest. So in order to win back for man that which he had lost, He became Man, and it is now as Man, as the seed of David according to the flesh, that He is made great, and called the Son of the Highest.

Remember this, it is as a Man, the Son of man, as "the Man Christ Jesus," (1 Timothy 2:5) that He occupies His high position; not as a unique specimen, but as the representative Man, our Forerunner. "He died for all." (2 Corinthians 5:15)

And what He won is for all. "He [is] the firstborn among many brethren," (Romans 8:29) all of whom through the grace of God have equal rights with himself. "The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God; And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." (Romans 8:16-17)

Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God. He is the One Man who is entitled to be called the Son of the Highest. But coming in the flesh as the seed of David, the Son of man, He has in His flesh abolished the enmity that separated man from God the Father, "That He might create in himself of the twain one new man, so making peace. ... For through Him we both have access in one Spirit unto the Father." (Ephesians 2:15,18)

There is only one Man, "the Man Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 2:5)

But in the faith and knowledge of the Son of God, we who have fallen, and have lost the Divine image, may attain "unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." (Ephesians 4:13)

Then in Him we also shall be great, and shall be called sons of the Highest, and shall reign with Him for ever and ever. God, who raised Christ from the dead, "and set

Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion," (Ephesians 1:20-21) because of "His great love wherewith He loved us, ... has made us alive together with Christ, And has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Ephesians 2:4-6) "He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree." (Luke 1:52)

In His hand is power and might, and in His hand it is to make great, and to give strength to all. "Both riches and honor come of You, and You reign over all; and in your hand is power and might; and in your hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all." (1 Chronicles 29:12) "You have also given me the shield of your salvation; and your right hand has held me up, and your condescension has made me great." (Psalm 18:35,RV) "With His stripes we are healed." (Isaiah 53:5)

Because He humbled himself we are made great; for if we accept Him as the sharer of our humiliation. He will acknowledge us as sharers of His greatness. Then let us gladly accept Him and worship Him as the Fountain of Life. "Not now afar, but near."--Horatius Bonar, Hymns of Faith and Hope, "Bathed in Unfallen Sunlight," 1861.

--Present Truth, December 15, 1898--Timeline: Nativity-2 (The Annunciation), 3 (Mary's Visit to Elisabeth)--Luke 1:32-52.

Chapter 23

Visited and Redeemed

When Zacharias, filled with the Holy Ghost, prophesied at the birth of John the Baptist, he said, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He has visited and redeemed His people." (Luke 1:68)

John's message was to prepare the way of the Lord. It is specifically prophesied of in Isaiah: "The voice of him that cries in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it." (Isaiah 40:3-5)

Further on it says, "Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him: behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him." (Isaiah 40:10)

The work which John began, therefore, was not only to prepare people for the first advent of Christ, but was to continue until the Lord should come with strong arm to redeem, bringing His reward with Him. "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." (Revelation 22:12)

So the same work is still going on. "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed." (Isaiah 40:5)

And we have it revealed to us now in the things which God has made. The everlasting Gospel is but a call to worship Him that made heaven and earth and all things. The light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon all men.

Then we may say the same thing which Zacharias spoke by the Spirit, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He has visited and redeemed His people." (Luke 1:68)

Anyone can say, "He has visited me, and redeemed me." "We have redemption through His blood [in] the forgiveness of sins;" (Ephesians 1:7) because the blood of

Christ stands for the life of Christ. We have redemption through His life, for He gave His life a ransom for many. "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:28)

When did He visit us? Long He has been saying to everyone, "Behold I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." (Revelation 3:20)

He is a welcome visitor, too, because He brings His provision with Him, when we have nothing. When we say continually, "Lord, abide with us," "But they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went in to tarry with them." (Luke 24:29) He does abide. He will stay as long as we are willing to have Him, and His presence is life and redemption. This is as really true today as when Zacharias spoke; and whoever believes it must be as happy over it as he was.

Redeemed! A slave set free! It requires no great stretch of imagination to see how a slave, a captive, driven, scourged, and bound, would feel with his fetters removed, and his freedom given to him. He would be a happy man. He would not receive the news of freedom stoically, and with a long face--not if he believed the message. His heart would be so full he would leap for joy.

The Lord wants us to rejoice; not because we think we ought to rejoice, but because we have so vivid a sense of His redemption that we know it to be a fact. We have been captives of a cruel master, and now we are redeemed. We know it because the Lord says so. He has bought us, and given us His own life.

Now when the enemy comes in the form of doubt, in the form of indifference, envy, pride, slavish fear,--in a thousand different forms,--trying to force us back into bondage, we are to maintain the fact that we are free. Eternal life is our right, through Christ. "Let us stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free." (Galatians 5:1)--Present Truth, March 8, 1894--Timeline: Nativity-4 (Birth of John the Baptist)--Luke 1:68.

Chapter 24

Only a Shadow

Every shadow of darkness, every cloud of gloom, every fear of whatever kind, is simply the shadow of death and of the devil. He has cast his hellish shadow over the world.

Now, as Zacharias prophesied by the Holy Ghost, at the birth of his son, the Lord has visited us "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He has visited and redeemed His people." (Luke 1:68) and delivered us out of the hand of our enemies, "That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us." (Luke 1:71) "That we ... might serve Him without fear." (Luke 1:74)

He has delivered us from every tremor of fear, and has sent "the Dayspring from on high ... to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death." (Luke 1:78-79)

If you have His life, you have His light. What is there to be afraid of?

To the one in Christ, death itself is only a shadow. The sting is gone. Satan can cast the shadow over him, but there is nothing in a shadow to be afraid of.

- He is delivered from the power of darkness. "Who has delivered us from the power of darkness, and has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son." (Colossians 1:13)

- He is going through an enemy's land, whose weapons are all broken.

- He is going into a nest of scorpions, whose stings have been removed.

- He is going into a prison-house, the key of which is held by One who loves him.

--Present Truth, February 15, 1894--Timeline: Nativity-4 (Birth of John the Baptist)--Luke 1:74-79.

Chapter 25

What Salvation Is

The one trouble in the world is sin, which is "the transgression of the law." (1 John 3:4)

The one object of Christ's Gospel is to bring men back to obedience, and He has power to do it. "You shall call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21)

There is another gospel being industriously preached nowadays, which insists, that so far from saving men from transgressing God's law, Christ's work is actually to make them free to transgress it with impunity.

This was Satan's gospel in the beginning and is characteristic of this latter time when the "man of sin," the "mystery of lawlessness" is to be revealed in all deceiving power to mislead all who receive not the love of the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness. "Let no man beguile you in any wise: for it will not be, except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, he that opposes and exalts himself against all that is called God or that is worshiped; so that he sits in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God. ... For the mystery of lawlessness already works: only there is one that restrains now, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of His mouth, and bring to nought by the manifestation of His coming; even he, whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God sends them a working of error, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4,7-12)

But everyone who wants salvation from sin may know that the Father of our Lord Jesus has "sent Him to bless you, in turning away everyone of you from his iniquities." (Acts 3:26)--Present Truth, September 16, 1897--Timeline: Nativity-5 (The Announcement to Joseph; Marriage)--Matthew 1:21.

Chapter 26

Now is Come Salvation

Do not be cheated of the blessing of salvation by putting it off in the future inheritance. "He shall save His people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21)

Now He does it, therefore now His name is Jesus-Saviour. All who enter heaven will have been saved from this present evil world while they were yet in it, being "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." (1 Peter 1:5)

He will save you now from sin--from transgressing His law, from your own works--if you will let Him. "For I am with you, says the Lord, to save you." (Jeremiah 30:11) "Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ." (Revelation 12:10)--Present Truth, January 13, 1898--Timeline: Nativity-5 (The Announcement to Joseph; Marriage)--Matthew 1:21.

Chapter 27

God With Us

The presence of God with His people is signified by the very name of the Saviour: "Immanuel, which means, God with us." (Matthew 1:23)

He is their strength, their wisdom, and their righteousness. They are His dwelling-place, and He is theirs: "And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? for you are the temple of the living God; as God has said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (2 Corinthians 6:16) "Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations." (Psalm 90:1)

Those who know not this truth know not the Lord.

In ancient times God gave a visible manifestation of His presence with Israel. He went before them in the wilderness in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, which was to them an aid, a comfort, and a protection.

And in the most holy place of the earthly sanctuary, there remained always the visible token of His presence, in the brightness above the mercy seat.

All this was but the visible manifestation of what was true before, and has been true ever since it was given; namely, that God was with His people, not merely by a figure of speech, but actually, dwelling in their midst, and giving them aid, comfort, and protection from their enemies. It is as true today as it was in the days of Moses.

When the servant of Elisha was afraid because of the army of the Syrians that had come against the prophet, Elisha prayed that the Lord would open the eyes of his servant, and this being done, he saw that: "The mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." (2 Kings 6:17)

This was no sudden interposition on the part of God to save Elisha from the king of Syria. Had the servant's eyes been "opened" at any other time, he would have seen the same thing; and we, had we like power of discernment, would see today the host of God

surrounding each of His saints. "The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him, and delivers them." (Psalm 24:7)

When Elisha's servants saw the horses and chariots of fire round about them, he was not afraid of the host of the Syrians; he would not have feared any earthly power that could have come against them. And for the same reason precisely, the servants of God do not fear the opposition of any earthly power today. If we fear the Lord, we cannot fear man.

Though we cannot see the angel of the Lord encamped round about us, we know that He is there, just as He was about Elisha. We know it by faith; faith is the Christian's sight. By faith we know a thing to be true when God has said it, just as certainly as if it were visible to our natural eyes.

God is the majority; His side is the side of numbers and of power, as well as of truth and right. And only as we lack faith, so that we fail to see this clearly, can we have any fear of the forces arrayed against us.

The wicked, because they have not faith, see this not, and count their side the strong one. They know not the source of the Christian's peace, courage, and joy, when he seems about to be swallowed up by his enemies. It is the Word of God, which he has received by faith, and has hid in his heart. Like Moses when he was threatened with the wrath of Pharaoh, he endures "as seeing Him who is invisible." (Hebrews 11:27)

Faith does for him what the Divine touch did for Elisha's servant; it enables him to know, just as if he saw it, that the host of the Lord is round about him to deliver him. And so, in the very presence of his enemies, he says, "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation. ... Cry out and shout, you inhabitant of Zion; for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of you." (Isaiah 12:2,6) "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." (Psalm 46:11)--Present Truth, March 28, 1895--Timeline: Nativity-5 (The Announcement to Joseph; Marriage)--Matthew 1:23.

Chapter 28

The King of Glory

Hark the herald angels sing,
Glory to the new-born King.
--Charles Wesley, Hymn: Hark! The Herald Angels Sing, 1739.

Angels rejoiced and sang for joy when this beautiful world was created, and man was formed to be its king. "The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." (Job 38:7)

But their songs of joy were soon changed to mourning when they saw that earth had lost its king, and the blight of sin had come over the fair world.

How glad, then, they must have been to bear to earth, to the sons of men, the good tidings of the coming King, through whom the curse should be taken away from the whole earth, and of whose kingdom, "there should be no end." (Isaiah 9:7)

This was the message, you remember, sent to Mary by the angel Gabriel. Mary was then living at Nazareth, but the Word of God had said that the King, the Shepherd and Ruler of His people, should come forth out of Bethlehem.

So when the time for the royal birth drew near, the Emperor of Rome sent out a decree that all the world should be taxed, and this made it necessary for Joseph and Mary to go to Bethlehem. And while they were there, in fulfillment of the prophecy, "[Mary] brought forth her firstborn Son; and she wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." (Luke 2:7)

Cold on His cradle the dewdrops are shining,
Low lies His head with the beasts of the stall
Angels adore Him, in slumber reclining.
Maker and Monarch, and Saviour of all!
--Reginald Heber, Hymn: Brightest and Best of the Sons of the Morning, 1811.

What a sight for the angels to see,--their Maker and Monarch, their Creator and King, a tiny helpless babe "wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger!" (Luke 2:12)

And did they honor Him any less, or cease to worship Him, when they saw His helpless human form? No! listen to the words of their glad song of praise: "Glory to God in the highest!" (Luke 2:14)

That little baby lying in the Bethlehem stable with the beasts of the stall was "God in the Highest,"--the Most High--to whom the angels of God were offering deeper love and adoration than ever before. For when God brought the Firstbegotten into the world He said: "Let all the angels of God worship Him!" (Hebrews 1:6)

We sometimes sing:

Lo, He laid His glory by,
Born that man no more may die;
--Charles Wesley, Hymn: Hark the Herald Angels Sing, 1739.

But this is not true. He cannot lay aside His glory, for it is the beauty and power of His own life and kingly character. Those who lived with Him on the earth said of Him: "We beheld His glory ... full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

He did not "lay His glory by," but He veiled its bright shining in our weak, human flesh, so that He might come near to bless and save us. But this very veiling only made His true glory, His grace and truth, even more plainly seen.

When He became a little human child, and lived and died on this earth for our sakes, He was showing to angels and to men the depths of shame and sorrow to which He, the Creator and King of all, will go, so that He may help and save any of His creatures who are in trouble, even through their own folly and sin.

So even the angels knew Him better than before when they saw the baby lying in the manger. They saw more of His glory, and sang with deeper gladness songs of praise to God in the highest, to whom belongs "the kingdom and the power and the glory," (Matthew 6:13) because He is the Saviour of all. But, "Earth asleep unconscious lies,"--

James Thomson, A Hymn. while all the angels of God are worshiping the babe "with joy unspeakable and full of glory." (1 Peter 1:8)

How they must have longed to give the message of salvation and to share their joy with those for whose sake the King of Glory had become a poor babe, that they through His poverty might be rich. But the children of men are wrapped in slumber. Yet not all: "There were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night." (Luke 2:8)

And to these was given the high honor of being the first to hear and carry the good tidings. "And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them: Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: You shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even to Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord has made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this Child." (Luke 2:9-17)

This glad tidings, this beautiful Gospel message which the angel said should "be to all people" is for each one of you, dear children. "Unto you is born this day ... a Saviour which is Christ the Lord," (Luke 2:11)--"Christ in you," (Colossians 1:27) to be your King, to save from sin, and to make you pure and holy. Are you not glad, as the shepherds were when they heard this good news, and will you not, like them, carry the joyful tidings to others, and make known what God has made known to you about His Holy Child Jesus?--Present Truth, December 21, 1899--Timeline: I-2 (The Announcement to the Shepherds)--Luke 2:7-17.

Chapter 29

How to Have Faith

"And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not, for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; you shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." (Luke 2:8-12)

Now note what the shepherds said and did:

"And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord has made known unto us." (Luke 2:15)

Most people would say, "Come, let us go and see if this thing is so."

But it was not so with the shepherds. They simply wanted to see the great thing, which they knew was true, because the Lord had made it known to them. That was simple faith, and it is all there is to faith. Faith is the simplest and most natural thing in the world. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:17)

There can be no faith where there is no word of God; but where there is the word of God, all one has to do is to believe it, not hesitatingly, not questioningly, but with the positiveness of actual knowledge.

Who would think of trying to teach a little child how to believe its parents? Surely it is important that the child should believe its parents, is it not? Certainly; but there is no necessity for teaching, for the child believes without being taught. It is the most natural thing in the world to do. Now all there is to having faith is to believe just as a little child does.

It does not require an effort to have faith. On the contrary an effort is required not to have faith. For he who does not have faith necessarily believes that which is not true; and it stands to reason that it is much easier to believe truth than to believe falsehood.

God's word is truth, and it is the foundation of faith. Therefore faith gives the only true wisdom, since nothing is wisdom except the knowledge of truth.--Present Truth, August 17, 1893--Timeline: I-2 (The Announcement to the Shepherds)--Luke 2:8-15.

Chapter 30

The Universal Message

Here is the simple yet wondrous story, with the incidents attending one proclamation of it: "And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: You shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." (Luke 2:8-14)

That is a story, not of a, day, but of eternity, and it is not for one day in the year, but for eternity. The effort, that is made to exalt these great events, by devoting a special day to the "celebration" of them, very naturally has resulted in causing people to think very little about them at other times, and so of course to lose the real spirit of them on the particular days when they are remembered.

But "the old, old story is ever new," as we shall see if we give constant heed to it. The message concerns us as much as it did the shepherds. The angel said to them: "I bring you good tidings of great joy." (Luke 2:10) but he immediately added the words, "Which shall be to all people." (Luke 2:10)

Therefore what he said to the Bethlehem shepherds that night is addressed as directly and as personally to everybody who ever lives on the earth. What is this joyful message? Unto you is born this day a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:11)

Can it be said to each individual in the world, today, and every day while time lasts, "Unto you is born this day a Saviour"? Most certainly. "Jesus Christ [is] the same yesterday and today and for ever." (Hebrews 13:8)

He was begotten of Mary by the coming of the Holy Ghost upon her, and the power of the Highest overshadowing her: "And the angel answered and said unto her,

The Holy Ghost shall come upon you, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God." (Luke 1:35)

Very well; the same Spirit of power is given to every soul for the same purpose; and the Apostle Paul, who was not only himself filled with the Spirit, but who was a minister of the Spirit to others, wrote to the backsliding Galatians, saying, "I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you." (Galatians 4:19)

To every true believer is Jesus Christ born as truly as of Mary, for He is "the Son of man."

It is not known when Jesus was born in Bethlehem. That is, the time of year is not known. The most certain thing about it is that His birth did not take place on the 25th of December, nor in the month of December, for at that time of year shepherds do not keep their flocks in the fields by night.

Another evidence, of which most people are unaware, is that nobody thought of the 25th of December as the date of the birth of Christ in Bethlehem until several centuries after the event. The adoption of that date is purely arbitrary, for there is nothing whatever in Scripture to indicate at what time of the year it was. The Lord left the date unrecorded so that no one should have any excuse for celebrating a certain day as the birthday of Christ, instead of letting it be a constantly-recurring event.

God inhabits eternity. Eternity is always present with Him. To Him there is no past nor future, as to us. Not only is He at all times and in all places, but everything is in Him. The things that newly occur to us, and which we connect with certain fixed dates, are the things which were in Him from the beginning. Read these words: "Now unto Him that is able to establish you according to my Gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept in silence through times eternal, But now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, is made known unto all the nations unto obedience of faith." (Romans 16:25-26,RV)

That is, these things which are preached concerning Christ are the things which were from times eternal. The fact that at a certain time they were brought within the

range of man's vision, does not, prove that they first then had an existence. This is what is said directly of the Christ of Bethlehem: "You, Bethlehem Ephratah, which are little among the thousands of Judah, out of you shall One come forth unto me that is to be Ruler in Israel; whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting [or "from the days of eternity"]." (Micah 5:2)

So that even in Bethlehem in Judea nearly nineteen hundred years ago was not something which just then came into existence, but was simply the visible manifestation of what had been from eternity.

When then should we celebrate the birth of Christ the Lord? Now, now, eternally NOW, we celebrate it by allowing the reality of it to be visibly manifest in our own lives. That is the only way that it can be done. "And this shall be a sign unto you: you shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." (Luke 2:12)

What! that the Saviour of the world? That little helpless babe the One whom God has sent into the world "that the world through Him might be saved?" (John 3:17)

Yes, so it is. "Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and His Holy One, to him whom man despises, to him whom the nation abhors, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and He shall choose you." (Isaiah 49:7)

For, "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nothing things which are. ... Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men." (1 Corinthians 1:27-28,25)

Nothing on earth has less wisdom than a little babe; and a newborn baby presents the most perfect picture of helplessness that can be found. No other creature is so utterly helpless. Even so it was with the babe in the manger in Bethlehem. Yet it was: "Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." (1 Corinthians 1:24)

That is a sign to us. Of what is it a sign? It is a sign that the strength of God is made perfect in weakness. It is for the purpose of cutting off all ground for the discouraged wail, "I am so weak and helpless."

Are you weak and helpless? Good; then you have the sign of God's salvation. Don't forget the sign.

Once more; let us compare two portions of Scripture, that we may see how the message comes to us exactly as it did to the shepherds. "The angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them." (Luke 2:9)

So to us comes the message, "Arise, shine; for your light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon you, and His glory shall be seen upon you." (Isaiah 60:1-2)

Christ is the Light of the world, and He is come into the world, even to us. Therefore our light is come. It is come that we may shine. And how may we shine? By showing forth in our lives the excellencies of Him who has called us "out of darkness into His marvelous light." (1 Peter 2:9)

Thus it is that men as humble as the unnamed shepherds of Bethlehem may flash back to heaven the light which the angels brought, and may reveal even to "the principalities and powers in heavenly places," (Ephesians 3:10) the hidden mysteries of the birth of Christ.--Present Truth, December 22, 1898--Timeline: I-2 (The Announcement to the Shepherds)--Luke 2:8-14.

Chapter 31

The God of the Poor

Whatever God does is done thoroughly: "He has done all things well." (Mark 7:37)

When He speaks, He leaves no room for reasonable misunderstanding. So since: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life," (John 3:16) He has taken the greatest pains to make it very clear that He is no respecter of persons and that nobody is left out. Wealth and worldly position are no recommendation with Him. The Gospel was, in its inception, addressed especially to the poor, the grand proof of the Messiahship of Jesus being that: "The poor have the Gospel preached to them." (Matthew 11:5)

The anointing of the Spirit of God is for the express purpose of enabling the receiver "to preach the Gospel to the poor." (Luke 4:18)

All the promises are to the poor, instead of to the rich. "Hearken, my beloved brethren, Has not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He has promised to them that love Him?" (James 2:5)

If Christ had come preaching to the rich, the poor would have slunk away abashed, not daring to present their needs; but when the door was open so wide as to take in the very poorest, the lowest, and the most despised, it was very evident that all who would might be saved. Nay, more, Christ himself, who was rich, became poor, and so made it forever impossible for anybody to doubt the sincerity of His call.

Even the rich must become poor; for none of this world's goods can ever be taken to heaven. "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out." (1 Timothy 6:7)

So, as a matter of fact, God must love the poor if He loved anybody; for the richest are really poor, since they bring nothing more into the world than the poorest; and when the wealthy are required to become poor in order to gain the world to come, it is simply

that they may recognize and acknowledge what they really are. "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." (1 Corinthians 3:19)

And so the things of God are hidden from the wise and prudent, and are revealed unto babes. Thus all may understand for the most unlettered have not to acquire something, before they can know God's salvation, and the philosophers have only to let go of their worldly wisdom.

The inhabitants of this earth form a vast pyramid, the base being composed of all the poor; and by identifying himself with the very lowest stratum, Christ showed that His Gospel comprehends all. "We speak ... not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought; But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory; Which none of the princes of this world knew." (1 Corinthians 2:6-8)

Thus it was that when the mystery was revealed,--God manifest in the flesh--the announcement was made, not to princes, but to peasants. "There were in the same country, shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." (Luke 2:8-10)

First to the poor shepherds, then to all the world. God chooses the humble and unknown as His ambassadors to the world, the messengers of His mercy. Those who can understand it best, naturally receive it first.

- Moses was not called to lead the host of Israel from bondage to freedom while he was the prince in the court of Egypt, and heir to the throne; but it was when he was a lone shepherd in the wilderness that the glory of God was revealed to him.

- Gideon was threshing grain on his father's farm, when the angel of the Lord appeared to him, and sent him to deliver Israel from their Midianite oppressors.

- David was called from the sheepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over the Lord's people.

- Elisha was ploughing the field with his father's hired servants, as one of them, when the mantle of Elijah was cast upon him, which was his call to be one of the greatest of Israel's prophets.

- Amos when charged with being only a conspirator, and no prophet, did not plead his family position, but on the contrary said, "I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was a herd man, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit; And the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel." (Amos 7:14-15)

- Samuel and Jeremiah were both little children when the work of the Lord was revealed to them.

"Though the Lord be high, yet He has respect unto all lowly." (Psalm 138:6)

With all the evidences of God's special attachment to the poor, why should anybody ever complain of the oppression of the rich, or seek to defend themselves against injustice? The Lord thinks upon the poor and needy. "For the needy shall not always be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever." (Psalm 9:18) "For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, says the Lord; I will set him in safety from him that puffs at him [or, "would ensnare him"]." (Psalm 12:5) "I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor." (Psalm 140:12) "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:31-32)

If we expect Him to give us eternal things, why can we not much more trust Him for all that we need of temporal things? The Gospel contains the remedy for all ills, the deliverance from all afflictions. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and that which is to come." (1 Timothy 4:8)

Strikes and boycotts can never be mentioned as becoming saints, and no Christian will ever in any way whatever countenance any such doings; for it is by "the power of the world to come," (Hebrews 6:5) that all wrongs are to be righted. The proclamation, "Peace on earth," will soon meet its fulfillment; for the Judge stands at the door. Christ will soon come, and cause wars and oppression to cease unto the ends of the earth; and

it is to this event that the angelic message directs us. "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord.Behold, the husbandman waits for the precious fruit of the earth, and has long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be also patient; stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draws nigh." (James 5:7-8)--Present Truth, December 11, 1902--Timeline: I-2 (The Announcement to the Shepherds)--Luke 2:8-20.

Chapter 32

The Child Wonderful

"And His name shall be called Wonderful." (Isaiah 9:6)

That is the name of the Child that is born to us, and the Son that is given to us. How wonderful He is, it will take all eternity to unfold.

Jesus is the ladder that reaches from earth to heaven, the bridge over the gulf between man and God, the bond that makes the two one.

The strength and joy and blessing of the Gospel have been lost to thousands of earnest seekers after rest in God, because they, through Pagan and Papal teaching in the professed church of Christ, have regarded the bridge which God himself has provided, as an impassable gulf, and the ladder as unapproachable.

Let us learn by Him to draw near to God, that we may realize our rightful place as sons of God, loved in equal measure with Him, "whose goings forth have been from of old, from the days of eternity." (Micah 5:2)

Strange as it at first appears to most people, Christ is never truly reverenced until He is recognized as one with us. Every form and act of worship which does not proceed from a knowledge of Christ as one with humanity, in all things like unto His brethren, and of "God with us" in Him, is but some grade of idolatry.

He is our Brother, and although "[He] is passed into the heavens," (Hebrews 4:14) it is only as "the Forerunner," (Hebrews 6:20) the member of the family, who has gone before to prove our claim, and to demonstrate the right of human beings to the inheritance of the everlasting kingdom of God--to a place on the throne of the Lord, among the princes of His people. "He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts the needy out of the dunghill; That He may set him with princes, even with the princes of His people." (Psalm 113:7-8)

The title by which Christ always makes himself known is "the Son of man." (Matthew 8:20 and others) "God sent forth His Son, born of a woman." (Galatians 4:4)

Remember that Christ did not come to this earth to inaugurate some new order of things, but to reveal "that which was from the beginning." (1 John 1:1) "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful." (Isaiah 9:6)

His name is called Wonderful, because childhood is itself wonderful, and is a reality only in Him. Do not be frightened, thinking that we are dishonoring Christ, in applying the name

"Wonderful" to all children. Although "[He is] made higher than the heavens," (Hebrews 7:26)

He is still "the firstborn among many brethren." (Romans 8:29)

And though the Government be upon His shoulder, He shares the burden with all His brethren. He is a Kingly Priest, "after the order of Melchizedek." (Hebrews 5:10)

But we also are created to be "a royal priesthood." (1 Peter 2:9)

It is not with the advent of Jesus in Bethlehem nineteen hundred years ago, that childhood became wonderful; that was only that men might clearly see, and learn to appreciate, the wonder. Christ was manifest in the flesh, in order that mankind might learn the worth of humanity, and not merely of humanity in general, but of every individual human soul.

From the beginning some souls had received clearness of vision to enable them to see into the innermost sanctuary,--God's worship,--and grasp the eternal mystery. One of these was David, who in words that every person ought to be able to use as his own, said: "You have formed my reins; You have knit me together in my mother's womb. I will give thanks unto You; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are your works; and that my soul knows right well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes did see my unperfect substance, and in your book were all my members written, which day by day were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." (Psalm 139:13-16,RV,margin)

Even though the child have not the inestimable privilege of being well born, the birth is none the less wonderful, and the human infant is the most wonderful of all the marvelous works which God has made, through which to make known "His everlasting power and Divinity." (Romans 1:20,RV)

Whatever the disadvantages of birth, they are all overcome in the new birth; and whatever the failure of the parents before the birth of the child, it is their privilege and duty to cooperate with the Holy Spirit's work of begetting him anew, by "bringing him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:4)

The Firstborn

According to that which is "written in the law of the Lord," Jesus was formally presented and dedicated to the Lord at the age of six weeks. "As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord." (Luke 2:23)

By Moses God had said, "The firstborn of your sons you shall give to me." (Exodus 22:29) "For all the firstborn of the children of Israel are mine, both man and beast; on the day that I smote every firstborn in Egypt I sanctified them for myself." (Numbers 8:17)

It is not, however, the firstborn only that belong to the Lord.

He says: "Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine." (Ezekiel 18:4)

The firstborn were specially set apart to Him at the departure from Egypt, because on that night all the firstborn in Egypt were destroyed, except those of the families that had the blood of the Passover lamb sprinkled on the doorposts. That was a representation of the destruction of all the wicked, and a lesson to the effect that only those who are covered by the life of "Christ our Passover" can be saved. "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, as you are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." (1 Corinthians 5:7)

On that occasion the firstborn stood for all. They alone were destroyed on that night, but all the children of Egypt perished in the Red Sea a few days later, even as all who do not repent will perish; and not only the first born, but all the children of Israel who trusted in the Lord were saved, even as "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Acts 2:21; Joel 2:32)

Of the time when all the wicked shall be destroyed, we read, "At the same time, says the Lord, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people. Thus says the Lord, The people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest. The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn you." (Jeremiah 31:1-3)

All Firstborn in Christ

Further, the Levites were chosen and set apart to take the place of the firstborn, in the service of the temple. "Thus shall you separate the Levites from among the children of Israel: and the Levites shall be mine. And after that shall the Levites go in to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation: and you shall cleanse them, and offer them for an offering. For they are wholly given unto me from among the children of Israel; instead of such as open every womb, even instead of the firstborn of all the children of Israel, have I taken them unto me. For all the firstborn of the children of Israel are mine, both man and beast: on the day that I smote every firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them for myself. And I have taken the Levites for all the firstborn of the children of Israel." (Numbers 8:14-18)

But all whom Christ looses from their sins in His own blood, are made not only priests, but kings: "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, And has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." (Revelation 1:5-6)

God's choice among His people is not one single family or tribe; but to all He says: "You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people [a people for God's own possession]; that you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." (1 Peter 2:9)

So the infant Jesus was dedicated to the service of God, not alone to show that all children, last-born as well as firstborn, should be devoted to God, but to make such sanctification possible. "You are complete in Him." (Colossians 2:10)

But this dedication of the child to the Lord, which should be done in its earliest infancy, is not the work of but a single hour. The human house, God's temple, complete though it be at the very beginning when first dedicated, is constantly growing, and therefore needs a new consecration every day, indeed every hour.

The adult can dedicate himself to God, even though it has never been done for him by his parents; and he can renew his consecration day by day; but the parents must devote the child, and on them devolves the duty of keeping the dedication complete; and to the extent that they fail in this is the way made more difficult for him in after life.

The Possibilities of Childhood

How few parents appreciate the wondrous trust committed to them, and the grave responsibilities resting on them with the little child. Leaving out the question of those who regard it as an unwelcome intruder come to rob them of selfish pleasure and self-gratification, it is a fact that most of those who welcome the advent of the new-born babe with joy, regard it for months of its life more as a plaything than as a sacred gift from God, to be given to God. How few there are who think that the serious education of the child should begin with the first days of its life, and never end.

People are most astonishingly blind concerning the receptiveness of their own children. They would feel deeply affronted if anyone should intimate that their child was lacking in intelligence, yet they themselves will not give it credit for having as much quickness of perception as the family dog. All sorts of nonsense is talked to it, and in fact it scarcely ever hears anything else.

Then all its winning little ways are noted and freely commented upon in its presence, and it is constantly being stimulated to show them off, especially before company. All this is done in seeming total unconsciousness that not only are valuable opportunities being neglected; but impressions are being made that can be effaced only at the expense of much effort, and which may cause lifelong pain and sorrow to the innocent victim of the vanity and ignorance of its parents.

Now it is a fact that not only no other creature, but no adult human being, has so clear perceptive faculties or so vast a power of comprehension as a child. At no other period of one's life does one learn so much as in the first two years. Within that period, or by the end of the third year, at most, the child learns a language, and in many cases two, or even three, without any difficulty, besides accumulating by observation a great store of facts.

No naturalist ever observes so closely, or to so good purpose, as a little child. The deep things of God, which are hid from the wise and prudent, are revealed unto babes: "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes." (Matthew 11:25)

Yet most parents seem to think that it is impossible to make any religious impressions on the mind of a child under three or four years of age, or that its whole life may be permanently shaped before that age. Indeed, very few give it a thought.

We do not of course mean that a child of tender years should be drilled in theological dogma; for that is not necessarily religious teaching even for an adult; but the parents who know the Lord as a personal Friend, and who have learned to recognize the Life, as it is manifested, and who also appreciate the almost infinite possibilities in the soul committed to their keeping, will learn of the God who has entrusted His child to their care, how to order the child, and what they shall do to it.

In Christ all things are possible, for He is set forth as "the Man" "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 2:5), the example for all other lives, the measure of their possibilities, and the means for their fulfillment.--Present Truth, January 3, 1901--Timeline: I-4 (The Presentation at the Temple)--Luke 2:23.

Chapter 33

Recognizing the Lord

"And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for Him after the custom of the law, Then took he Him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, according to your word; For my eyes have seen your salvation, Which You have prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel." (Luke 2:25-32)

There was another man in the temple that day, who also had the Lord Jesus in his arms, namely, the high priest; but unlike Simeon, he did not recognize in the infant the light of the Gentiles, and the glory of Israel,--the Saviour of mankind.

Why could not the high priest, the religious leader of all the people, discern what the unknown Simeon saw so plainly? The answer is plain: Simeon was "waiting for the consolation of Israel." (Luke 2:25) "If any man wills to do the will of God, he shall know." (John 7:17)

God says: "I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth; I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek me in vain." (Isaiah 45:19)

God had sworn to Abraham, and that oath, added to an immutable promise, made and still makes a strong consolation to all who flee for a refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them. This oath of God centered in Christ, and the birth of Christ was the remembering of His holy covenant, and the oath which He swore to Abraham. "And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He has visited and redeemed His people, And has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David; As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began: That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant; The oath which he swore to our

father Abraham, That He would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life." (Luke 1:67-75)

The thing was not done in a corner but was placed on record for all men. God had proclaimed, "Look unto me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth." (Isaiah 45:22)

No man ever looks to God for consolation in vain. The high priest, on the other hand, was waiting for the exaltation of himself and his people. His interest was not, however, for the people, but for himself. His desire to see Israel exalted was solely in order that his authority and dignity might be correspondingly increased. He was looking altogether too high to see the Lord, who is meek and lowly in heart, and who dwells with the humble and contrite. The truth that is revealed unto babes, and even in the form of a babe, was too insignificant for his notice.

Note well the agency of the Spirit of God on this occasion. The Spirit was upon Simeon, not occasionally, but all the time. If Simeon had not been continually walking in the Spirit, he would have missed the opportunity. To how many people the one opportunity of a lifetime comes and is lost, because they have not been ready for it. Just that moment they were taking a rest from well-doing, having become weary. "But they that wait on the Lord [wait for His consolation,] shall renew their strength." (Isaiah 40:31)

They will never be taken unawares either by the enemy of souls or by the revelation of God. "[Simeon] came by the Spirit into the temple." (Luke 2:27)

That shows that he walked in the Spirit. He allowed his steps, and all his actions, to be guided by the Spirit of God. The true Christian position is that in which every thought and every movement is but the working of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is the whole and only life of the individual. If we were always in that condition we should be directed to many treasures which we now miss.

The Spirit revealed to Simeon that the little baby in the arms of that poor, timid woman was the Lord's Anointed. He could not have known it in any other way, for there was nothing in the child's appearance to distinguish it from scores of other babes that were presented in the temple. He did not have a halo of light about His head, as so many

fanciful picture-makers delight in portraying Him. "When we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him." (Isaiah 53:2)

Isaiah had written this hundreds of years before. Only the Spirit can make Him known. Flesh and blood cannot do it. "He said unto them, But whom do you say that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed are you, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you, but my Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 16:15-17) "I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed; and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." (1 Corinthians 12:3)

What an opportunity the high priest missed that day. He had the Lord's Anointed in his arms, yet he felt no thrill. The babe was nothing to him. It was not merely to comply with the Levitical law, that Christ was presented in the temple, but that the priest might have an opportunity to recognize Him, and to make Him known to the people. That was his business; "For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth." (Malachi 2:7)

But he did not know the day of his visitation, and because he failed on that occasion, which was seemingly so insignificant, he lost everything.

Unto us the same opportunity and obligation comes. "Behold your God!" is cried out to us: and we are to behold Him in order that we may make Him known to others: "O Zion, that bring good tidings, get up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bring good tidings, lift up your voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!" (Isaiah 40:9)

God makes everyone of His people a priest, that they all may "show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." (1 Peter 2:9)

Where shall we see Him? Ah, where can we fail to see Him? "Christ [is] the power of God," (1 Corinthians 1:24) and, "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." (Colossians 2:9)

And ever since the creation of the world His everlasting power and Divinity have been clearly seen in the things which have been made: "For the invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even His everlasting power and divinity." (Romans 1:20)

Every created thing, from the mightiest planet to the tiniest atom, reveals the Lord Jesus.

It is not enough to recognize the Lord in one place, if we fail to see Him in another. If we cannot recognize a friend when we see him in a new place, and an address that we have not before seen, we are certainly not on very intimate terms with him. We must be so well acquainted with the Lord, that we shall have no trouble in recognizing Him every instant, and on the instant, in every place.

If Christ had come to the high priest in pomp and royal majesty, like an earthly king, he would probably have recognized Him. No; he could not have recognized Him except by the Holy Spirit, no matter in what form He came; but he would at any rate have bowed before Him.

But he did not know that "the weakness of God is stronger than men." (1 Corinthians 1:25)

And that "God chooses the weak things ... and even things which are not, to bring to nought the things that are." (1 Corinthians 1:27-28)

The infant Jesus, borne in the arms of that poor woman, whose extreme poverty was indicated by the birds that she brought as an offering, instead of a lamb, was "the power of God." (1 Corinthians 1:24)

Yea, He was "the salvation of God." (Luke 3:6)

Nothing is weaker than a babe. The young of humankind is more helpless than any of the lower orders of creation. Never in our lives can we be more helpless and dependent than Christ was at that moment; yet He was the power of God; for God's strength is made perfect in weakness.

This is to teach us that at our lowest and weakest state we may be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. We are to recognize and confess Christ in our own bodies, even in our weak and sinful flesh. As surely as any man does this, he will be the victor over all the power of the enemy; for the Word is nigh us, in our mouth and in our heart, so that: "If you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved." (Romans 10:9)

A preparation for the coming of the Lord is a preparation of character. "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness." (2 Peter 3:11)--Present Truth, November 9, 1899--Timeline: I-4 (The Presentation at the Temple)--Luke 2:25-32.

Chapter 34

God's Unspeakable Gift

What is it? Only a helpless baby, born in deepest poverty. But it was God's gift, and that made it great. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

This was the Redeemer, who was to turn away ungodliness from men. So we read: "Who is so great a God as our God? You are the God that does wonders: You have declared your strength among the people. You have with your arm redeemed your people." (Psalm 77:13-15)

It is with His strong right arm that God redeems His people; and this arm of the Lord is Jesus Christ whom He has sent; for we read again: "Who has believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground; He has no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." (Isaiah 53:1-3)

This is the "mighty arm" of the Lord, with which He redeems His people. Prophets had sung of it, and kings and people had looked with eager longing and exultant hope for its revelation; and: "When the fullness of the time was come," (Galatians 4:4) what did they see? Only a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger. Disappointed? Yes; many of them were; but they had no reason to be; for that was the sign which the angel gave to prove that the great gift was bestowed. "The foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men." (1 Corinthians 1:25)

What is weaker and more destitute of reason than a newborn babe? Not any other animal that lives. Yet that helpless babe was "the power of God, and the wisdom of God." (1 Corinthians 1:24)

The cross of Christ is the power of God. Christ hanging on the cross, nailed hand and foot, the helpless object of the ridicule of the mob, is the gift by which God redeems mankind. "[God's] strength is made perfect in weakness;" (2 Corinthians 12:9) and so in

the cradle and the cross we have the highest manifestation of God's everlasting power. "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the East, and are come to worship Him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea; for thus it is written by the prophet, And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, are not the least among the princes of Juda; for out of you shall come a Governor, that shall rule [feed] my people Israel. Then Herod when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when you have found Him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship Him also. When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star which they saw in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. And when they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy." (Matthew 2:1-10)

It was most fitting that wise men should bring gifts to God's unspeakable gift--to Him who was the wisdom of God. Earth's wisest men did homage to "the foolishness of God." In Him we see wisdom and foolishness combined. He who is set forth as the foolishness of God, which is wiser than men, is also the wisdom of God; so that God's foolishness is His wisdom.

This is encouragement for the foolish of this world--those who lack wisdom. "God has chosen the foolish things of the world," (1 Corinthians 1:27) in order that He may through them glorify His own wisdom; for even the foolish things are by Him made to confound the wisest men of earth. "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings You have ordained strength, that You might still the enemy and the avenger." (Psalm 8:2) And Jesus said unto them, Yea; have you never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings You have perfected praise?" (Matthew 21:16)

Well might the wise men of earth bring the richest treasures to the infant Jesus, for He was "the Son of God," (Luke 1:35) "In whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; For in Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers;

all things have been created through Him, and unto Him; And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist." (Colossians 1:14-17,RV)

All heaven, yes, the earth also, and the entire universe, was contained in that one gift; for: "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." (Colossians 1:19) "In [Him] are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," (Colossians 2:3) "[even] unsearchable riches." (Ephesians 3:8)

There is not a good thing enjoyed by any person on earth, that does not come from Christ. "A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven." (John 3:27) "Every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights." (James 1:17) "[He] gives us richly all things to enjoy," (2 Timothy 6:17) so that our daily bread comes to us from the cross of Christ. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. But God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit. ... None of the princes of this world knew [the Lord of glory]." (1 Corinthians 2:9-10,8)

They could not discern Him in the guise of a little child. Divinity was clothed with humanity, and the fleshly clothing which the Word took was a veil that concealed the glory from the eyes of the unspiritual. So when men were speculating as to who He was, and Peter declared, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God, Jesus answered,...flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you, but my Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 16:16-17)

Even to this day the flesh serves as a veil to hide the Divine power from the perception of those who "have eyes, but see not." (Jeremiah 5:21)

That is, who do not allow God to use their eyes and all their other members. But the blood, the life of Christ, even in mortal flesh, gives us boldness to enter into the holiest, where we can "behold the beauty of the Lord," (Psalm 27:4) although outwardly "there is no beauty that we should desire Him." (Isaiah 53:2)

This failure to discern the Lord in the weakest form of weak humanity is what holds men in sin and degradation and misery. They look at themselves, at their own bodies as good as dead, and lose heart. "It is impossible for me ever to overcome," they

say; "these sins are part of my nature; they were born in my flesh, and I cannot hope to get rid of them."

They forget, that: "The righteousness which is of faith speaks on this wise, Saynot in your heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what says it? The Word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart; that is, the Word of faith, which we preach." (Romans 10:6-8) "The Word was made flesh," (John 1:14) and still remains in the flesh, with "power over all flesh." (John 17:2)

Heaven's richest Gift, the power and fullness of the whole universe, is brought to and placed in everybody. No longer, allow the flesh to hide the glory of the only begotten of the Father; but yield your bodies as temples of the Holy Ghost where God may sit enthroned, so that: "He that sits between the cherubim [may] shine forth." (Psalm 80:1)

But think! this gift was "born King of the Jews." (Matthew 2:2)

Shall we therefore reject Him, saying, "We want no Jewish King to reign over us!"

If so we reject salvation, "for salvation is of the Jews." (John 4:22)

Those wise men from the proud East were not ashamed for all Jerusalem and all the world to know that they had come to worship the King of the Jews, although the Jews themselves were ashamed of Him, and hid their faces from Him.

Ever since Constantine, the self-elected head of the apostate church, said, "Let us have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd," professed Christians have been following his lead. They reject God's law, and especially the Sabbath, because, as they say, "It's Jewish."

And in rejecting the law, they reject the Lawgiver, the One who bestows the unspeakable gift; and so they despise the gift itself. No other throne was promised Him except that of "His father David": "The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: And He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever." (Luke 1:32-33)

God's richest gift is brought to us in the meanest covering and in the meanest form. May He give to us "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him." (Ephesians 1:17)--Present Truth, December 13, 1900--Timeline: I-5 (Visit of the Magi)--Matthew 2:1-10.

Chapter 35

When the Messiah Came

"But you, Bethlehem Ephratah, though you be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." (Micah 5:2)

This was the stately language of the prophet, foretelling the coming of the Messiah. This was the passage to which the chief priests and scribes turned, when Herod called them together and demanded of them where Christ was to be born. "And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And you Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, are not the least among the princes of Juda, for out of you shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel." (Matthew 2:5-6)

They did not quote the last clause: "Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." (Micah 5:2)

Why not? Their "higher criticism," no doubt, had explained away those words so fraught with the breath of eternity, and so full of spiritual meaning. To them perhaps that was but a bit of mystical poetry, which, according to their interpretation, the prophet had seen fit to attach to the weightier matters of practical prophecy.

That a ruler should arise, who would expel the Roman governor, soldiers, and tax-gatherers, and re-establish the glories of King David and Solomon was something that they believed, and looked forward to. They felt that to be practical.

It was something which their minds could grasp and they could look forward to with a feeling of its possibilities. They felt such a consummation was conceivable, and was something to which men of the practical trained intelligence that they felt they had attained, might look forward with some assurance of its realization.

As for the rest, however,--that was but the mystic veil thrown round a core of reality: just the rhetorical dress in which the fact of the coming Jewish supremacy was set forth, --that was all.

Yet, did it enter the minds of any of them that He who should be ruler in Israel was that little babe in Bethlehem? Who can tell? Perhaps. But if it did they had no thought of emulating the wise men in their adoration of an infant.

Indeed, they felt it would not do for them to commit themselves to anything so unreasonable. It would be quite time enough to acknowledge allegiance when He had come to years of maturity, when He had donned his armor, and summoned his men-at-arms about Him, and there was a reasonable certainty that He was about to drive the foreigner from the sacred soil of Palestine, and set up His kingdom.

When that time should arrive, and all this should be assured, then it would be time enough for them to take action. In the meantime it would be the part of wisdom for them to stand, calmly by--entirely neutral--and await the progress and development of events. They did so, and the outcome was such as to convince them of the entire wisdom of their policy.

If they had any hopes they were literally destroyed in the bud by the severe measures which Herod took. The incident of the quest of the wise men, the examination of the chief priests and scribes by Herod, his alarm and the cruel act in which his jealous fear resulted, passed from the minds of men, and became but an episode in the uncertain records of a troublous time.

It is thus, in centuries past, that men have ignored the accepted time, and so they do still. The Word of God is spread abroad now as never in the previous history of mankind. All the accessories which fulfill, explain, and illustrate the Scriptures are published in the view of men as never before; they are multiplying rapidly within the possible observation of all men.

And yet there are chief priests, scribes, and Herods, today as there were eighteen hundred years ago. It is no less evident now than then that not all learned men are wise. Then the wise men worshiped in humility and faith, but the learned gave information to the enemy. Wisdom will be justified of her children no less today than then.--Present Truth, May 7, 1896--Timeline: I-5 (Visit of the Magi)--Matthew 2:5-6.

Chapter 36

A Lesson in Ruling

"You, Bethlehem Ephratah, though you be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall He come forth unto me that is to be Ruler of Israel." (Micah 5:2)

Compare this with Matthew 2:6, where it is quoted, and note the margin which is closer to the original: "You Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the princes of Juda; for out of you shall come a Governor, that shall rule [margin: "feed"] my people Israel." (Matthew 2:6)

This is the Holy Spirit's definition of the work of a true ruler or governor. We find it not in the nations of earth, nor in the apostate church, where the princes of the people "exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority over them," (Matthew 20:25) but we do find it among the real followers of Christ, where greatness is according to the amount of service. The Danish version, following the original more closely than the English, has it: "Out of you shall go a Prince who shall be my people Israel's Shepherd."

This agrees with the marginal reading of our common version, for the duty of a shepherd is to feed the flock. But mark this, that the Ruler of Israel is the Shepherd of Israel; His work as Ruler of the people is to feed them.

See how beautifully this thought of a Shepherd-King is expressed in: "Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him; behold, His reward is with Him, His work before Him. He shall feed His flock like a shepherd; He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." (Isaiah 40:10-11)

This is the only kind of ruling that the Lord sanctions in His church. In Hebrews 13 we read the exhortation, "Obey them that have the rule over you." (Hebrews 13:17)

But here again we may learn from the margin that these rulers are guides-those who direct the people in the right way, as a shepherd. Christ is "the Prince of princes," (Daniel 8:25) the Ruler over all. He leads His people, however, and does not drive them.

He leads them where they will find food and safety. This thought is emphasized by the fact that Christ as Ruler comes out of Bethlehem. Bethlehem, literally, is the "House of Bread." Out of the house of bread comes the Ruler, whose work is to feed the people. How significant!

More than this, He himself is the Bread of Life. In the house of God there is always an abundance of "the hidden manna," (Revelation 2:17) enough and to spare. Here is a lesson for all who are in positions of authority in the church. Their work is to take the Bread of Life from the House of Bread, to feed upon it themselves, and then feed the people with it. When they do this their authority will be recognized by the people, even if questioned by the scribes and Pharisees.--Present Truth, March 18, 1897--Timeline: I-5 (Visit of the Magi)--Matthew 2:6.

Chapter 37

Ruling is Feeding

"But you, Bethlehem Ephratah, though you be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel." (Micah 5:2)

If we compare this verse with the rendering that is given in the quotation in the Gospel of Matthew, we shall learn something of what God means by a ruler, and how He rules: "And you Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the princes of Judah; for out of you shall come forth a Governor that shall rule my people Israel." (Matthew 2:6)

The margin has "feed," and the Revision has "be shepherd of," as an equivalent. These two are the same; for the shepherd feeds the sheep; and one or the other of those means must be used here, since the Greek word cannot be rendered "rule." It must be rendered, "He shall feed," or, "He shall shepherd" them.

The translators of our common version evidently had the original passage in Micah in mind, and feared that if they translated Matthew 2:6 literally, it would seem like a contradiction; so they gave us "rule." But there is no need to be afraid to take God's Word just as it reads. There is no contradiction between the text in Micah and the quotation in Matthew; we simply learn that God's idea of ruling is that of feeding.

God is Ruler of the universe; He is King over all; yet: "Jehovah is my Shepherd." (Psalm 23:1)

Christ is "that great Shepherd of the sheep." (Hebrews 13:20)

Earthly rulers expect to be supported by those over whom they rule; God himself supports all His subjects; indeed, His rule consists in feeding them, acting as Shepherd, leading them by still waters and in green pastures. "He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside still waters." (Psalm 23:2)

He does not rule them and feed them, but His feeding of them is His ruling. Jesus said: "I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep." (John 10:11)

So the Ruler feeds His people with His own body. What a foolish choice Israel made when they rejected God as their Ruler, and desired a king like the heathen round them! God warned them, saying, "He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots. ... And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your olive yards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your sheep: and you shall be his servants." (1 Samuel 8:11,13-17)

Contrast this with Christ, "Who gave himself for us." (Titus 2:14)

The earthly king took of his subjects for himself; the heavenly King gives himself for His subjects. It is a poor exchange that men have made; but there is still opportunity for us to change back, and to accept as our Ruler the One who gave himself for us, and who rules only by virtue of His life in us, upon which we are to feed that we may live. For our king is: "The Bread of Life." (John 6:35)

He came forth out of Bethlehem--the "house of bread."

What wonderful fitness! He is the corn that fell into the earth to die, that He might bear much fruit. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone: but if it die, it brings forth much fruit." (John 12:24)

He was bruised and crushed for us. As the Bread of Life, His body was and is broken for us, that we may eat, and be "filled with all the fullness of God." (Ephesians 3:19) "This is the Bread which came down from heaven, not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead; he that eats of this bread shall live for ever." (John 6:58)

Yet the manna was bread from heaven. "Then said the Lord unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. ... And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they knew not what it was." (Exodus 16:4,15)

Spiritual meat, even Christ's body, which is the true food "For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." (John 6:55), was given to the children of Israel in the wilderness, and eaten by them. "And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ." (1 Corinthians 10:3-4)

Nevertheless they died. "With many of them God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness." (Hebrews 3:17)

Wherefore? Because they did not eat in faith. It was because of unbelief, that they could not enter the promised land, but died in the wilderness. "And to whom swore He that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief." (Hebrews 3:18-19) "They believed not in God, and trusted not in His salvation; Though He had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven, And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven. Man did eat angels' food." (Psalm 78:22-25)

This Bread of Life is given to us, that we may eat, and not die: "This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die." (John 6:50)

Yet if the man who eats of Him does not believe, he will certainly die. "And he that doubts is damned if he eat, because he eats not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin." (Romans 14:23) "For he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." (1 Corinthians 11:29-30) "He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (John 3:18)

So he who does not eat of Christ in faith, discerning His body, is the same as though he did not eat. It is therefore only by faith that we really and truly eat of the Bread of Life; and: "The just shall live by faith." (Romans 1:17)

So he who truly eats the Bread of life will live for ever. The children of Israel died because they lusted after evil things. "But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted." (1 Corinthians 10:5-6)

They said, "There is nothing at all, beside this manna before our eyes," (Numbers 11:6) and, "Our soul loathes this light bread." (Numbers 21:5)

That shows that they did not believe that the manna was the body of Christ,--bread from heaven,--for if they had believed it, they would have been satisfied with it. "[Men are] abundantly satisfied with the fatness of God's house." (Psalm 36:8)

But it can never be taken except by faith. If one does not discern the Lord's body, he gets no real and lasting benefit from it.

Three different events are set before us in the Scriptures, to enable us to discern the body of Christ:

1. We have read of the manna in the desert, and are told that it was bread form heaven--spiritual food.

2. The same night that Jesus was betrayed, He took bread,--the pure, unleavened bread that was upon the table at the Passover meal,--and, after giving thanks, said, "This is my body." (1 Corinthians 11:24)

3. Here we have Christ's testimony to the effect that pure food is His own body, and that in eating it we are feeding upon Him.

On at least two occasions he had miraculously fed some thousands of hungry people with a very small portion of good. There was not bread enough for all to get a crumb, yet all were filled. Where did the bread come from? Evidently from His own body. He did not at that time say anything (although He did the next day); yet no words would have made it clearer, that it was from the body of Christ that the multitude ate that day; for they saw it demonstrated.

God gave the children of Israel manna in the desert, in order that they might "know that man does not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord does man live." (Deuteronomy 8:3)

In eating it, therefore, they were eating the Word of God. Why does God feed us? What is the real object of eating? "That we may live," someone will say.

That is true; but in saying that, we must not forget that: "God is our life and the length of our days." (Deuteronomy 30:20) "[Only] in Him do we live." (Acts 17:28)

It would be possible, as has been proved on occasion, for God to keep us alive without our eating; but if that were done, we should have no visible proof that we do not have life in ourselves. In taking food, however, which we are obliged to do regularly, we have the proof constantly before us, that we have no life in ourselves, but must receive it daily from God, who feeds His flock with His own life. Food is given to us in order that we may know God, and not forget His benefits.

The rulers of the Jews--the princes of this world--crucified the Lord of glory, because they did not know Him. "Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." (1 Corinthians 2:8)

They did not discern, under the veil of human flesh, the body of Christ. If they had, they could not have crucified Him. Their ignorance was their sin, but there was forgiveness for it if they repented, and accepted Him.

Can we be guilty of the same sin? Certainly. How? By not discerning Christ's body, under the veil of the food that he provides for us daily. "Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. ... For he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." (1 Corinthians 11:27,29)

Whoever eats bread, not simply on the set occasions when the Lord's Supper is formally eaten, but at any time, and does not discern the Lord's body--His life in it, given to us that we may have life with which to serve Him, is guilty of the death of Christ just as certainly as were the rulers of the Jews.

Just a moment's thought will make this clear. For example: If I am seen taking a man into my house, and the house is watched, but the man is never seen to come out again, I shall be charged with murdering him. There will be strong presumptive evidence of it, and the finding of his body will prove it.

Well now, when we eat the daily bread that God provides us, we take His body, His life. That is plainly to be seen. That puts us under obligation to let His life appear in our bodies, and to control us; for He alone has the right and power to live His own life.

But if we do not discern the fact that we are taking His life in the food that He gives us, we shall not yield ourselves to it. We shall assume that the life that we have is our own, to use as we please. Thus we take Christ in, but He is not seen again. We take His life, and bury Him. We are thus guilty of His death. That is a terrible thing.

Let us not do so anymore. We do not need to. Christ lives. He may be, and should be, and is, crucified in us: but if we confess Him--if we confess that: "Christ is come in the flesh," (1 John 4:2) and then, "believe in our heart that God has raised Him from the dead," (Romans 10:9) and so allow Him to live in us by the power of the resurrection, we shall continually eat righteousness and life and salvation. "[He] is made unto us ... righteousness." (1 Corinthians 1:30)

And, "They who hunger and thirst after righteousness ... shall be filled." (Matthew 5:6)

Oh, "Receive not the grace of God in vain!" (2 Corinthians 6:1)--Present Truth, November 30, 1899--Original title: Front Page--Timeline: I-5 (Visit of the Magi)--Matthew 2:6.

Chapter 38

The Birth of Jesus

Many, many times since that night nineteen hundred years ago has the story of Christ's birth been repeated, yet:

The old, old story is ever new.
--P. P. Bliss, Tell me More About Jesus (song).

Everybody is familiar with every detail, yet no thoughtful, reverent person can ever read it without learning something. Indeed, so full of instruction is the narrative, that only a small portion of the Scripture devoted to this week's study can be taken under consideration.

Fulfilling the Scripture

"The fullness of time" (Galatians 4:4) had come. "And it came to pass in those days, there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled [KJV: "taxed"]." (Luke 2:1,RV)

How little the Roman Emperor thought that he was simply an agent in the Lord's hands for the fulfillment of prophecy, and that his decree would be remembered only in connection with the birth of a King infinitely greater than he.

Some hundreds of years before, it had been prophesied that out of Bethlehem should the Ruler of Israel come; Joseph and Mary lived in Nazareth, and the time was at hand; doubtless both were expecting the birth of the coming One in their home in Galilee; but: "the Scripture cannot be broken," (John 10:35) and so the decree was issued, which brought them to Bethlehem. Who shall say that God did not move the Roman Emperor to issue that decree for the sole purpose of securing the fulfillment of His Word? How often men, bent only on carrying out their own will, have been simply the unconscious agents of God's will. God works all things after the counsel of His own will.

Her First-Born Son

"And she brought forth her first-born Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger." (Luke 2:7)

In no particular was Christ separated from mankind. A theology borrowed from paganism would allow Him nothing in common with us. Not only would it have Him so far removed from ordinary flesh that His mother must be born without any trace of sin in her flesh, but He must be so far separated from any connection with humanity that no other infant could ever occupy the same body that He had once inhabited; but all this is contrary to fact.

There is no meaning to the word "first-born," if no others are born afterwards. When Christ was buried, He occupied, as was fitting, a tomb in which no man ever had lain; but that did not prevent it from being used again. "In all things [He was] made like His brethren." (Hebrews 2:17) "[He was] born of the seed of David according to the flesh." (Romans 1:3)

His flesh was just the same as that of all other men; He was one with us in all things, except in sin; and even there He is one with us, in that He takes our sin and shows us how to bear it so that it is destroyed.

Lowly Laboring Men

It was eminently fitting that the birth of Him who was to be: "[The] Shepherd of Israel," (Psalm 80:1) "That great Shepherd of the sheep," (Hebrews 13:20) should be first announced to shepherds in the fields, and that they should be the first to make it known to others. "With the lowly is wisdom." (Proverbs 11:2)

Of what use would it have been to announce the birth of Christ to the priests and rulers-worldly princes? They would have scoffed at it. "What! that babe in the manger a King! How absurd! What nonsense!"

If anybody feels inclined to doubt that the rulers of the Jews would have mocked and scoffed at the idea that the little babe was a King, he has only to glance at the record of Christ's betrayal and crucifixion. Then they mocked Him because of His weakness,

and derided His claim to being King. "And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, And saying, You that destroy the temple, and build it in three days, save yourself. If You be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking Him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself He cannot save. If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God." (Matthew 27:39-43)

They might have had the honor of announcing the birth of the Saviour, if they would have believed it. God always sends His truth to those who are willing to receive it. It has always been the case that reformations begin with what are termed the "lower classes." They formed the bulk of the believers on Christ. The question was asked, "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on Him?" (John 7:48)

As though that proved that He could not be true. He was not in fashion. "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." (1 Corinthians 1:26)

He who despises a doctrine because its adherents are few and poor, would reject Christ for the same reason. "He that despises the poor reproaches his Maker." (Proverbs 14:31)

The Sign

"And this shall be a sign unto you: You shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." (Luke 2:12)

Of what should that be a sign? A sign that a Saviour, Christ the Lord was born.

"The Jews require a sign." (1 Corinthians 1:22)

Well, there they had a sign, and they always had it before them, for the same lowliness was continued through the whole of Christ's life. What a sign! Isaiah prophesied of the Coming One "mighty to save": "Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." (Isaiah 63:1)

God had told David that He had "laid help on One that is mighty": "Then You spoke in vision to your holy one, and said, I have laid help upon One that is mighty; I have exalted One chosen out of the people." (Psalm 89:19)

And now as proof that there had "come out of Sion the Deliverer." (Romans 11:26; Isaiah 59:20)

The angel tells the shepherds that they will find a little helpless baby, wrapped up in a bundle, and lying in a manger. There He is! that helplessness is the sign. Wonderful! yet even so it was all through His life: "I can of my own self do nothing." (John 5:30) "God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty." (1 Corinthians 1:27)

He says, "My strength is made perfect in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:9)

Therefore the Apostle Paul said, "When I am weak, then am I strong." (2 Corinthians 12:10)

If that is so, then the weakest ought to be the strongest. Exactly. It is out of weakness that God has established strength, with which He stills the enemy and the avenger: "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings have You ordained strength because of your enemies, that You might still the enemy and the avenger." (Psalm 8:2)

A little babe is the best manifestation of the power of God that overcomes the world. Of God's people it is said that: "Out of weakness [they] were made strong." (Hebrews 11:34)

The whole of the Gospel is summed up in the acknowledgment that God is Almighty, and that we are absolute helplessness. God is everywhere, upholding all; therefore, as soon as one who has no strength recognizes that fact, the mighty power of God manifests itself.

See how God has removed all possible ground for complaint and discouragement. If He had said, "My strength is made perfect in the power of the ocean, the whirlwind, the tempest, and he who can exhibit the most might, the most endurance, is the one who

approaches most nearly to me," then we might well have expected many sighs of discouragement. Then the complaint, "Oh, I'm so weak, I know I can never overcome," might have been in place. But how is it? Why, He has manifested himself in the lowliest, humblest, poorest, weakest possible form, and has said that there is the perfection of His power. That is the wisdom of God, and the power of God. It is all the power He asks or expects anybody to have. So whenever a person would begin to complain, or to excuse his failure, by saying, "I'm so weak," he finds his mouth stopped. At the very weakest point anybody can be, there he finds the Lord. God says, "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble." (Isaiah 57:15)

The First Advent Includes the Record

The span of Christ's manifestation in the flesh is from the manger to the cross. In weakness He came, and in weakness He ended His work. "He was crucified through weakness." (2 Corinthians 13:4)

Nevertheless, "He lives by the power of God." (2 Corinthians 13:4)

And that is how we are to live. Christ is coming again; but His coming in the clouds of heaven, "with power and great glory," (Matthew 24:30) will be only the manifestation of the power that lay in the manger and hung on the cross. "The hiding of His power" (Habakkuk 3:4) [margin: "bright beams out of His side"], is from His side, where once the spear pierced, but where the stream of glory issues. He is King of glory solely because of His humility. "And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also has highly exalted Him, and given Hima name which is above every name." (Philippians 2:8-9)

He is coming to save His people; but He will save at His second coming only those whom He has already saved at the cross. That manger in Bethlehem is capacious enough to contain all mankind: it contained Divinity.

The second coming will be only the complete manifestation of the first. In the manger Christ was the Son of God; but it was the resurrection from the dead with power

according to the Spirit of holiness, that demonstrated the fact. When He comes again, it will be for the purpose of showing all men that He really lives.

Great Joy

"Good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." (Luke 2:10)

What is the joy? A Saviour!

Joy to the world! the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King!
Let every heart prepare Him room;
And heaven and nature sing.
--Isaac Watts, Psalm 98--Second Part, The Messiah's Coming and Kingdom, 1719.

When Philip went down to Samaria, and preached the Word, so that devils were cast out, and the afflicted were healed, "there was great joy in that city." (Acts 8:8)

There is always joy in victory, and: "God ... gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 15:57)

God does not wish the world to go bowed down with sorrow. He says, "Look up! Lift up your heads." (Luke 21:28)

Christ, the anointed King, came "to proclaim liberty to the captives; ... to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." (Isaiah 61:1,3)

This joy is "to all people;" then let everybody be glad and rejoice in the great salvation that by the grace of God has appeared to all.

Our Saviour

"For unto you, is born a Saviour." (Luke 2:11)

The message is to you, whosoever you are who read these lines, and to everybody else. The Saviour is born to you. "The Word is near you, even in your mouth and in your heart;" (Romans 10:8) "that you may do it." (Deuteronomy 30:14)

Somebody says that a child was born to Mary that night. Oh, no; He was born to you. He did not belong to her, but to the world. He is "the Son of man." (Daniel 7:13)

He is your Son, and mine. He is our child, and formed within us, He is "the hope of glory." (Colossians 1:27)

Unhesitating Faith

The shepherds said one to another, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord has made known unto us." (Luke 2:15)

They did not say, "Let us go and see if this thing is so."

Ah, how very cautious we are when God speaks; we cannot believe until we have tried every test. God comes, making known the most exceeding great and precious promises, such as would make men leap for very joy, and lo, straightway they begin to devise some means to keep from accepting them. They try every way possible to prove that the promises are only a delusion.

Men act toward God's promises just as a child does toward bitter medicine. One would think, to see how loath men are to take God at His word, that He is announcing some terrible calamity, something to be dreaded, instead of a blessing to be enjoyed. So they hold it off, until when at last they do hesitatingly embrace it, after every possible objection has been removed, half of its sweetness for them is gone.

But the shepherds, as soon as they heard the message of God's great salvation, said, "Let us go and see this thing which is come to pass, which God has made known unto us." (Luke 2:15)

There is an example for us. You need not wait to hear the word of the Lord, for it is speaking now. Believe it, and: "The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."

(Romans 15:13)--Present Truth, December 28, 1899--Timeline: I-5 (Visit of the Magi), 6 (Flight to Egypt)--Luke 2:1-16.

Chapter 39

The Wisdom of Jesus

"And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him. Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover. And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and His mother knew not of it. ... And it came to pass, that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers." (Luke 2:40-43,46-47)

Of one thing each reader of this narrative should rest assured from the very beginning, and that is that Jesus was not, as we sometimes see it stated, "Disputing with the Doctors."

- He was not doing anything that would be unbecoming in a child of twelve years.

- He was not putting himself forward, nor "showing off."

- He was not presuming to teach those learned doctors of the law, nor showing the least disrespect to them.

He was listening to their instruction, and asking them questions on what they were teaching, just as every listener was expected to do. He was seeking knowledge; more wisdom may sometimes be revealed in the questions of a learner than in the instruction of a teacher. The questions of the child Jesus, asked for the purpose of gaining information, showed that He already had a marvelous perception and grasp of truth, greater perhaps than had the doctors.

Later in life, when He was engaged in public labor, "the multitudes were astonished at His teaching, For He taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes." (Matthew 7:28-29,RV)

"And when He was come into His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence has this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?" (Matthew 13:34)

The true answer to this question is scarcely understood even by the followers of Jesus. If it were, there would be more of the same wisdom among them; for just as truly as "[Christ] emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men;" (Philippians 2:7,RV) so that: "It behooved Him in all things to be make like unto His brethren," (Hebrews 2:17) so truly, He possessed no advantages over His brethren, and had access to no sources of wisdom that are not open to all.

In All Things Like unto His Brethren

The common idea concerning Jesus is that He was born with special wisdom; that as an infant He possessed knowledge superior to that of most men; and that He did not need to learn as other folks do, but that His wisdom was inherited, so that He knew everything without any effort. Such an idea not only makes Him a monstrosity, but it places a great gulf between Him and us, so that we have nothing in common with Him, and derive, no help from Him.

All our hope and consolation in Jesus rests in the fact that, as partaker of flesh and blood, He was subject to the same infirmities that we are, was weak and helpless in himself as we are, yet without sin, and by the Divine life dwelling in Him made "Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." (1 Corinthians 1:24)

He came to earth to let men know what God can do in human flesh; and just to the extent that we imagine Him to have "natural" abilities superior to ours, do we deprive ourselves of the grace that is brought to us in Him.

The fact that Jesus was not born with greater knowledge than possessed by other infants, is indicated by the statement that: "[He] increased in wisdom and stature and favor with God and men." (Luke 2:52)

It would have been as incongruous for Him to be born with perfect wisdom, as to be born with full stature. He increased in wisdom as He grew in age and stature, just as other children are expected to.

In the 5th chapter of Isaiah we have the Lord's own statement of how He obtained the wisdom that made Him the greatest teacher the world has ever seen. That this chapter contains the words of the Lord Jesus, is shown by: "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting." (Isaiah 5:6)

Now read verse 4: "The Lord God has given me the tongue of them that are taught, that I should know how to sustain with words him that is weary; He wakens morning by morning. He wakens my ear to hear as they that are taught [or "as disciples"]." (Isaiah 5:4)

Christ was himself, a disciple, a learner from the Father, thus showing that only they who are learners can be apt teachers.

Jesus made no claims to be the possessor of a special gift. He said, "I can of my own self to nothing. ... Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he sees the Father do." (John 5:30,19)

These are not the expressions of false modesty, for Jesus spoke only truth, as He is the Truth; therefore as no man can be any weaker than not to be able to do anything of himself, or more ignorant and not to know anything without being taught, even so there is no person in the world who does not possess the same advantages that Jesus did. Hear Him again: "Then said Jesus unto them, When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you shall you know that I am He, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father has taught me, I speak these things." (John 8:28)

To Moses God said concerning Jesus, "I will raise, a Prophet from among their brethren like unto you, and I will put my words in His mouth; and He shall speak unto them all that I shall command Him." (Deuteronomy 18:18)

The Promises To All Believers

All this is promised to all believers as well as to Jesus. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God that gives to all men liberally, and upbraids not; and it shall be given him." (James 1:5)

To "the captive exile" the Lord says, "I have put my words in your mouth." (Isaiah 51:16) "[As] God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself...[even so He has] put in us the word of reconciliation, [so that] He beseeches by us." (2 Corinthians 5:19-20)

If it is given to us to "pray ... in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God," (2 Corinthians 5:20) then of course the same grace, and the same gifts by grace, are bestowed upon us that were bestowed upon Him. "Unto everyone of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." (Ephesians 4:7)

All this knowledge of Jesus came solely from the Word of God, through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. He asked wisdom and received it just as we may. But we must not suppose that we are to ask for wisdom, and then go to sleep and wake up wise. We are to ask in faith, and that means according to God's promise, which is this: "My son, if you will receive my words, and hide my commandments with you; So that you incline your ear unto wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; Yea, if you cry after knowledge, and lift up your voice for understanding; If you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hid treasures; Then shall you understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; out of His mouth comes knowledge and understanding. ... Then shall you understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path." (Proverbs 2:1-6,9)

To the simple, even to fools and scorners, God says, "Turn at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you." (Proverbs 1:23)

Jesus needed no reproof, for He did not turn aside from the way. He said, "I delight to do your will, O my God; yea, your law is within my heart." (Psalm 40:8)

We have sinned, as He did not; but if we will turn at the reproof of the Lord, He will make known to us the same words of wisdom that He did to Christ; for Christ is made unto us wisdom, as well as righteousness. "But of Him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." (1 Corinthians 1:30)

How little we have realized the wonderful depths and heights and breadth of wisdom that is contained in the Word of God, to be freely bestowed on all who will humbly, patiently, and prayerfully study them. Both Solomon and He who is "greater than Solomon" derived all their wisdom from this source alone, as we have learned by the inspired testimony of Solomon. God, who through Solomon said, "My son, if you will receive my words ... then shall you understand." (Proverbs 2:1,5) was speaking to His Son Jesus, and also to us, whom He accepts as sons equally with Jesus. Jesus listened and learned. He says, "The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back." (Isaiah 50:5)

He has said to us that: "If any man wills to do His will, he shall know." (John 7:17)

This wonderful knowledge is not hidden from children. Nay, the things that are hidden from the worldly wise and prudent are revealed unto babes. "I have more understanding than all my teachers; for your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients [the old men], because I keep your precepts." (Psalm 119:99-100)

This is not to the praise of the child, but of the Word, which any child, as well as Timothy and Jesus, may know.

One thing must not be forgotten, and that is that such wisdom accompanies only true humility. The simplicity of real childhood must be maintained. We must always, even with the knowledge which the Word gives, confess that we know nothing except as we are taught.

Natural pride, stubbornness, and unwillingness to acknowledge that we have nothing and are nothing, are the hindrances to the acquirement of true knowledge.

But we have the assurance that the same God whose power bestows upon us the wisdom of Christ is able also to give us His meekness. "But the fruit of the Spirit is ... meekness." (Galatians 5:22-23)

Let us then be not rebellious, but submissive to the Word of wisdom.--Present Truth, May 6, 1897--Timeline: I-8 (First Passover Visit)--Luke 2:40-47.

Chapter 40

My Father's Business

When Joseph and Mary, after three days of searching, found Jesus in the temple, "sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions," (Luke 2:46) and reproved Him for not being with them, He replied, "Wist you not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:49)

What was He doing? He was not teaching, not disputing, for to attempt either would have been most unseemly in a child of twelve; but He was simply listening to the teaching of the doctors of the law, and asking them questions in order to get a more perfect understanding.

He was, in short, endeavoring to increase in the knowledge of God; and this was the doing of His Father's business.

The one thing required of God's children is to know Him. The real business of life is to learn to know God. It is for this that God has placed us here.

Are we attending strictly to business, or are we idling away our time in other things that we make ourselves think are more important?--Present Truth, March 20, 1902--Timeline: I-8 (First Passover Visit)--Luke 2:46-49.

Chapter 41

A Real, Model Child

The visit of Jesus to Jerusalem when He was twelve years of age is the only recorded incident in His life from infancy to His baptism at the age of thirty, yet it throws a flood of light on the scene, and makes us feel as well acquainted with the youth of Jesus as we possibly could by means of any ordinary biography.

Increasing in Wisdom

Verse 40 tells us that: "The child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him." (Luke 2:40)

Those who have the Revised Version will me by the marginal reading that, according to the literal Greek text, "[He] grew and waxed strong, becoming full of wisdom." (Luke 2:40)

He was in no respect different from other children, except in submission to authority, to those immediately over Him, and to the Word of God.

He was not born with all the wisdom which He afterwards exhibited, any more than He was born with a man's stature and strength. There are those who would have us believe that all men are born with all the wisdom that they will ever have, and that education consists merely in drawing it out of them,--an idea as absurd as it is dishonoring to God.

But while comparatively few believe that piece of nonsense, very many seem to think that it is true of Jesus Christ,--that He differed from everybody else, in that He never had to learn anything. The Scripture tells us that: "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature." (Luke 2:52)

No one would think of such a thing as a child born into the world six feet tall; but that would not be nearly so marvelous as a child born into the world with a man's wisdom. The latter would be a monstrosity indeed.

At twelve years of age the Jewish child becomes a man ecclesiastically. No synagogue can be formed unless there were ten men, no matter how many women and children there way be. While this was not necessarily the case in the time of Jesus, the custom has probably arisen from the fact that it was at that age that the males first presented themselves in the temple before the Lord, according to the requirement of the law. "Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord God." (Exodus 23:17)

After this time Jesus undoubtedly went up to Jerusalem every year, but this is especially mentioned because it was the first occurrence.

A Lesson for Parents

The feast was over, and the people were on their way home. Joseph and Mary missed Jesus from their side, but gave themselves no concern over the matter, supposing Him to be with some of their acquaintances. But when after a day's journey they saw nothing of Him, they began to be alarmed, and, not finding Him with any of their friends in the company, they returned to Jerusalem, where another day was spent in search. To His mother's reproving words, "Son, why have you thus dealt with us? behold, your father and I have sought you sorrowing;" (Luke 2:48)

He replied, "How is it that you sought me?" (Luke 2:49)

Surely in these words and in this record we have a lesson for parents. It was most certainly recorded for their learning. The lesson to be learned is that parents should know where their children are. "How is it that you sought me?" (Luke 2:49)

Sure enough; if they had been mindful of their duty in the first instance, they would not have needed to seek Him. That He was in no danger, and exposed to no special temptation, was not due to their care. The place for every child is with its parents, and every hour of the day and night the parents should know where it is, supposing or even knowing that a child is with "kinsfolk and acquaintance," does not relieve parents of their responsibility.

Many a child has been ruined, or has at least acquired habits that required much discipline to overcome, by making what we supposed to be the most innocent visits.

Parents cannot be too jealous in their watchfulness as to their children's associates. Nobody can take the place of the parent, and nobody should be expected to while the parent is alive.

Nobody else can be expected to have the same watchful interest in the child that the parent has. No right-minded person will resent such watchfulness on the part of the parent, and no true parent will begrudge the time and trouble. Too much trouble to look so closely after children? Ah! how few parents understand that they themselves are the chief gainers by their care for their children.

In bringing up children in a proper manner, the parents get most valuable discipline, and learn far more than the children do. The parent who does not learn more from his child than his child does from him, does not do his duty, or is very dull. Keep watch of the children! You need the discipline as much as they do.

The Wisdom of a Child

"They found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers." (Luke 2:46-47)

It is not uncommon to see a representation of this, entitled, "Jesus disputing with the doctors."

Nothing could be farther from the truth. Jesus was the manifestation of God; God is love; and: "Love does not behave itself unseemly." (1 Corinthians 13:5)

But it would be most unseemly for a child of twelve years to dispute with old men. He was listening attentively, and asking questions, not for the purpose of puzzling the doctors and showing His skill, but for the purpose of learning; and He was also modestly answering their questions. This would be becoming in any child. He was "sitting in the midst of the doctors," at their feet as a learner; and not standing as an instructor. "I [Paul] am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as you all are this day." (Acts 22:3)

The people were amazed at His understanding and answers. Here again is where most readers of this narrative fail to learn the lesson that is intended for them. They take it for granted that Jesus was an anomaly, "an exceptionally forward child," and that no other child of twelve could be expected to know as much as He did. All this is a mistake.

It is no doubt true that very few, if any, other children have ever manifested the same wisdom and understanding at the age of twelve that Jesus did; but that does not signify that they could not. "He was made like unto His brethren, ... in all things," (Hebrews 2:17) in order that in all things His brethren might be made like unto Him. Not only in His suffering, but in every act of life. He was "leaving us an example, that you should follow in His steps." (1 Peter 2:21)

Jesus showed just the wisdom that any well-trained child ought to show. He was a child as well as a man in order that children as well as men may live and be saved by His life. His life perfected in a child today will make that child even such as He was.

All that heard Him were astonished, but they ought not to have been. That is, if the Word of God had been heeded by them as it should have been, such things would have been common; it would not have been thought an extraordinary occurrence.

It is a thousand pities and a burning shame that such wisdom is still so uncommon. If Christians had read this part of the record of the life of Jesus to profit, it would not be an uncommon thing for children to know as much of truth as most doctors of divinity do. And what then of the older people? Why, they would of course know correspondingly more.

God has revealed unto babes things that have been hid from the wise and prudent, and therefore we do often find children "wise beyond their years," as it is mistakenly said. No child is ever wise beyond his years, but thousands are less wise than they ought to be at any given age.

And whenever a child does manifest some degree of the wisdom and understanding that God designs that every child should have, most people who see him

are so ill-advised as to talk and act as though he were a prodigy, until his wisdom is in danger of becoming foolishness.

The child that before was simple and natural, now supposing that he knew anything unusual becomes pert and selfconscious, and imagines that everybody in admiring him, or that if they are not they ought to be, and will take pains to attract attention to his supposed superior wisdom, which by that very act he loses.

It is most pitiful that most people, by their failure to understand how much a child ought to know, directly hinder the advancement of children in knowledge. There is need to learn of the Lord Jesus.

The Source of the Wisdom

The wonder exhibited by those who heard the child Jesus in the temple was the same as that afterward manifested by those who heard Him teach as a man. They said, "Whence has this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son?" (Matthew 13:54-55)

And again, "Is not this the carpenter?" (Mark 6:3)

Yet He knew no more than any carpenter may know. He himself has told us the secret of His wisdom and power: "I do nothing of myself; but as my Father has taught me. I speak these things." (John 8:28) "The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwells in me, He does the works.

He has said, "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. ... Verily, verily I say unto you, he that believes on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father." (John 14:23,12) "For the Lord gives wisdom; out of His mouth comes knowledge and understanding." (Proverbs 2:6)

That was the Word that dwelt in Christ. Then: "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." (Colossians 3:16)

All that Jesus knew He learned from the Word of God. Bear in mind that at that time the Old Testament Scriptures were all that existed. But it was not by simply poring over the leaves of the Bible, that Jesus got His wisdom. That is the Word of God, yet the Word of God would not be diminished in the least if every Bible were sought out and burned. Men's knowledge of the Word would be interfered with, but the Word would abide just the same, unharmed.

The Word of God, which teaches wisdom is spread over the face of all nature. Every leaf of the forest helps to make God's great Book. Here Jesus learned, and it is from the Book that is open to the poorest, and is plain to the most unlettered, that Jesus taught the people.

Yet everything that may be learned in all creation, is epitomized in the Bible. Just because Christians have not appreciated the Bible, has there been so great a mass of "science falsely so called" accepted in the Church as true wisdom. No school that ignores God's written and living Word can ever make a scholar equal to the man who may never have studied in the schools, but who has lived by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

The reason why the people were so astonished at the understanding of Jesus was that He held to the simple Word of God, while they knew nothing but the tradition of men. They were great sticklers to custom: He wished to know only what was right. The doctors dealt in imagination--the product of their own heads; Jesus held to facts--the infinite thoughts of God.

Truth is simple, and very easy to comprehend; it is only man's envelopment of it with speculation, that has made it seem obscure. The Word of God is light: "Your word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." (Psalm 119:105)

And the opening of it gives light: "The entrance of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple." (Psalm 119:130)

On Christ rested "the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; [Making] Him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord." (Isaiah 11:2-3)

But the same Spirit is given freely to all who wish to receive in order to obey wisdom in seeking men, and begging them to accept her. "[She] cries without; she utters her voice in the streets; She cries in the chief place of concourse, in the openings ofthe gates; in the city she utters her words, saying, How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scoring, and fools hate knowledge? Turn at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you." (Proverbs 1:20-23)

Whoever will heed the reproofs of the Lord, and profit by them, will have wisdom that this world knows nothing about.

The Father's Business

"Wist you not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:49)

Jesus said this when His parents found Him in the temple. "And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them." (Luke 2:49)

Although He was but a child, He knew that He was a child of God, and He knew His Father's will. Yet He was not puffed up by His knowledge; of course not, because whoever has the wisdom that comes from above, and who knows that it comes from above, and not from himself, cannot become puffed up or elated over it.

People think it a strange thing that anybody should really know the will of the Lord, and what the Lord has for him to do, when the fact is that every child ought to know it.

What was the Father's business for the Child Jesus to attend to? It was to be subject to His parents. He did not neglect His Father's business in going down to Nazareth with Joseph and Mary, and being subject to them. "Children, obey your parents in all things; for this is well pleasing unto the Lord." (Colossians 3:30) "Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right." (Ephesians 6:1)

Most people think that if they go about their Father's business, they must leave home, and engage in some "mission work." Well, Jesus was charged with the greatest mission ever committed to any being and He discharged it faithfully; and He was never

more the Saviour of the world than when He was in Nazareth subject to His parents. There is a lesson here for old and young. "Whatsoever your hand finds to do, do it with your might." (Ecclesiastes 1:10) "And whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." (Colossians 3:17)

This is to be about your Father's business.

Finally: the sum of all that may be learned in this narrative is found in this: "The Word became flesh." (John 1:14)

The Word was God, and God was manifest in the flesh; but this was simply for a light to the world, that the same might be manifest in all men. "The Word of God is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow." (Hebrews 4:12)

Take the Word as your guide, become full of it, eat it and assimilate it and thus it will become flesh, and you will not only know, but will do, the will of your Father which is in heaven.--Present Truth, January 4, 1900--Subtitle: The Child Jesus Visits Jerusalem--International Sunday School Lesson for January 14--Timeline: I-8 (First Passover Visit), 9 (Youth and Young Manhood)--Luke 2:41-52.

Chapter 42

Work of John the Baptist

When the angel Gabriel foretold to Zacharias the birth of his son John, he said: "He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the Spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." (Luke 1:15-17)

Thus his work was to be one of preparation for the coming of the Lord. In what way was this preparation to be made? We have the answer in the inspired words of Zacharias, after the birth of John: "And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Highest; for you shall go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways; To give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high has visited us, To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." (Luke 1:76-79)

In fulfillment of this, we find that John came "preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." (Luke 3:3)

His message was, "Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 3:2)

If the word of John the Baptist had ceased with his death, it would have but little interest for us. We should read of it as a bit of history, interesting as an attractive story, but not personally concerning us. This is the way it is too often read.

But that is a grave error; for the work of John the Baptist has not yet ended. We do not mean merely that the influence of his work has not ceased, but that the message which was committed to him is a live message still, and is still to be proclaimed by those who are the Lord's servants.

Christ's Second Coming

For it should not be forgotten that the mission and work of the Baptist reaches up until the coming of the Lord in glory, to give reward to His faithful people. John came in fulfillment of the "words of Isaiah the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; And all flesh shall see the salvation of God." (Luke 3:4-6; Isaiah 40:3-5)

After comparing the above two passages of Scripture, read farther in the 40th of Isaiah: "And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it." (Isaiah 40:5)

Note that the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and that all flesh is to see it together. Compare this with: "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father, with His angels; and then shall He reward every man according to his works." (Matthew 16:27)

Also: "Behold, He comes 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." (Revelation 1:7) "And then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." (Matthew 24:30)

Note also that the voice is to say, "Behold your God! Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him; behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him." (Isaiah 40:9-10)

This, compared with Revelation 22:12 "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." (Revelation 22:12), shows plainly that, although John the Baptist's personal work ended soon after the baptism of Christ, the message which he began to proclaim reaches until Christ's second coming in glory.

For in this study it should be remembered that John the Baptist himself stands for a movement. While he was a man of marked characteristics, he stands not as a single individual, but as a great force-a reformation. This is seen by the quotations in the preceding paragraph, and by the words of John to the messengers whom the Jews sent to ask him, "Who are you?" (John 1:22)

John said, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as says the prophet Isaiah." (John 1:23)

If you turn to the book of Isaiah again (chapter 40) you will see that it is the "voice" that is given prominence. The Saviour said that John was "more than a prophet."

Repentance and Faith

Thus we find that John the Baptist stands as the type of those who shall proclaim the second coming of Christ, and his message is the message which is preached to prepare people for that great event.

Let us examine it briefly. He preached "repentance" and "remission of sins." "Sin is the transgression of the law." (1 John 3:4)

To preach remission of sins, is to preach turning away from sin; and this agrees with the words of the angel, that he should "turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just." (Luke 1:17)

That means that he was to preach the commandments of God; and that he did so is shown in his reproof of sin, and in the instruction which he gave to enquirers. But remission of sins is only through faith in Christ, and this John also preached, as we learn from: "Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on Him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." (Acts 19:4)

His preaching was therefore the same as Paul's: "Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts 20:21)

And this is the message which prepares for the Lord's return; for those who are waiting for Him, are "they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." (Revelation 14:12)

It is "the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ," (Romans 3:22) that is to prepare men to meet the Lord Jesus Christ when He comes.

The Commandments of God

The commandments of God are ten, in which are summed up every other precept of the Bible. They comprise "the whole duty of man." (Ecclesiastes 12:13)

The one which is plainest of all, yet least understood, is the fourth, which reads thus: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shall you labor, and do all your work; But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger that is within your gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it." (Exodus 20:8-11)

This enjoins the observance of the seventh day of the week, the day which the Jews professed to keep, and which John and Jesus actually kept. The entire law, including the fourth commandment, is the "way" of the Lord.

Therefore those who are the followers of John the Baptist, in preparing the way of the Lord, must, in their preaching of the coming of the Lord, preach the Sabbath of the fourth commandment, the seventh day of the week. Those who truly preach such a message, deserve the name of Seventh-day Adventists. Such was John the Baptist.

Infant Baptism

John preached "the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." (Acts 19:4)

This dictates that he did not baptize infants. His message was, "Repent, and believe."

Repentance and faith were the indispensable conditions. Without these things none could be baptized by John. But infants cannot repent and believe. They have no knowledge of sin, and no ability to believe.

Therefore those who take up and carry on the work of John the Baptist,--the work of preparing a people for the coming of the Lord,--will have nothing to do with the so-called baptism of infants. They will not thus caricature one of the most solemn ordinances of the Gospel.

Baptism is Immersion

We said "so-called baptism," in speaking of the ceremony performed on children; for sprinkling, whether applied to infants or adults, is not baptism at all. It is nothing like baptism. The words "baptize" and "baptism" are the original Greek word spelled with Roman characters. They are not translated, but only transferred; so that when we use them we pronounce them very nearly as the ancient Greeks did.

Now by those words the Greeks always meant "to dip in or under water." A Baptistarion meant "a bathing place," or "a swimming-bath," and we have the same word in the form of "baptistery." There is no instance of the use of the word "baptize" by the Greeks, in the sense of sprinkle.

We have before us the standard Greek-English Lexicon, by two Churchmen, Henry George Liddell, D.D., Dean of Christ Church, and Robert Scott, D.D., late Dean of Rochester, and Master of Balliol College, Oxford, and they give no hint that the idea of sprinkling ever attached to those words.

Those clergymen had doubtless sprinkled many babies, calling the act "baptism;" yet as scholars they well knew that there was no more authority for calling it baptism than for calling it flying. The word Baptistes, which is the word used in the New Testament for Baptist, as in "John the Baptist," is defined in Liddell and Scott's Lexicon, "one that dips: a baptizer."

John went down into the water with Jesus, and baptized Him, just as Philip did with the eunuch. They both "came up out of the water." (Acts 8:39)

This is all in keeping with the meaning of baptism, which is a memorial of the death and burial of Christ. "Know you not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection." (Romans 6:3-5) "Buried with Him in baptism, and wherein also you are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who has raised Him from the dead." (Colossians 2:12)

Temperance

The forerunner of Christ was strictly temperate, and thus we learn that temperance will be a prominent characteristic of those who are preparing the way of the Lord. His life emphasized his teaching. He was a living protest against extravagant living.

Ministers and religious workers who conform to popular customs of eating and drinking, especially drinking, will be accounted "good fellows" by the world, but they will not influence it for good. The world loves preachers whose lives give a silent sanction to worldly habits.

John the Baptist did not compromise with the world, thinking thus to win it to Christ. He preached the plain truth, no matter how unpopular it was, and took the consequences. So those who truly engage in the work which he began, will proclaim the truth, and the whole truth, even though it be unpopular, and though men in the highest positions are offended.

It was not the rulers, but the common people, that heard Jesus gladly.

Power of the Holy Ghost

Lastly, we find the secret of John's loyalty to the truth, in the fact that he was filled with the Holy Ghost. John went before the Lord, "in the spirit and power of Elijah." (Luke 1:17) "It is the Spirit that bears witness, because the Spirit is the truth." (1 John 5:6)

And so those who are preparing the way of the Lord, by proclaiming the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, can do so in reality only as they are led by and filled with the Holy Ghost. This is the promise of the Saviour, to fit men to be witnesses for Him. This it is that makes baptism more than a mere form, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we bond or free; and have all been made to drink into one Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:13)--Present Truth, May 3, 1894--Timeline: II-1 (Ministry of John the Baptist)--Luke 3:3-6; Matthew 3:2.

Chapter 43

The Baptism of John, and the Baptism of Jesus

There is a wide-spread idea that there was an essential difference between the baptism taught and administered by John the Baptist, and that by the disciples of Jesus. (It will be remembered, of course, that Jesus did not personally baptize anybody.)

This idea has come, partly at least, from a misapprehension of the passage in Acts, concerning Apollos and the twelve men whom Paul found at Ephesus. This is not a trivial matter, for the misapprehension contributes to the notion that at some point in the first advent of Jesus there was a change of "dispensations," the former "the Jewish," and its successor "the Christian dispensation." And this notion is particularly pernicious, in that it presupposes that God is changeable, sometimes having one way of salvation, and at other times another way.

The best, and, indeed, the only way to correct an erroneous opinion is to note exactly what the Word of God says. In the case of Apollos, we read that: "[He] was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spoke and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue; whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." (Acts 18:25-26)

Now read what is said of the twelve disciples whom Paul met at Ephesus, and asked, "Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed?" (Acts 19:2)

Their reply was, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." (Acts 19:2)

Paul then asked in surprise, "Unto what then were you baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then Paul said, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on Him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. And when they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." (Acts 19:3-5)

Whoever has read the record of John's work ought to be able to perceive at once that these men had not been baptized by him, and that they had never heard John preach. If they had, they would have known about the Holy Ghost; for John proclaimed the baptism of the Spirit. There is in the Scriptures no disparagement of the teaching of John, or of the baptism which he administered.

By a comparison of Matthew 3:1-2 "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, And saying, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 3:1-2) and Mark 1:14-15 "Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent, and believe the gospel." (Mark 1:14-15), it will be seen that Jesus preached exactly the same thing that John did, namely, repentance and the Gospel of the Kingdom. Paul's words, "John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance," (Acts 19:4) were not a criticism of John's teaching and baptism, but an explanation of what it really was; for they were evidently ignorant of it. It is plain that these men had been baptized, not by John, but by some person who might or might not have heard John, and that they had been baptized in the name of John. This is confirmed by the words that follow those last quoted. "Saying unto the people that they should believe on Him that should come after him." (Acts 19:4)

That is, John had not preached that people should believe on him, but on the One who should come after him; and this is what is to be preached unto this day.

As soon as the men heard the truth concerning John's baptism, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. They had not really been baptized before; for baptism that is not in the name of the Lord Jesus is of no more value than an ordinary bath, if it be as much as that. If John had taught and baptized the men, they would not have needed a second baptism.

The same thing is indicated in the record concerning Apollos. He was instructed in the way of the Lord, but imperfectly. He knew the Scriptures, but only as an unenlightened Jew,--one upon whose heart the veil still lay. He had heard of John, but He evidently did not know of Jesus. This can be gathered from what is said of his teaching after he had been instructed by Aquila and Priscilla: "He mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus is Christ." (Acts 18:28)

Before that, He had not heard of Jesus, or at least did not know that He is Christ.

That there was no "change of dispensation" at the time of the first advent of Jesus is evident from the fact that Jesus and His disciples taught exactly the same thing that John the Baptist did; and, moreover, both John and the disciples of Jesus taught the same things that the Jews had been taught for hundreds of years; for they used the writings of the prophets.

It is true that there was a great revival; but a revival is not a new dispensation. The Word was proclaimed with greater power by John and Jesus than the people had been accustomed to hear it; and in that respect it was "a new doctrine": "And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they do obey Him." (Mark 1:27) "And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof you speak, is?" (Acts 17:19)

So the preaching of Luther and Wesley revealed new truth and made the Bible a new book to thousands; yet the reformations, in which those men were leaders, were not new dispensations of God's grace. They were simply the awakening of the people to the grace and truth that God had from the beginning freely offered to all who would accept them.--Present Truth, February 19, 1903--Timeline: II-1 (Ministry of John the Baptist)--Matthew 3:1-6.

Chapter 44

The Preaching of John the Baptist

A Message for Today

When the messengers whom John sent from his prison to interview Jesus, and to ask if He were indeed the Messiah, had departed, Jesus said to the people, "What went you out for to see? A prophet? yea; I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before your face, which shall prepare your way before You. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist." (Matthew 11:9-11)

With this testimony before us, we are justified in saying that John the Baptist was more than a mere man. By this we do not mean that he was divine, or that he was as a creature anything more than any human being, but that he was the embodiment of a great movement that was greater than any man, and which continued after the man died, and which continues today.

He was the one spoken of by Isaiah the prophet, saying, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; And all flesh shall see the salvation of God." (Luke 3:4-6)

This prophecy is found in Isaiah 40:3-5. Now read Luke 3:3, in connection with the verses just quoted: "He came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord." (Luke 3:3-4)

From this we see that the message spoken of by the prophet Isaiah is one of remission of sins. The preparation of the way of the Lord is by preparing the hearts of the people. This is set forth in the inspired utterance of Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist: "You, child, shall be called the prophet of the Highest; for you shall go before the face of the Lord, to prepare His ways; To give knowledge of salvation unto His

people by the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God." (Luke 1:76-78)

This is of itself sufficient to show that the message of John the Baptist cannot cease as long as there is any hope of sinners accepting the tender mercy of our God.

Christ's Coming in Glory

Further, the "way of the Lord," which was to be prepared, is His coming in glory, to give the final reward to His saints. Isaiah had identically the same message that John had, and he was to proclaim it "until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, And the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land." (Isaiah 6:11-12)

In the chapter where the work of John the Baptist is specially described, namely, "The voice crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord," (Isaiah 40:3) we read, just following, "Behold, the Lord God will come with a strong hand, His arm shall rule for Him; behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him." (Isaiah 40:10)

From Matthew 11:13-14, we learn that John and his work are mentioned in Malachi 4 where we read, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord; And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to the fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse [or, "with utter destruction"]." (Malachi 4:5-6)

This is the plainest possible statement of the fact that the work of John the Baptist extends until the coming of the Lord in glory. Unless we know this fact, we cannot study the account of his work to any real profit; but when we know that his message is the message for our time, even until the last day of probation for sinners, then we shall know what there is for us to do, and how we are to do it.

The Entrance of Your Word

At a certain time, most minutely described, "the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness." (Luke 3:2)

He was alone, yet he knew the word of the Lord when it came to him, and he did not need to go to Jerusalem, to consult with the priests and doctors of the law, to learn if it was really the word of the Lord that had come to him. If he had done so, they would most certainly have told him that he was mistaken, and that he ought to take a thorough course under them before he thought of such a thing as beginning to preach.

We know as a matter of fact that they did not know anything about his work, nor recognize it as being from God. "And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who are you? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Are you Elijah? And he said, I am not. Are you that prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who are you? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What do you say of yourself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Isaiah. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why do you baptize then, if you are not that Christ, nor Elijah, neither that prophet?" (John 1:19-25) "The entrance of your words gives light; it gives understanding unto the simple. ... Your Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." (Psalm 119:130,105)

It certainly ought not to be a difficult thing for anybody to see the light when it comes to him. If he cannot, then he is blind; but: "The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." (Psalm 19:8)

So the Word of God makes even the blind to see, if they will receive it when it comes to them. Everybody, therefore, may know the Word of the Lord, and may know just what it says to him, and what it demands of him, as well as did John the Baptist.

The Spirit of Prophecy

John the Baptist was the greatest prophet that ever lived, yet he did not foretell any future event. He simply, quoted the Scriptures, and warned men to repent of their sins. He did no miracle: "John did no miracle: but all things that John spoke of this man were true." (John 10:41)

But John preached the truth as it was recorded in the Bible. This therefore is to be the characteristic of all those who, living in the last days, are prepared for the coming of the Lord, and who give others knowledge in order that they may be prepared.

Let us see from the Scriptures that this is so. At the command of the Lord, Moses in the wilderness selected seventy of the elders of Israel, and set them round about the tabernacle; "And the Lord came down in a cloud, and spoke unto him, and took of the Spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders; and it came to pass, that, when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease." (Numbers 11:25)

But there were two men who remained in the camp, with the congregation, and did not come to the tabernacle with the other elders, and the Spirit rested upon them also, and they prophesied as well as the others. When Moses was informed of this, Joshua, full of zeal for his master, said, "My lord Moses, forbid them. And Moses said unto him, Do you envy for my sake? would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them." (Numbers 11:28-29)

This was not an idle wish, but an indication of what might have been; and whatever gift may be received from the Lord, ought to be received. Now that such a state of things as Moses desired is possible, and the right thing to exist in the church, is seen from the words of the Apostle Paul: "Follow after love; yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but rather that you may prophesy. For he that speaks in a tongue speaks not unto men, but unto God; for no man understands; but in the Spirit he speaks mysteries. But he that prophesies speaks unto men for edification, andcomfort, and consolation. He that speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but he that prophesies edifies the church. Now I would have you all speak with tongues, but rather that you should prophesy. ... If all prophesy, and there come in one that believes not or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth. ... For you may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted." (1 Corinthians 14:1-5,24-25,31)

Read still further: When John the Apostle on Patmos was about to worship the angel who showed him wonderful things, the angel said: "See you do it not; I am a fellow-servant with you and with your brethren that hold the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." (Revelation 19:10)

Now put with this: "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." (Revelation 12:17)

It is evident from this that the very same people who keep the commandments of God have also the Spirit of prophecy; and it is certain that all the people of God will keep the commandments of God; therefore it is also certain that everyone of the people who are ready to receive the Lord when He comes, having finished the work that He gave them to do, will have the Spirit of prophecy.

What it is to be a Prophet

Let no one mistake the meaning here; there will be no danger of making any mistake, if we keep in mind what the Spirit of prophecy is. People in general have a fixed and narrow idea of what a prophet is, and what the Spirit of prophecy is. A prophet is one who speaks for God. The Lord said to Moses, "See, I have made you a God to Pharaoh; and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet." (Exodus 7:1)

Now read concerning the relation of Aaron to Moses, and what his work was to be: "You shall speak unto him, and put the words in his mouth; and I will be with your mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what you shall do. And he shall be your spokesman unto the people; and it shall come to pass, that he shall be to you a mouth, and you shall be to him as God." (Exodus 4:15-16)

Aaron was the mouth of Moses, to speak for him whatever he wished to say. Moses instructed the people through Aaron. That constituted Aaron the prophet of Moses.

Just so whoever receives the words of God at His mouth, and speaks them to the people, is God's prophet. He may not foretell any future event, but he will speak the words of God. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." (1 Peter 4:10) "For he whom God has sent speaks the words of God." (John 3:34)

Thus may and should all the people of God prophesy, and until they do that, they are not giving the testimony to the world that God would have them give; they are not

witnessing for Christ. God gives the Spirit in order that all may speak His words, and be faithful witnesses.

God's People Seers

Still further: "Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to enquire of God, he spoke thus, Come, and let us go to the seer; for he that is now called a prophet was beforetime called a seer." (1 Samuel 9:9)

A seer is simply one who sees. Now God would have all His people see; for He says in a message for the very last days, "Anoint your eyes with eyesalve, that you may see." (Revelation 3:18)

Whoever can see will recognize the Word of God when it comes to him, and the Word will itself make him see if he will but gladly receive it. And so will all God's people be seers, knowing God's will, discerning the signs of the times, and making known the truth to the world. He who has not the Spirit of prophecy cannot discern that Spirit; for: "The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judges all things." (1 Corinthians 2:14-15)

How the Gift Comes

Let no one think that this gift comes arbitrarily, or that anybody can have it simply by declaring that he has it, or by any sort of mere profession that he may make. The Spirit of prophecy is the portion only of those who keep the commandments of God,--not of those who have the form of keeping the commandments, mind you, but of those who do indeed keep them. The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit: "And take the ... sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." (Ephesians 6:17)

And the Spirit comes to everybody as the reprover of sin, first of all. The promise is coupled with this statement: "Turn at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you." (Proverbs 1:23) "The commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life." (Proverbs 6:23)

He who heeds the reproofs and instruction of the commandments of God, will receive abundantly of the Spirit of God, and will know the will of God; for: "If any man wills to do His will, he shall know of the teaching." (John 7:17)

Here then we have the great lesson that is to be learned from the record of the work of John the Baptist. That which God is waiting for today is a people united not by a formal creed, but by the one Spirit, and thus all speaking the same thing. "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment;" (1 Corinthians 1:10) a people filled with the Spirit, and so seeing light in the light of God, and reflecting the light to others.

The message of John the Baptist--the preaching of the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins--was never more needed than it is today, but it cannot properly be given except by those who know the Word of God when it comes to them, and who are seers. They must receive the Word direct from God, and not from any man, and they must receive the Word first of all as a reprover of the sins of their own lives.

We have not said a word about the sayings of John; if we know what he stands for, we shall not have much difficulty with his message. Yet there is much that ought to be considered in the words that John spoke in answer to those who questioned him, and we shall in another paper call special attention to some of them. [See Prophecies Concerning the Messiah, and This World's Reward of Faithfulness , both in the section, "Middle and Closing Galilean Ministry." Also, see chapter 39: "The Last Loud Gospel Cry," and chapter 41: "Preparing the Way of the Lord," in the book, The Gospel of Isaiah] Those who have read this article will be the better prepared to appreciate the importance of what he said.--Present Truth, January 11, 1900--Timeline: II-1 (Ministry of John the Baptist)--Luke 3:1-17.

Chapter 45

We Have Abraham to Our Father

"And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." (Matthew 3:9)

These are the words which John the Baptist spoke to the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to his baptism.

These men were corrupt at heart. Their character is described by our Saviour himself in Matthew 23:13-33, where they are said to have outwardly appeared righteous, while within they were full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Both John the Baptist and our Saviour called them vipers. "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance." (Matthew 3:7-8)

These men were lineal descendants of Abraham, and were of the stock of Israel, but they had lost the spirit of Israel. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob confessed that they were pilgrims and strangers on the earth. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." (Hebrews 11:13)

They did not expect their portion in this life, nor an earthly inheritance; but they looked for a city from Heaven, and an inheritance in the new earth, wherein righteousness alone should dwell. "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness." (2 Peter 3:13)

And they knew that the possession of righteousness would be the only passport to that heavenly inheritance.

The Pharisees, on the other hand, had ceased to look for a Messiah who should finally reign over a righteous nation, and who should prepare subjects for that kingdom

by cleansing them from sin. They did not look at their hearts, which were corrupt, but only on the outward appearance, which was fair. Consequently, seeing no sin in themselves, they felt no need of a Saviour.

And so they came to John's baptism, not because they felt any need of flying from the wrath to come, but because they thought that by enrolling themselves in the ranks of the new leader, whose coming John announced, they would be sure of places of honor in the coming kingdom.

They expected that this kingdom would bring simply emancipation from the Roman yoke, and would place the Jewish nation in the seat of dominion over the whole world; and they had not the slightest doubt but that they would have a place in the kingdom, because they were children of Abraham. Their sole anxiety was to have as high a place as possible.

John saw through their mask of hypocrisy, and told them that they need not flatter themselves that they were children of Abraham. The promise to Abraham and to his seed would be fulfilled, but sooner than count them as the seed of Abraham, God would raise up children unto Abraham, out of the stones of the ground.

The inheritance was promised to Abraham, not because God regarded his person or his descent as superior to that of other men, but because he had the righteousness of faith. Conse- quently those who are counted as heirs with him, must be men of like character. It certainly would not be just to accept Abraham solely because of his faith in God, and to accept oth- ers solely on account of their parentage.

Afterward, when Christ was talking to the wicked Jews, He said, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham." (John 8:39)

The apostle Paul also says, "And if you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:29)

The Pharisees who came to John to be baptized thought that the fact that they could prove their descent from Abraham, would insure them a place in the kingdom of Christ; but Paul shows that they had turned the matter around. They could only prove

themselves children by bringing forth such works of repentance as would show them to be Christ's.

There are many today who have as erroneous ideas of the kingdom of Christ as the Pharisees and the Sadducees had. There is a large party called the National Reform Association, whose members think that Christ's kingdom is going to be established at the polls, by the voices of men. And they imagine that they are sure of a place in that kingdom, because they can trace their ancestry back to the Covenanters, or some of the Reformers.

They forget that the Reformers did not follow the multitude, but took the Bible for their guide, as far as its truths were revealed to them, and that in following its teachings they suffered untold hardships. The Reformers became such, solely be- cause their love for God and His truth was so great as to lead them to endure privation and to be considered as outcasts.

And yet these men imagine that they can ride into the kingdom of God on the top wave of popularity. How terribly mistaken they will some day be.

The kingdom of Christ is promised only to the true Israel, but the true Israel are only those "whose praise is not of men, but of God." (Romans 2:29)

Those who will be great in that kingdom, must be content to be small here; and whosoever will be chief, must be a servant: "Even as the Son of man [the King himself] came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:28)

He was in the form of God, and had all glory and honor, yet when He saw the lost world, He did not think His glory was a thing to be desired, so he laid it all aside, and "Made himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also has highly exalted Him, and given Hima name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth." (Philippians 2:7-10) "The servant is not great than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him." (John 13:16)

Let none therefore imagine that he is going to get into the kingdom on the strength of a profession, nor because he is a descendant of the Reformers, nor because he is a member of a large and influential church organization. Let none think that he can be more favored than the King, and can obtain the kingdom by any other means than humble self-denial and a godly life.

Neither let any think that Christ's reception of the kingdom depends on them. He receives His kingdom from the Father (I will declare the decree: the Lord has said unto me, You are my Son; this day have I begotten You. Ask of me, and I shall give You the heathen for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; you shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." (Psalm 2:7-9) "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." (Daniel 7:13-14), and will admit into it only those who upon the foundation of faith have built a superstructure of virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity. "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacks these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if you do these things, you shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 1:5-11)--Signs of the Times, July 7, 1887--Timeline: II-1 (Ministry of John the Baptist)--Matthew 3:7-9.

Chapter 46

The Baptism of Fire

To the multitude who had come to the banks of Jordan to be baptized, John the Baptist said: "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but He that comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." (Matthew 3:11)

There is no question but that the baptism of the Holy Spirit was administered on the day of Pentecost, although it is not probable that John had special reference to that occasion. That was simply a notable example of what John said should take place. All believers in Christ must be baptized with the Spirit, and must "walk in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:16), if they share the final reward.

But many people suppose that the baptism of fire was also administered on the day of Pentecost, which is a grave error. The next verse plainly indicates what was meant by the baptism of fire: "Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." (Matthew 3:12)

This shows that although the words of verse 11 were addressed to all the multitude, John did not mean that all should receive both the baptism of the Holy Ghost and the baptism of fire. He might baptize them all with water, and thus they might all be counted by men as followers of Christ; but He who should come after, would have His fan in His hand, and would thoroughly purge His floor, saving the wheat, and burning up the chaff in the fire. This is the meaning of John's words. The expression, "He will thoroughly purge his floor," (Matthew 3:12) shows that especial reference is made here to those who, by baptism, have professed to be Christ's. It was well understood by all that those who did not profess to be Christ's would be destroyed, but here they are shown that a profession alone is not sufficient, because the floor will be purged.

Now there was no baptism of fire on the day of Pentecost. It is true that: "There appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them." (Acts 2:3)

But this was not a baptism of fire. In the first place it is not said that there was actual fire present, but something which had the appearance of fire. Secondly, even if it had been fire, it would not have constituted a baptism of fire, for baptism is not administered in that way. Baptism means immersion, or an overwhelming. The disciples were baptized with the Holy Spirit, because: "It filled all the house where they were sitting." (Acts 2:2)

They were completely submerged in the Spirit. And the cloven tongues like fire formed a part of this manifestation of the Spirit.

But who will receive the baptism of fire? All those who do not receive the Spirit, or who, having once received it, do not walk in it, they will be burned up in that fire that shall burn as an oven. "For, behold, the day comes, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." (Malachi 4:1) "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." (Revelation 20:10) "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." (Revelation 21:8)

Here it is said that the wicked shall have their part in a "lake of fire." The whole earth will be melted with the fervent heat, and will present the appearance of a sea of liquid fire "and the works that are therein shall be burned up." (2 Peter 3:10)

The destruction of the wicked in this lake of fire may, without doing violence to language, fitly be called a baptism. In this lake of fire they will be submerged, and will be consumed root and branch.

Thus John was speaking of two baptisms:

1. One which saves, and

2. One which destroys.

And since he was talking, not to certain individuals whose destiny he might foresee, but was talking to the multitude collectively, some of whom would be saved, and some lost, he could truthfully say to them collectively, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." (Matthew 3:11)

Some of them would receive one baptism, and some the other.

There are some well-meaning persons who pray to be baptized with fire; and there are hymns which call for the baptism of fire. Such prayers and hymns cannot but cause a shudder to one who knows what the baptism of fire will be.

Let us pray above all things for the baptism of the Spirit, but let us pray most earnestly to be saved from the baptism of fire.--Signs of the Times, July 7, 1887--Timeline: II-1 (Ministry of John the Baptist)--Matthew 3:11-12.

Chapter 47

A Wise Answer

When John the Baptist was preaching in the wilderness, the soldiers came to him among others, and asked him, "What shall we do?" (Luke 3:14)

His answer was, "Do violence to no man." (Luke 3:14)

A man with less of the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, might have said, "Leave the army at once," and thus have got them into trouble, and got himself branded as a mover of sedition.

But John did not presume to take upon himself the responsibility of telling them how they should act, but gave them a simple Gospel precept, throwing the responsibility upon them. Soldiers who "do violence to no man," will soon find a place outside the ranks.

The Christian soldier is the man who never fights with carnal weapons, and whose only sword is: "The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." (Ephesians 6:17)--Present Truth, April 19, 1894--Timeline: II-1 (Ministry of John the Baptist)--Luke 3:14.

Chapter 48

Justified and Glorified

Jesus Christ in the flesh was the representative of the human family, a sample of what all humanity might become through union with Him. All that He did as man, He did for us, as our representative, and each individual may by faith receive the full virtue of every act of His life, just as though He himself had wrought it. Take, for example, His baptism. "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all," (Isaiah 53:6) that He, "the Lamb of God, [might] take away the sins of the world." (John 1:29)

So when the multitudes came to be baptized in Jordan, confessing their sins, "Then came Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John to be baptized of him." (Matthew 3:13)

And it was by faith he witnessed in this act to the power of His sacrifice to cleanse the whole world of sin, the Spirit also bore witness to the acceptance of that cleansed humanity with God.

Jesus was baptized as our representative, confessing our sins; therefore the words, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," (Matthew 3:17) are for us, who are "accepted in the Beloved." (Ephesians 1:6)

The opened heavens, the descending Spirit, the approval of the Father, all are ours in Him who "by himself purged our sins," (Hebrews 1:3) and justified humanity. This glorious fact even the apostles were slow to accept, and a special vision was given to Peter in which the truth that in Christ all men were justified and cleansed was most emphatically taught. "What God has cleansed, do not call common." (Acts 10:15)

These were the words thrice repeated in the vision; and in relating it Peter said, "God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean," (Acts 10:28) thereby showing that in Christ God has cleansed every man. Hence the yearning call to those who have not experienced a blessing as of "the man whose transgression is forgiven and whose sin is covered," (Psalm 32:1) because they are ignorant of that blessed fact: "I have blotted out as a thick cloud your transgressions, and as a cloud your sins; return unto me; for I have redeemed you." (Isaiah 44:22) "Whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He so glorified." (Romans 8:30)

At His baptism Christ revealed man justified and accepted.

Later, towards the close of His life on earth, He revealed man glorified. For a little while the veil was removed, and the beauty and glory of the divine image shone forth and proclaimed Him the Son of God. A chosen few of His disciples were "eyewitnesses of His majesty; When He received from God the Father honor and glory." (2 Peter 1:16-17)

And this He received as man for men; He was still our representative. Therefore seeing Jesus crowned with glory and honor, the whole creation waits in hope for the manifestation of all the sons of God, when all whom He has justified shall be likewise glorified, when the righteousness wrought for them and in them by the divine Son of man, shall clothe them with raiment white and glistening, fine linen clean and bright, and crown them with unfading glory. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." (1 John 3:2)

Then, "[He shall] change our vile body, and fashion it like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto himself." (Philippians 3:21)--Present Truth, May 29, 1902--Timeline: II-2 (The Baptism)--Matthew 3:13

Chapter 49

The Comfort of Approbation

Everybody knows what an encouragement it is to have one's work appreciated. We do not refer to the unhealthy love of applause but merely to honest appreciation.

It is very hard for a person to labor on month after month, and it may be year after year, finding his work misunderstood, and not become discouraged. Yet this was just what Jesus did. No one, not even His most intimate friends, or His own family, understood Him. He could not talk over His work with any companion, and find kindly sympathy and encouragement. He listened to the woes of others, but had nobody to share His own.

Yet He did not fail or become discouraged; and the reason was that He made a confidant of the Father, from whom He always received sympathy. And He was not without the encouragement of appreciation, for God said in the hearing of the multitudes, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:17)

You will say, "Surely that was approbation enough; if I could only have that approval, I would not mind the lack of sympathy and appreciation from men."

Well, we may have it. Of Enoch it is said: "Before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." (Hebrews 11:5)

It was by his faith that Enoch had this testimony, and faith will bring us the same heavenly commendation.

What need, then, of complaining because our work is not appreciated? If it is what God has given us to do, and we, like Christ, do always the things that please Him, we should be content and happy, even though all men oppose. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31)--Present Truth, May 8, 1902--Timeline: II-2 (The Baptism)--Matthew 3:17.

Chapter 50

Fulfilling All Righteousness

How Was He Baptized?

It is a pity that so wonderful a thing as that the Man should come to be baptized by the man who preached "the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins," (Mark 1:4) has ever had to be brought down to the level of a discussion as to how He was baptized, as though there ever could be more than one way. It is one of the devil's tricks to keep the minds of people away from the consideration of "the mystery of godliness." (1 Timothy 3:16)

If the second commandment is broken by the making of likenesses of any sort whatever, whether they are worshiped or not, the makers of the so-called pictures of the baptism of Jesus will certainly be counted guiltless on that score; for never yet was there a picture purporting to be of this event, whether by one of the "old masters" or by the new apprentices, that was like anything that ever happened in heaven or earth, or in the waters under the earth.

To see the numerous pictures representing Christ as standing ankle-deep in the water, and John, high and dry on the land, pouring a few drops of water on Him from a shell or a basin, is enough to make one think that "art" is a caricature of nature, instead of an improvement upon it.

It is true enough that in our language words often come to have a very different meaning from their original; but the word "baptize" is not an English word, but a full-fledged Greek word, and its meaning now is exactly what it was the day the Bible was written.

We have a very plain but expressive word, namely, "dip," the meaning of which everybody knows. Dipping a garment in the dye is a far different thing from sprinkling it for ironing, and nobody would ever mistake the one for the other.

When the Greek, whether scholar or peasant, said "baptize," he meant just the one thing,--to dip, to immerse, to submerge,--and that was all. In the Teutonic languages, to

which our English belongs, and from which it is largely derived, and which are content to translate a word, instead of hiding its meaning by leaving it untranslated, we have even to this day the word "dip" instead of "baptize," and "John the Dipper," instead of "John the Baptist."

Even so it would be in our Bibles, if it were not for the fact that the translators were under the spell of Rome. No person ever follows the Lord in baptism, unless he goes down into the water; for it is certain that no one can "come up out of the water" without first going down into it; and it was when Christ was "coming up out of the water," (Mark 1:10)--that the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove came upon Him. "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him." (Matthew 3:16)

If we are not "buried with Him by baptism," (Romans 6:4) how can we expect to be risen with Him? People will go hundreds of miles to stand in the very place Christ is said to have stood, or to see something that He is said to have worn, when they could "follow His steps" without leaving their homes, and they will not do it, but will instead get as far away as possible. It is in perverse human nature to love to be deceived.

Why Was He Baptized?

Why did Jesus receive baptism at the hands of John? He himself gives the answer: "To fulfill all righteousness." (Matthew 3:15)

There are depths and breadths to the life of Jesus of Nazareth that no man has yet explored. In this act we see Him revealed as one with those whom He came to redeem. We must remember that although He was Divine, He was a Divine Man. "[He was] in the likeness of sinful flesh," (Romans 8:3) "made under the law," (Galatians 4:4) having upon Him the sin of the whole world, and He felt oppressed by it as no other man before or since has ever felt for his own sins.

But He yielded His members as instruments of righteousness, just as we are to do, and indicated His complete acceptance of the life of the Father. He declared that He lived by the Father, and we are to live by Him: "As the living Father has sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eats me, even he shall live by me." (John 6:57)

Only so can all righteousness be fulfilled, and even Christ could do nothing of himself. Here is the strongest link that binds us to Him. He became one with us in our sin, that we might be one with Him in His righteousness. The fact that He fulfilled all righteousness, is proof that we also may in Him have the same fullness.

Temptations Necessary

Jesus had the highest sign of approval that heaven could bestow, and then followed the temptation. In this world it is necessary that for a season we be "in heaviness through manifold temptations, [in order] that the trial of our faith...may be found unto praise and honor and glory." (1 Peter 1:6-7) "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith works patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing." (James 1:2-4)

Therefore, "It became Him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of One; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." (Hebrews 2:10-11)

Jesus, having "taken on Him the form of a servant," (Philippians 2:7) must needs pass through all that the lowest servant has to endure. Having taken human flesh, He must bear all the infirmities of the flesh, and it was for that purpose that He came.

Temptations are necessary to keep us humble, and to teach us our dependence upon God. Let the sorely tempted one remember from the experience of Christ that temptations do not prove that he is not a son of God. Remember, too, that the Spirit of God led Jesus into the wilderness of temptation.

The Victory is Won

"In that He himself suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted." (Hebrews 2:18) "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed." (Isaiah 53:5)

His victory is our victory, for it was our sins that He bore. Therefore if we keep in mind His temptations, His trial and His victory, we may save ourselves much trouble. "This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith." (1 John 5:4,RV)

The chief temptation that Christ had to endure, the one that was twice repeated, was to doubt that He was really the Son of God. Do not make the mistake of considering this a light matter. It was a life and death struggle, and Jesus was sorely tempted to doubt the words that He had heard at His baptism, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," (Matthew 3:17) and to doubt His mission. After forty days of fasting in solitude, seemingly forsaken by both God and man, and seeing no face but those of the ravenous beasts, doubts would very easily be suggested. But He did not yield to them. By His victory, we may repel the temptation as soon as it is presented. Remember that: "[He] was tempted in all points like as we are," (Hebrews 4:16) and that no temptations came to Him but such as are common to men. But every temptation came to Him that ever comes to any man. Do not forget therefore that no man ever has a feeling of despondency or doubt that did not oppress the Lord Jesus.

Read the 22nd Psalm, and you will see something of what He passed through, and how He came out. Just as surely as He passed through the struggle a conqueror, may we also, even though we have many times been overcome by the tempter, be "more than conquerors through Him that loved us." (Romans 8:37)

Power Over Appetite

The first temptation was naturally on the point of appetite. Where man lost his dominion, is the place where he must regain it. He who can control his appetite can conquer anything. The man who in Christ is absolutely master of himself, of his whole body, is master of the world. To him is given "power over the nations." (Revelation 2:26)

It is just the point on which most people are most sensitive. They like to hear about the Gospel, but they do not like to hear anything about overcoming the appetite. Many who have made great sacrifices for their profession, will go back and walk no more with the Lord when a question of eating and drinking comes up.

People who will give up their situation in order that they may keep the Sabbath, will draw back when asked to give up some dainty to which they are slaves. Ah, it is a grand thing to learn that: "Man does not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord." (Matthew 4:4)

When we are content to live on the Word of God alone, then indeed have we fellowship with Him.

Faith Against Presumption

The second temptation was to presumption. If Satan cannot succeed in making us fall in one direction, when we draw back from it he will endeavor to push us over in the other. The first temptation had demonstrated the trust that Jesus had in the Father; therefore the devil would pervert that trust, and make it presumption.

Do not imagine that trust in God can ever be carried to such an extreme as to make it presumption. Far from it. Presumption has no connection whatever with faith. It is directly opposed to it. Therefore Jesus did not fall under the temptation. His faith in God saved Him from presumption.

It is true that God had promised to keep His children's feet from falling, but not when they go deliberately in the devil's path. It is those who have made the Lord their refuge, that are kept: "He that dwells in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust. Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings shall you trust: His truth shall be your shield and buckler. You shall not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flies by day; Nor for the pestilence that walks in darkness; nor for the destruction that wastes at noonday. A thousand shall fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you. Only with your eyes shall you behold and see the reward of the wicked. Because you have made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, your habitation; There shall no evil befall you, neither shall any plague come near your dwelling. For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. They shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone." (Psalm 91:1-12)

The promise was fulfilled in the case of Jesus, simply because He did not obey the suggestion of the tempter.

Vain Glory

There are endless applications that may justly be made of these temptations of Jesus, but it will be sufficient at this time if we learn from this that we are not at liberty to use our strength except in legitimate work. "Daring" feats, which should rather be called foolhardy, to show how much we can do or endure, are condemned by this victory. God gives us strength according to our day. "As your days, so shall your strength be." (Deuteronomy 33:25) "He is faithful, and will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will with the temptation make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it." (1 Corinthians 10:13)

We do not need to experiment beforehand, to see if we shall be able to endure the trial when it comes. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." (Matthew 6:34) "It is good that a man should hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." (Lamentations 3:22)

The Temptation to Ambition

The crowning temptation was ambition, and more than ambition, even the very same ambition that caused the fall of the angels. Showing Jesus all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, the devil said, "All these things will I give you, if you will fall down and worship me." (Matthew 4:9)

For much less than that, many a man has sold himself to the devil. To have all the earth! why, that was just why Christ came to this earth, and here it was freely offered Him.

No, not freely, for there was a condition attached that deprived the offer of all its value, and that was that He become the slave of the devil. But a slave is not a king, and the possessor of this earth must be a king. "He ... whose right it is," (Ezekiel 21:27) owns the earth because it is His by right of the righteousness which He possesses.

Possession of the World to Come

Moreover it was not "this present evil world" (Galatians 1:4) that God would have man possess. Christ came, not for the purpose of giving it to us, but "that He might deliver us from [it]." (Galatians 1:4)

Here is where many make a fatal mistake. It was "the world to come," (Hebrews 2:5) that God put in subjection to man. The earth was new, free from all curse of sin, when God gave it to man. It is an inheritance of righteousness, to which God has called us. The promise to Abraham, that he and his seed should possess the world, was only "through the righteousness of faith." (Romans 4:18)

Christians have no claim upon this world as it now is. Christ was content not to have so much of it for His own as would furnish a resting place for His head; even as Abraham had not so much as standing room. "And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has not where to lay His head." (Luke 9:58) "And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet He promised that He would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child." (Acts 7:5)

Many Christians are making the mistake of thinking that by gaining power in this world they will advance the kingdom of God. They imagine that by wars and fightings the kingdom will be advanced, and the time hastened when the will of God shall be done on earth as it is done in heaven.

Let everyone understand well that in order to gain any portion of this world he must do obeisance to "the god of this world," (2 Corinthians 4:4) the devil. Just in proportion as the church gains worldly power, she loses spirituality, and so at last when the church--not the true church of Christ, but that which fills the eyes of the world--shall have gained control of the whole world, so that it can dictate terms to governments, it will simply be the world.

The moment when it begins to celebrate what it will call its victory over the world, will mark its complete fall under the dominion of the devil. Beware of taking favors from the devil; there is always a strong chain fastened to them, and every link is a trap.

Power Over the Devil

"Then said Jesus unto him, get hence, Satan; for it is written,You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve. Then the devil left Him." (Matthew 4:10-11)

There was the power that overcomes the world. The devil offered Jesus all the kingdoms of this world, but Jesus, in commanding him to depart showed that He had power greater than that of all the kingdoms of the earth. He had power and authority over the god of this world.

That is the power which He gives to everyone of His followers. When Christ dwells in our hearts by faith, we are "strengthened with all might according to His glorious power." (Colossians 1:11)

He has given His disciples "power and authority over all devils." (Luke 9:1) "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." (James 4:7)

Just as surely as the devil was subject to the commands of Jesus, will he yield to our word if we "resist steadfast in the faith." (1 Peter 5:9)

He can have no more power over the one who is in Christ, than he had over Christ himself. "Forasmuch then as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind; for he that has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin." (1 Peter 4:1)--Present Truth, January 18, 1900--Subtitle: Baptism and Temptation of Jesus--Timeline: II-2 (The Baptism), 3 (The Temptation) Matthew 3:13-4:11.

Chapter 51

Take Heed

The Apostle gives us this exhortation: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; But rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings." (1 Peter 4:12-13)

It is the thought that when we are tempted we are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that enables us to "count it all joy when [we] fall into divers temptations." (James 1:2) "For in that He himself has suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted." (Hebrews 2:18)

We are to overcome even as Christ himself overcame: "To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne." (Revelation 3:21) "Forasmuch, then, as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind; for he that has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin." (1 Peter 4:1)

It becomes us, therefore, to study carefully the account of the great temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. In the first place, remember that the great temptation immediately followed the anointing by the Holy Spirit. Let no one therefore think that a wonderful blessing is a pledge of freedom from trial. Rather conclude that God, foreseeing fierce temptations about to assail you, is preparing you to meet them successfully. Satan plies his temptations the most vigorously after one has been greatly helped, because he knows that he may find the soul off its guard. "[Uzziah] was marvellously helped, till he was strong. But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction." (2 Chronicles 26:15-16) "Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." (1 Corinthians 10:12)

The first recorded words of Satan to Jesus were: "If you be the Son of God" (Matthew 4:3) He would have Jesus doubt His Sonship. There is no way in which Satan causes more people to fall than by leading them to doubt their acceptance with God. And these temptations are the most likely to come, too, just after a great spiritual uplifting. Satan will seek to lead us to doubt our experience, or to think that God has forsaken us.

At such times it is a most pleasant thing to know that we have the same assurance that Christ himself had. What was the evidence to Him that He was the Son of God? It was the word of God that came to Him after His baptism, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:17)

That same word comes to us, calling us beloved sons: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God." (1 John 3:2) "Herein is our love made perfect ... because as He is, so are we in this world." (1 John 4:17)--Present Truth, March 1, 1894--Original title: Front Page--Timeline: II-3 (The Temptation)--Matthew 4:3.

Chapter 52

Temptations in the Wilderness

Let no one deceive himself with the thought that by getting away from society and association with men, he will be free from temptation. Remember that:

- Jesus met His fiercest temptations alone in the wilderness.

- Luther in his monk's cell suffered temptations greater than any that ever came to him among his companions.

There is no place on earth where one will not be exposed to temptations, and solitude in the monk's cloister or the hermit's cave gives one no immunity from it. God has placed men in the world and it is there that they are to do battle and gain the victory.

This is not saying that solitude is not at times good for Christians; far from it. The secret place of prayer is where the heavenly plant fastens its roots most firmly in the Divine soil.

But he who runs away from what is called "the world," in order to avoid temptations, thereby shows himself already conquered; and the weakness exhibited in his running away, will make him an easy prey to the temptations that surely follow him.

We are not to run into temptation. We are to avoid it when we can. But he who cannot overcome in the position where God has placed him, can most certainly not overcome anywhere else.--Present Truth, September 7, 1899--Timeline: II-3 (The Temptation)--Matthew 4:1-11.

Chapter 53

Every Word

"And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." (Luke 4:4)

Man shall live by every word of God. Every word has the life of God in it. Wherever we get one word, that is the life, whether we understand another or not.

But when we get the life in one word, we cannot reject it in another word, and still retain the life. While each word has life for us, and one word is enough to give us life, we must live by every word that comes to us.

Thus we shall have life, and have it more abundantly.--Present Truth, March 1, 1894--Timeline: II-3 (The Temptation)--Luke 4:4.

Chapter 54

By Bread Alone

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4)

These are the words of Christ, and their application is as universal as the term "man." It is for each one of us to ask ourselves whether we find life in the word of God, or whether we live merely by physical food. If the latter, we are certainly not living as God designs that we should.

Some of us spend much time thinking about what we shall eat and how we may contrive to obtain it. Certainly then we should welcome any additional means of life that is placed within our reach, and endeavor to appropriate all that it has for our benefit.

God is the Author and Sustainer of all life, and He wants man to recognize this fact. He it is that gives all living creatures their food. But He sent the Israelites manna direct from heaven, that they might recognize that behind all the operations of nature are God and His word, without which those operations would instantly cease.

But while there is not life for man in everything that grows, there is life for him in every word spoken by God. He gets that life by faith. Simple, perfect belief, united to the smallest word of God, constitutes the "faith as a grain of mustard seed," (Matthew 17:20) which is able to remove mountains. God is life, and faith connects us with God; and he who is connected with God cannot die until God wills it; and even then he simply "sleeps" for a season, having still eternal life in Christ.--Present Truth, March 29, 1894--Timeline: II-3 (The Temptation)--Matthew 4:4.

Chapter 55

Trusting, not Tempting

There is much that passes for trust in God, that is nothing else but tempting God. Christ endured a great temptation on this point, in order that we might know how to distinguish between trusting God and tempting Him. In the account of Christ's temptation in the wilderness, we read: "Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, and set Him on a pinnacle of the temple, And said unto Him, If you are the Son of God, cast yourself down; for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning you; and in their hands they shall bear you up, lest at any time you dash your foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, You shall not tempt the Lord your God." (Matthew 4:5-7)

There is such a thing as changing the truth of God into a lie, and that is always done when the devil quotes Scripture. The words which the devil quoted from the 91st Psalm are addressed to those who dwell in the secret place of the Most High, abiding under the shadow of the Almighty, taking His truth for their shield and buckler, and not to any who should presumptuously disregarded God's word, and do what He has not commanded.

Christ was kept because He trusted in the Father; but there can be no trust where there is no commandment and no promise. As there was no commandment for Christ to throw himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, and no necessity for it, He could not have claimed any promise if He had done so.

The Lord tells us that where sin abounds grace does much more abound; and then the question arises, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" (Romans 6:1)

In other words, "Shall we do evil, that good may come?" [Editor's note: it was "slanderously reported" that the disciples taught this false doctrine: "And not rather, {as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,}" (Romans 3:8) Let us do evil, that good may come? Whose damnation is just.]

Not by any means. The grace abounds only in order that we may be saved from the sin in which we find ourselves; to go on deliberately committing the sin after the grace

of God has shown it to us, would be to tempt God, instead of to trust Him. It would be trying to get Him to deny himself by giving His grace to condone sin, and to multiply it, instead of to pardon and cleanse from it.

We once knew of a mother who, in her mistaken idea of love for her boy, allowed him to have his own way in everything, never correcting him for any fault. The result was that as he grew older he manifested no regard for her or her wishes, but made himself intolerable, not only to strangers, but even to his own mother, who had fancied that she loved him.

Too late she began to be interested in his salvation, and called in a minister to try to make up for her neglect; but as might be expected, the youth would not listen to a word of counsel or reproof. And then the mother with that spirit of weakness which many mistake for pious resignation, said, "Well, I can do nothing but trust in the promises of God."

But there was no promise in which she could trust. She had ignored: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it," (Proverbs 22:6)

The only word that fit the case, was one in which there was no comfort, namely, "A child left to himself brings his mother to shame." (Proverbs 29:15)

So her supposed trust was nothing but presumption.

Many people to whom a plain duty is made known by the commandments of God refuse to obey, and yet they imagine that they are trusting the Lord, whereas they are only tempting Him. When they ask Him to protect and save them, while refusing to listen to His word, they are asking Him to break His word. But it is written, "You shall not tempt the Lord your God." (Matthew 4:7; Deuteronomy 6:16)

When people go to places where they ought not, merely to gratify morbid curiosity, and not to seek and save the lost, they are yielding to the temptation of Satan, which Christ resisted. When they are in the path of duty they may safely trust the Lord, no matter where they are, or what the circumstances; but to go needlessly on the devil's ground is to tempt God, and to court destruction.

The story is told of William III, that in one of his battles he was in a very exposed position, and an officer who had brought a message to him, tarried with him after his business was done. The king told the officer that he was in danger, whereupon the man rejoined, "But your Majesty is in danger also."

"I am safe," replied the king, "because duty calls me here; duty does not demand your presence, and you are not safe."

In a few moments the man was killed by a cannon ball, while the king was uninjured. Whether the story is true or not, it illustrates the fact that the only place of safety for any man is the place of duty. While he is in the way of duty, he may "trust and not be afraid." (Isaiah 12:2)

It is often the case that supposed work for the Lord is done for other motives. Mosheim says, "What is man! The very best often serve God and themselves when they fancy they are serving God alone."--[Editor's note: This comment from Mosheim was made regarding the motives of John Calvin in putting Servetus to death. The quote is referred to in a few other books, but I could not locate the original source.]

Much that is supposed to be defense of the faith, is undertaken at the instigation of the enemy of truth, rather than at the command of the Lord. The professed followers of Christ often allow themselves to be drawn into discussions and contests by unchristian taunts.

When professed Christians engage in controversy because they fear that some will accuse them of cowardice if they do not, they are not following the example of Christ. He would not do anything for the mere purpose of proving that He was the Son of God.

We hear much about the necessity of speaking for God, but very little about the importance of keeping silent for Him. Jesus often held His peace when the scribes and Pharisees tried to provoke Him to speak in order that they might catch up something from His mouth. So we may often show our trust in God, and our confidence in His truth, by keeping silent. Here is an example: "I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue; I will keep my mouth with a bridle while the wicked is before me. I was dumb with silence, I held my peace even from good." (Psalm 39:1-2)

There is such a thing as casting the pearls of truth before swine, which is forbidden. "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." (Matthew 7:6)

Who can know when to speak and when to keep silence? Who can know what is exactly the right thing to do on every occasion? Christ alone never made a mistake, and only those in whom He dwells can be kept from stumbling. "He that trusts in his own heart is a fool." (Proverbs 28:26)

But the Lord has promised that those who receive His words and cling to them alone, "[Shall] understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path." (Proverbs 2:9)

Then, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not unto your own understanding." (Proverbs 3:5)--Present Truth, August 17, 1893--Timeline: II-3 (The Temptation)--Matthew 4:5-7.

Chapter 56

Again It Is Written

The necessity of being acquainted with all Scripture is seen in the account of the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. And when the devil tried to induce Him to throw himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, saying, "It is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning you; and in their hands they shall bear you up, lest haply you dash your foot against a stone," (Matthew 4:6)

Jesus instantly replied, "Again it is written, You shall not tempt the Lord your God." (" (Matthew 4:6))

By this the Saviour did not mean that the verse He quoted contradicted or even modified the other; but it was the shortest way of indicating that the passage in the Psalms does not justify presumption. It applies, as is plainly evident from the context, to God's people in troubles that come upon them, and not to those into which people may capriciously jump.

Jesus would not discuss the meaning of texts of Scripture with the devil, but silenced him with a text which made it evident that he had perverted Scripture.

So while we are always to take every text just as it reads, the more Scripture we know and remember, the less are we liable to misread any portion of it, thoughtlessly assuming that it says what it does not.--Present Truth, May 29, 1902--Timeline: II-3 (The Temptation)--Matthew 4:6-7.

Chapter 57

Fading Glory

"Again, the devil took Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And said unto Him, All these things will I give you, if you will fall down and worship me. Then said Jesus unto him, Get you hence, Satan: for it is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve." (Matthew 4:8-10)

When Satan showed to Christ the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them, he did it in a moment of time. Doubtless he realized that the picture would not bear inspection.

England has been covered with that same glory by her army in the recent war, but the shouting is dying away, and in its place there comes a rising murmur of discontent:

- The War Office attacked and ridiculed from all quarters;
- The generals who have been shelved for their incompetency;
- The reservists "fretting over deferred pay," and unable to find employment;
- The "ragging" of the young officers, and other features, do not combine to produce a very glorious spectacle.

Even in this life, the glory that God gives, is preferable to the glory of the world. God presents to us the cross of Christ, but whoever bears it finds glory in it.

The world allures with the promise of its glory, but it means a pathway of mortification and final disappointment.--Present Truth, March 26, 1903--Timeline: II-3 (The Temptation)--Matthew 4:8-10.

Chapter 58

Casting Out of Devils

When Jesus came back from the wilderness of temptation, where He had defeated the devil, He went about the country healing all that were possessed with devils. The casting out of devils was one of the most prominent features of His work on earth. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil," (1 John 3:8) and the devil himself. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." (Hebrews 2:14)

The Word of Salvation which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, was confirmed by those that heard Him. Christ said to His disciples, "As my Father has sent me even so send I you." (John 20:21)

Accordingly when He sent them forth to preach "[He] gave them power and authority over all devils." (Luke 9:1)

Without the casting out of devils, their work would have been a failure. If they could not have cast out devils, they could not have done the work of the Lord.

This power necessarily goes with the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the end of the world. Preaching which does not result in the casting out of devils, is not the preaching of the one true Gospel. This will be evident to everyone who remembers that sin is of the devil. "He that commits sin is of the devil." (1 John 3:8)

The devil is the ruler of this present evil world, "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience." (Ephesians 2:2)

Therefore the freeing of a soul from sin means the casting out of the devil. Paul was sent to the Gentiles, "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." (Acts 26:18)

Until a person has Satan cast out of him, he is a child of sin; he ceases to sin only when Satan is driven forth.

All this is made plain in the account of Christ's contest with Satan in the wilderness. He there showed His power over the devil, the same authority that He had ever after; for when He said, "Get you hence Satan," (Matthew 4:10) the devil could stay no longer. But this power was the same power by which He resisted all the devil's temptations to sin. Power, therefore, which Christ gives His followers, even to this day, over all the devils, must show itself in lives unsullied by transgression of the law.

A writer says: "Apart from the keeping power of God, we are never safe till we reach heaven."

True enough; but it ought to be known that the safety of the saints in heaven will be due only to the keeping power of God. That is why God has revealed to us something of the glories of heaven: it is that we may know what power we have to depend on now.

The saved in heaven can never be any safer than are the souls here and now on this earth, who trust implicitly and always in the everlasting God.--Present Truth, February 6, 1902--Original title: Back Page--Timeline: II-3 (The Temptation)--Matthew 4:10.

Chapter 59

The Lord's Temptation

There is one most precious statement in the account that Luke gives of the Lord's temptation in the wilderness. It is this, "And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from Him for a season." (Luke 4:13)

Christ was tempted for our sakes: "For in that He himself has suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted." (Hebrews 2:18)

How can He succor us in our temptation? By putting His mind in us, as the Apostle Paul exhorts us to let Him do: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 2:5) "Forasmuch then as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind; for he that has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin; That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." (1 Peter 4:1-2)

Whoever therefore is armed with the mind with which Christ resisted temptation, suffers with Him; and he conquers with Him also.

Satan will tempt us fiercely, but we have the comforting thought that when we resist with the mind of Christ, he will leave us for a season. He will in time return to the attack, hoping to find us off our guard; but for a time we may be left entirely alone with the Lord, to gather fresh strength for another struggle.

The devil will flee from us, when we resist him steadfastly in the faith: "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." (James 4:7) "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." (1 Peter 5:8-9)

But Christ has promised that He will never leave us nor forsake us: "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5)

With His abiding presence we need not fear the fiercest attack of the adversary. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for You are with me; your rod and your staff they comfort me." (Psalm 23:4)--Present Truth, January 4, 1894--Timeline: II-3 (The Temptation)--Luke 4:13.

Chapter 60

Every Temptation

"And when the devil had completed every temptation, he departed from Him." (Luke 4:13)

This rendering of the Revision, in Luke's account, brings out strongly the encouragement of the text.

Every temptation was tried, every bolt shot, and all failed. There is not a weapon left untried for Satan to bring rattling down upon the Christian armor for a fresh test. That armor has turned aside every device in the artillery of the enemy.

It is encouraging to the tempted to know that there has no temptation befallen him, but such as is common to man. But there is all joy and strength in the knowledge that there can come no temptation which was not common to "the Man Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 2:5) "He was tempted in all points like as we, yet without sin." (Hebrews 4:15)

And He gives to us His own faith--"the faith of Jesus"--which is "able to quench all the fiery darts of the enemy." (Ephesians 6:16)

It has done it; this faith is already the victory that has overcome the world.--Present Truth, April 26, 1894--Timeline: II-3 (The Temptation)--Luke 4:13.

Chapter 61

Grace Abounding

The sacrifices and offerings commanded to Israel of old were all intended to set before the people the work of Jesus Christ, "the Lamb of God which bears away the sin of the world." (John 1:29)

When Israel failed to see Christ in their sacrificial offerings, these were of no avail, and were no better than the sacrifices of the heathen. God did not regard them as offerings rendered unto himself, but as worship given to some false god who only existed in the perverted imaginations of the people.

Thus it was possible for Israel to be guilty of idolatry, even while nominally worshiping Jehovah. "Did you bring unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel. Yea, you have borne Moloch [margin] and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which you made to yourselves." (Amos 5:25-26)

The worship of Jehovah did not, like that of Moloch, call for the purposeless shedding of blood, but when Israel overlooked the teaching of their sin offerings, the blood was shed without avail, and the fact that this wholesale taking of life was done in the name of Jehovah rendered it no more acceptable in His sight than were the awful sacrifices by which Moloch was worshiped. "You have not called upon me, O Jacob, but you have been weary of me, O Israel. You have not brought me the small cattle of your burnt offerings; neither have you honored me with your sacrifices ... but you have made me to serve with your sins, you have wearied me with your iniquities." (Isaiah 43:22-24)

Christ, bearing the sins of the whole world, is not a manifestation of God for three and a half years merely, but for the whole period of earthly history. God has taken upon himself to sustain the life of all His creatures, to provide them with life and breath and all things.

He places His life at their disposal and gives them a free choice as to what they will do with it. Not one thought or word or act ever came into existence, which was not

rendered possible by God in supplying, the necessary power. Not a sin could be committed if it were not that God given life and strength to sinful men.

It is no burden to the Lord to maintain in perfect health and soundness the whole of His vast creation. "The God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth faints not, neither is weary." (Isaiah 40:26)

But although it is no drain on the Lord to supply men with all the life they need, and more than they can use, it does weary Him to have His life used for purposes of sin. This is so foreign to His inclinations that it distresses Him beyond our comprehension. "You have made me to serve with your sins, you have wearied me with your iniquities. I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for my own sake." (Isaiah 43:24-25)

The Lord is more anxious than men are to make an end of sin. It wearies Him more than it does them. Therefore, for His own sake He blots it out. No one need fear that the Lord will not forgive his sins because they are too great. If he is weary of them, the Lord is much more so, and for His own sake He blots them out.

Since every soul on earth is a sinner, and all live by the Lord's life, it is evident that it is the Lord himself who bears the whole burden of sin. Multitudes are not conscious of any burden themselves, but the Lord bears the burden of all, and whether they feel it or not, it wearies Him. Therefore it is true of the whole world that, for His own sake, God has blotted out their transgressions. He commits to His servants the ministry of reconciliation: "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; ... For He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5:19,21)

But there are some who have sinned more deeply than the heathen. There are those who, knowing their Lord's will, have not done it. The Lord speaks to such a class in the first chapter of Isaiah, who offer a multitude of sacrifices and make many prayers, yet whose hands are red with the blood of souls, lost by their unfaithfulness. These have a form of godliness, but lack the power of it.

Like the Pharisees of old, they make a fair show outwardly, but inwardly they are full of sin and uncleanness. The Lord is wearied enough when the heathen make Him to

serve with their sins, but those are infinitely worse than the heathen, for not only do they pervert God's life into the commission of the same sins, but they further make Him to serve, in that which is most detestable of all to Him, the sin of hypocrisy.

Surely we would think, the Lord must hate those who burden His life with that which is so repugnant to every instinct of His being, even using the strength He gives to lead astray and destroy other souls. He says, "Your appointed feasts my soul hates: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them." (Isaiah 1:14)

But, since the underhanded sin of professed Christians, using God's life not only for their evil-doing, but also for the attempt to make it appear righteousness, is worse than the open sin of the heathen, the burden upon Him must be so much the heavier, and therefore His desire to get rid of the wearying burden must be so much the greater. More emphatically to them than to any others, comes the word, "I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for my own sake." (Isaiah 43:25)

Because the silver is become dross, "Your princes are rebellious and companions of thieves," (Isaiah 1:23) everyone seeking his own gain and oppressing the helpless, "Therefore, says the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the mighty Oneof Israel, Ah, I will ease me of my adversaries, and avenge me of my enemies." (Isaiah 1:24)

God will blot out the sins that weary and burden Him, so that the greatest sinner need not be discouraged. Although we have added hypocrisy to guilt, if we will let the Lord deal with our sins, He will gladly and promptly attend to their removal, and the heavier they are, the more assurance we have that God, for His own sake, will blot them out of remembrance. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." (Romans 5:20) "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all." (1 John 1:5)

The sinful soul need not fear to find clouds of discouragement if he turns to the Lord, for the penitent will find in Him no darkness at all. "His going forth is prepared as the morning;" (Hosea 6:3) and He sets His people in a path that: "Shines more and more unto the perfect day.--Present Truth, February 9, 1899--Timeline: II-4 (Jesus Declared "The Lamb of God")--John 1:29.

Chapter 62

Where Are You Looking?

When John saw Jesus walking by the river side, he pointed toward Him, and said, "Behold the Lamb of God." (John 1:29)

Suppose the disciples, instead of looking in the direction where John pointed, had looked only at his finger; they would not have seen the Christ.

Now that is just what a great many people are doing. The Gospel teacher's only business is to point man to the Lamb of God; he is to be a seer, and to point out to other people what he sees.

But if they keep looking at him, instead of where he is pointing, and expect to get the knowledge from him,--to make his sight answer for theirs,--they will certainly see nothing.

As soon as people get hold of the idea that if they wish to see they must rouse themselves to use their own eyes, that is, that they must acquire the knowledge of God and His truth in the same way that the teacher does, they cease to complain that the Gospel is so obscure that they cannot understand it.--Present Truth, March 1, 1900--Timeline: II-4 (Jesus Declared "The Lamb of God")--John 1:29.

Chapter 63

The First Disciples of Jesus

Two things are noticeable in the story of the first disciples of Jesus:

1. The class of men whom Jesus called, and

2. The readiness with which they followed Him.

They were not all from one class. One, Matthew, was a rich man; all the others were poor men, in the sense that they had no income except from their daily labor. But whether rich or poor, they were all those who were not held in the highest repute by the proud Pharisees. "Good enough men as fishermen, if they would but keep their place, but with no qualifications for teachers or preachers."

This would be the natural comment of the learned rabbis. But Jesus did not choose them for what they were, but for what He could make of them. "For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wisemen after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called; But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are; That no flesh should glory in His presence; ... That, according as it is written, He that glories, let him glory in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 1:26-29,31)

Those whom Christ chose were men who were in a condition to be made over new, so that the new wine of the Gospel could be put into them. They did not know so much that they were not willing to learn more.

Among all the gifts which God by the Spirit has placed in the church, we do not find preachers. The Lord has not made any provision for a preaching class. A bishop or elder must be "apt to teach," (1 Timothy 3:2) but nothing is said about his preaching. If most people were asked to name the chief qualification of an elder, they would say, "apt to preach."

No; every Christian is a preacher, whether he knows it or not; he is a preacher by virtue of his existence but to be able to teach, to catch men for the kingdom of God, needs special training by the Holy Spirit. So when Christ called Peter and Andrew, He said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." (Matthew 4:19)

Not only so, but they were to be made successful fishermen, for He also said, "From henceforth you shall catch men." (Luke 5:10)

Things Which Are Despised

All the first disciples of Jesus were of the common people. "The common people heard Him gladly." (Mark 12:37)

Christ himself was one of the common people. "Then you spoke in vision to your holy one, and said, I have laid help upon One that is mighty; I have exalted One chosen out of the people." (Psalm 89:19) "He [was] despised and rejected of men." (Isaiah 53:3)

But it is "to him whom man despises," that God speaks: "Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despises, to him whom the nation abhors, to a servant of rulers, ... In an acceptable time have I heard you, and in a day of salvation have I helped you; and I will preserve you, and give you for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inhabit the desolate heritages." (Isaiah 49:7-8)

Note well that there is only one qualification here: "To him whom man despises."

Jesus was not the only one in the world, who has been despised. How many of us have not felt ourselves despised? Indeed, we have despised ourselves. Then these words apply to us as well as to Jesus. God has chosen us to be His salvation unto the ends of the earth. "But," you say, "we are justly despised, because of our sinfulness, while Jesus was unjustly despised."

What difference does that make? The text does not say, "To him whom man unjustly despises," but "To him whom man despises."

It is unlimited. Wherever there is a poor, despised person on this earth, there is one whom God has chosen to be His messenger of salvation. The only question is, will the despised person acquiesce in the choice?

After three years of intercourse with Jesus, there was a marked change in the disciples. The learned doctors of the law could indeed see that they were of the common people, and that they lacked the peculiar polish of the schools, but "they marveled [at their words]; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." (Acts 4:13) "Behold, God exalts by His power; who teaches like Him?" (Job 36:22)

Christ had and still has all the learning and wisdom of eternity to impart to all who follow Him. No one who closely follows Christ need have occasion to mourn his lack of opportunities. Following Christ is not a substitute for education, but supplies the genuine article, if one is willing to undergo the necessary discipline.

Prompt Obedience

Matthew was a rich man, engaged in a lucrative business. Yet as soon as "[Jesus] said unto him, Follow me. He left all, rose up, and followed Him." (Luke 5:27-28)

This was written as an example for men to the end of time. It is a very common thing for men to say, "I will begin to serve the Lord as soon as I can get my business settled." "As soon as I can dispose of my business, or as soon as I can pay my debts, or as soon as I can get out of this partnership, I will begin to keep the Sabbath of the Lord."

Matthew made none of these excuses, although he certainly had as much ground for them as anybody ever can have, for he was in Government employ. But the business of the king had to give way for that of the King of kings.

When a father calls his son, it does not sound very respectful for the son to answer, "I'll come when I get ready."

Yet that is just what many people virtually say to the Lord. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God." (Mark 10:23)

Excuses, however, are not confined to the rich; the poor are often just as ready with them. "I should lose my situation, if I begun to serve the Lord, keeping all His commandments." "I could not make a living, if I should keep the Sabbath."

How often we hear these words. Peter and Andrew were fishermen, having only their fishing nets and their boats with which to earn a livelihood. "And [Jesus] said unto them, Follow me. ... And they straightway left their nets, and followed Him." (Matthew 4:19-20)

Ah, those are the followers in whom Jesus delights. How often we think, "If I were only such a man as Peter, or John! In that case I might do something worthwhile."

Well, you can at least begin to be like them. You can be like them in the beginning of their career, and leave it with the Lord as they did, to determine what you shall be afterwards.

God has no use for two exactly alike. All the first disciples of Jesus were marked by the characteristic of David, who said, "I made haste, and delayed not to keep your commandments." (Psalm 119:60)

How strange it is that people seem to take it for granted that all the martyrdom, and the spirit of martyrdom, is relegated to the past, and that now it cannot be expected that they shall inconvenience themselves in the least for the sake of Christ. "Even Christ pleased not himself." (Romans 15:3)

And He still says, "Follow me!" "If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." (Matthew 16:24) "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." (Luke 9:23-24) "He that takes not his cross, and follows after me, is not worthy of me." (Matthew 10:38)

Ah, here we have the answer to the oft-repeated complaint, "I am so unworthy."

When the man makes that complaint, we know what is the trouble. Let him deny himself, be content to be of no reputation, take up his cross, and follow the Lord

promptly, instead of hesitating, and dreading it, and the Lord will count him worthy, and will make him of incalculable worth. Just such disciples as those first ones, the Lord is still seeking. Will you be one of them?

Come and See

Nathanael had some doubts, but Philip did not waste time arguing with him. His only answer was: "Come and see." (John 1:46)

That is all that is required of any servant of Christ,--to lead men to Him, that they may see Him. Let men see Him, and He will do the rest. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." (John 12:32)

Who is authorized to do this? "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes unto me." (John 6:45) "If so be that you have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus:" (Ephesians 4:21)

Whoever has heard, and has learned of the Father as the truth is in Jesus, and has come to Him, is commissioned to bring others to Him. "Let him that hears say, Come." (Revelation 22:17)

Let everyone take heed not to misrepresent Christ, and be sure that he brings men to the real Christ, and not to himself or to something of his own devising. Happy is the person who can say of a truth, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write." (John 1:45)

Such a man has an argument that will be sufficient for every doubter, namely, "Come and see."

Those who refuse to comply with so reasonable a request, would certainly not listen to anything; and those who, having seen Jesus crucified before them, yet will not believe, cannot be reached by any argument, and so nothing more is needed. "But how shall I show Jesus to them, if I do not preach to them, and argue with them?"

That question reveals the fact that you have not yet found Him. All the most eloquent preacher in the world can do to lead men to Christ, is to tell them how he found Him, and what He has done for him; and the least talented man in the world can do that.--Present Truth, January 25, 1900--Timeline: II-5 (The First Disciples)--John 1:35-46.

Chapter 64

How to Obey

In the record of the call of the apostles, we have a lesson on how the Lord wishes men to obey His call: "Follow me." (John 1:43)

Simon and Andrew were fishers. Jesus said, "Come after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men." (Mark 1:17)

Not a moment did they hesitate, but: "Straightway they forsook their nets, and followed Him."" (Mark 1:18)

Peter and John were also fishers. They were in their boat, mending their nets, which had been broken by the great number of fish that they had just taken. "And when they had done this, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net broke." (Luke 5:6) "And when He had gone a little further thence, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets." (Mark 1:19)

Jesus called them, "and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after Him." (Mark 1:20) "And after these things He went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom; and He said unto him, Follow me. And he left all, rose up, and followed Him." (Luke 5:27-28)

There are two great difficulties that confront people when they are asked to follow Christ. That is, most people are confronted by one or the other of them:

1. The poverty of the one called. One man hesitates because he has hard work to make a living, and he doesn't know how his family will be provided for if he obeys the Lord.

2. The wealth of the one called. Another man has so extensive a business on his hands that it is impossible to leave it, at least until he has had time to arrange his affairs.

Both these classes of people are represented in the above calls, but they took no account of the difficulties. We know that Peter had a family, and being a humble

fisherman he could not have been wealthy. Yet he did not stop to consider how he should support his family if he obeyed the voice of Jesus, but left his nets, and went with Him.

Levi was wealthy, for the office of publican was a very lucrative one; yet he left his business at a moment's notice, when Jesus said to him, "Follow me."

So it was with Paul. He says, "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, To reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." (Galatians 1:15-16)

That is the way the Lord wishes men to obey His voice. He reveals himself in the Sabbath of the fourth commandment--the seventh day,--and says to them, "Follow me." "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shall you labor, and do all your work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord your God: in it you shall not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger that is within your gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it." (Exodus 20:8-11)

Many hesitate. With some, it is their poverty that stands in the way. They don't see how they can live if they keep the Sabbath, forgetting that people who do not keep the Sabbath also die; and forgetting that it is the Creator of the heaven and earth, who calls them; forgetting that He who calls them to obey Him, says, "The silver is mine and the gold is mine," (Haggai 2:8) and also, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof." (Psalm 24:1)

Of His power to provide for His followers, we have a striking proof in the wonderful draught of fishes that the disciples took at His word.

The more wealthy are still more inclined to hesitate to obey the call which Jesus sends them in the Sabbath, because the Sabbath is the best day for business. They do not reflect that it is He who gives them power to get wealth: "But you shall remember the Lord your God: for it is He that gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore unto your fathers, as it is this day." (Deuteronomy 8:18)

He is just as able to give wealth to those who obey Him, as He is to give it to those who disobey Him; and that, after all, "A man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses." (Luke 12:15)

Men cannot be too slow to follow strange and doubtful voices; they cannot be too cautious about moving when God has not spoken; but they cannot be too quick to obey the voice of the Lord. David said, "I made haste, and delayed not, to keep your commandments." (Psalm 119:60)

And then he declared that he would run in the way of the commandments of God. "I will run the way of your commandments, when You shall enlarge my heart." (Psalm 119:32)

God's will is to be done on earth as it is in heaven; and in heaven, "[The] angels...do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word." (Psalm 103:20)--Present Truth, March 22, 1894--Timeline: II-5 (The First Disciples)--John 1:43.

Chapter 65

Jesus of Nazareth

"Philip found Nathanael, and said unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip said unto him, Come and see." (John 1:45-46)

A whole volume could not describe the standing of Nazareth any better than Nathanael's question of astonishment. It had a bad reputation. It was so bad that nobody expected any good thing from it. Yet Jesus was all His earthly life associated with Nazareth, and He is still known as "Jesus of Nazareth."

It would have been according to human nature to associate His name with some more renowned place. Any ordinary man would have taken care that he should be announced as from Jerusalem, or from Capernaum: but Jesus was content to be heralded as "Jesus of Nazareth." "[He] made himself of no reputation [for our sakes]." (Philippians 2:7)

From this simple fact we may derive both comfort and instruction. We may be comforted by the knowledge that Jesus identifies Himself with the humblest and the most despised. No matter how poor and despised people are, nor how degraded they are, if they but come to Him in faith, "He is not ashamed to call them brethren." (Hebrews 2:11)

This is most comforting. And we should learn also from "Jesus of Nazareth," not to despise or reject any person because of his birth or station. Many a man who has lived all his life in a hovel, and had only shabby clothing, will yet dwell in a mansion, and be clothed in light as the brightness of the firmament. Martin Luther was a miner's son, John Bunyan was only a tinker, and one of the grandest titles of the Lord of all worlds is "Jesus of Nazareth."

Come and See

When Nathanael said to Philip, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46)

Philip's only reply was, "Come and see." (John 1:46)

He did not argue the question, but took the only sure way to convince the questioner; he led him to Jesus, that he might see for himself.

It was thus that the woman of Samaria convinced her neighbors. She did not argue with them, but said, "Come and see." "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" (John 4:29)

When they saw Jesus, they believed on Him, as Nathanael did. "And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on Him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did. So when the Samaritans were come unto Him, they besought Him that He would tarry with them: and He abode there two days. And many more believed because of His own word; And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of your saying: for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." (John 4:39-42)

That is the Christian's strongest and only valid argument. He may argue, but the unbeliever can argue also; but when a man sees Jesus there need nothing more be said.

So in everything Jesus is to be lifted up and presented to the people, and He will do the convincing. Blessed are they whose lives, as well as their words, say, "Come and see."--Present Truth, November 16, 1893--Timeline: II-5 (The First Disciples)--John 1:45-46.

Chapter 66

Jesus of Nazareth

"Philip found Nathanael, and said unto him, We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip said unto him, Come and see." (John 1:45-46)

The name by which Jesus was distinguished while on earth was "Jesus of Nazareth."

"[Joseph] came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene." (Matthew 2:33)

And after the ascension of Christ, that name was used in the performance of a mighty miracle. To the man who had never had the use of his legs, Peter said, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." (Acts 3:6)

In the economy of God there are no accidents. It was not an accident that Jesus was brought up from infancy in the town of Nazareth, and that He is known to this day as "Jesus of Nazareth." There is something for us in the frequent use of that title. What is it?

Consider the reputation of the people of Nazareth, and you have the answer. The estimation in which the place was held is indicated by Nathanael's question: "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46)

Philip expressed no surprise at this question, for nobody expected to hear of any good from Nazareth, and he did not attempt to defend the place, or to argue the case at all. The only thing he could say was, "Come and see." (John 1:46)

The place was so thoroughly bad that nobody would believe that there was any good in it unless he saw it for himself.

The word Nazareth means "separated." But the city of Nazareth was separated or distinguished by its general worthlessness. It was in that place that Jesus was brought up, yet He was a Nazarite indeed, separated and distinguished because of the goodness of His character. Under the very worst conditions, He developed a perfect character.

Was not this written for our encouragement and strength? How often we wish that we could get out of the conditions in which we find ourselves through no fault of our own, into a place where the conditions are more favorable for serving God. And because we are where we are, and our associates are so wicked and so much opposed to the truth, we persuade ourselves that we cannot be expected to do right. So we, like Felix, wait for a more convenient season, which too often never comes.

It is for help in just such cases that we are directed to Jesus of Nazareth. He was faithful to Him that called Him. He was just as good in Nazareth as in Bethany. Circumstances and associations had no effect on Him, for He trusted in God from childhood. "[He] went about doing good, ... for God was with Him." (Acts 10:38)

And the good which He did to suffering people was only the shining forth of the good that was in Him. If He had not resisted the evil influences which the devil threw around Him in Nazareth, He could not have healed those who were oppressed by the devil.

There is not a phase of human experience that Jesus has not passed through. No one is in such unfavorable circumstances for doing God's will as Jesus was. He knows all about us. And He is with us every day, even, to the end of the world.

He does not simply point to His achievements, to how He "endured such contradiction of sinners against himself," (Hebrews 12:3) but by the blessed and all-powerful Holy Spirit He comes into our hearts, to endure the same things still, and to make us "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." (Ephesians 6:10)

Therefore, "Consider Him." (Hebrews 12:3) "Take the name of Jesus with you,"--[Lydia Odell Baxter (1809-1874), Hymn: Take the Name of Jesus With You.] even the name of Jesus of Nazareth. There are no associations so bad that Jesus cannot live a holy life in the midst of them, and it is He, not we, who gains the victory. "Thanks be unto God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians

15:57)--Present Truth, August 18, 1898--Original title: Back Page--Timeline: II-5 (The First Disciples)--John 1:45-46.

Chapter 67

The Vine and Its Fruit

Shortly after Jesus began His public ministry, there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, to which He and His disciples were invited. In the course of the wedding feast the wine failed, and the mother of Jesus notified Him of the fact, and then said to the servants, "Whatsoever He says unto you, do it." (John 2:5)

The result is thus told: "And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus said unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And He said unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bore it. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was (but the servants which drew the water knew); the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, And said unto him, Every man at the beginning sets forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but you have kept the good wine until now. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him." (John 2:6-11)

Christ the True Vine

The Saviour and said, "I am the true Vine, and my Father is the Husbandman. Every branch in me that bears not fruit He takes away and every branch that bears fruit, He purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can you, except you abide in me. I am the Vine, you are the branches; He that abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit; for without me you can do nothing." (John 15:1-5)

The miracle of turning water into wine is an object lesson reality of this statement that He is the true Vine, and that we can bear fruit through being connected with Him, as branches.

All life springs from God through Christ. He is the Creator of all things, and in Him all things are supported. "For in Him were all things created, in the heavens and

upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through Him, and unto Him; And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist." (Colossians 1:16-17,RV)

It was by virtue of this power that He turned the water into wine. In that miracle He simply hastened the process.

Let us trace it. In the instance before us, Christ transformed the water instantly into wine. In the ordinary case, the moisture is absorbed by the rootlets, and is drawn up through the stock, and dispersed to the various branches, where it is stored up in the little sacs which we call grapes. The sunshine has a large part to act in the process of transformation.

No one can know how the change is effected; we only know that water, with the element which it holds in solution, is changed in the course of a few months into delicious fruit.

Men call this the working of nature and because the thing is so common they forget that it is a miracle. In the miracle which Jesus wrought at the wedding in Cana, He showed that in the ordinary process the water is not changed into wine through any inherent power in the vine, but by His own power, which works in every living thing.

This shows that it is not as a mere figure of speech that He calls himself the Vine, but that it is an actual fact. Because He is the true Vine, He could in a minute change the water into wine. He did in a minute what He ordinarily does in several months through the grape vine.

Now by the same power by which Christ changed the water into wine, and by which He makes all the fruit of earth grow, He is able to make the fruits of righteousness come to perfection in human beings. We cannot know how it is done in any case; we can only know the facts.

The Scriptures make use of the mysteries taking place all around us in "nature," to teach us to grasp the mystery of the Gospel of grace. Just as the branch bears rich clusters of grapes, through its connection with the vine, all by the power of Christ the

true Vine, so we, being directly connected with Him by faith, may bear the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

Righteousness and Temperance

In the case of the water turned to wine we have the most striking lesson not only in righteousness but also in temperance. The two are combined. The question is often asked, "What kind of wine was it that Jesus made at Cana?"

Many assume that it was as a matter of course fermented, intoxicating wine, and urge that miracle as an evidence that Christ sanctioned the use of intoxicating liquor. If we study the miracle as we ought, we shall have no difficulty over this matter.

Whoever does not allow his appetite to becloud his judgment, will readily see that the miracle which Jesus wrought was the exact counterpart of the miracle which is wrought in the storing up of the sap in the grape clusters. He made just such wine as you would get if you should press the juice of the clusters of grapes into a vessel and drink it. This process is described in the dream of Pharaoh's butler: "A vine was before me; And in the vine were three branches; and it was as though it budded, and her blossoms shot forth; and the clusters thereof brought forth ripe grapes; And Pharaoh's cup was in my hand; and I took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand." (Genesis 40:9-11)

But there is another point, which gives us a most practical lesson in both righteousness and temperance. The wine which Jesus made on that occasion, like the clusters of grapes on the vine, was the direct product of His own life. It is not too much to say that the guests who drank that wine were drinking directly of Christ's life.

Of the Israelites who drank of the water which flowed from the rock on which Christ stood in the wilderness, it is said that they drank from Christ. "And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ." (1 Corinthians 10:4)

Those who did not by faith recognize His life, did not in either instance receive any spiritual life; but the turning of water into wine did become spiritual life to Christ's disciples, for they believed on Him.

There is this difference between fermented and unfermented wine:

The unfermented wine is pure food. It is the life of the vine in the most condensed form, and is all nourishing. It tends to build up the system, and is therefore one of the best ways in which to supply nourishment to those who are ill, and who cannot receive a great quantity of food. The unfermented wine,--the juice of the grape, the true fruit of the vine,--supplies a great amount of the nourishment in a small space, and is easily assimilated.

But in fermented wine the food elements are so changed that there is scarcely any real nourishment. It is now a stimulant and an intoxicant, instead of a food. Instead of building up the system, and supplying new life and power, it simply excites the power already possessed, spurring it to action. It adds nothing to the one who takes it, but simply stimulates him to use that which he already has.

Now Christ's life is food, and not a stimulant. He did not come to earth to incite men to put into operation power that they already had, but which lay dormant, but to give them power, of which they were destitute. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." (Romans 5:6)

There is in men no power whatever to do right. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." (Romans 8:7-8)

Anyone would say that it is an act of cruelty to beat a poor, lame horse that is almost ready to die, in order to make him work. He has no work in him, and neither whip nor spur can put it into him. The whip or spur may incite a strong animal to use its strength, but they cannot put strength into one that has none. So it would be wicked to try to force a palsied man to work. He has no power to work. There are men who are wicked enough to do such things, but they are moved by the spirit of Satan.

For the work of the devil is to make men think that they can manufacture strength out of nothing. So he induces them to drink alcoholic liquors, and tea, etc., in order to get strength for work, when there is nothing in those substances to supply strength.

Taken in certain quantities they only stimulate a man, and cause him to put forth and use up the physical strength that he has. In larger quantities they stupefy and intoxicate.

Thus he literally induces them to spend money for that which is not bread, and their labor for that would satisfies not. "Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfies not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." (Isaiah 55:2)

By the use of those substances people use up the strength they have, and become prematurely old.

In the same line of work the devil causes people to think that they have in themselves all the power that is necessary for doing right. So he stimulates them with false hopes and promises. He gets them to punish themselves in various ways, for their failures, and to spur themselves up to bring forth the good which they are persuaded is latent in them.

And when the individual effort fails, he induces the nation to pass laws with the object of compelling people to be religious. The idea is that they have goodness in them, but that they have to be spurred by the law, and by fear of punishment, in order to bring it out. That is the devil's way. The end, of course, is increased sin, and death.

Christ's way is different. He knows that in man "dwells no good thing." (Romans 7:18)

And therefore He does not give him a stimulant, which would do no good, but which would tend only to excite and wear him out. On the contrary, He feeds man with His own life, which contains all the elements necessary to perfect growth. "In Him all fullness dwells," (Colossians 1:19) "And we are made complete in Him." (Colossians 2:10) "We [are] saved by His life." (Romans 5:10)

And so from the miracle of changing water into wine we learn an important lesson in righteousness, and temperance, and the judgment to come, because it is the life of Christ that is to be the standard in the judgment.

That which Christ gives to us, is His life, which is real nourishment. His life in the heart produces righteous acts. And so for our physical sustenance He gives us that which is wholesome and nourishing, and not that which adds no real strength, but which dissipates the energy we already have. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance." (Galatians 5:22-23)

Slain, Yet Living

Jesus says, "I am He that lives, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore." (Revelation 1:18) "[He is] the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." (Revelation 13:8) "[He is] the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." (John 1:29)

For this cause all who believed in Christ as the Saviour of sinners were taught from the beginning to offer a lamb as a sacrifice, in token of their faith. The blood was shed, and the flesh was consumed.

Cain, who had no faith, brought the fruit of the ground, while Abel brought from the best of the flock. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous." (Hebrews 11:4)

The Passover lamb also represented Christ. Its blood sprinkled upon the door posts caused the destroying angel to pass over the house. Those who offered it, especially the first time, in Egypt, did so in direct recognition of Christ, whose blood cleanses from sin, and who was delivering them from bondage. "Christ our Passover, is sacrificed for us." (1 Corinthians 5:7)

But at the Passover immediately preceding His crucifixion, Christ gave His disciples another memorial of himself. "Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink you all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." (Matthew 26:26-28)

It was directly after this, that same evening, that Jesus said to His disciples, "I am the true Vine." (John 15:1)

Hitherto men had shown their faith in the power of His blood to cleanse from sin, by shedding the blood of a lamb. But now the real Lamb was about to shed His own blood. Those lambs that had been slain had utterly ceased to live; but as surely as the Lamb of God was slain He was to live again.

It would manifestly be out of place to go on taking the life of beasts in remembrance of Christ after He had died and risen again. And therefore henceforth His disciples were to commemorate the fact that life is obtained through His blood, by taking the fruit of the vine, which sheds its blood for the life of men, and still continue to live.

Manifesting the Glory

"This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory." (John 2:11)

Yet the person of Jesus did not shine with any such splendor as when He was on the mount of transfiguration. There was no more beauty in Him, that men should desire Him on that occasion, than on any other; yet He at that time manifested forth His glory. This shows that His glory is in His works. It is by His life that all things on earth exist, and therefore it is that: "The whole earth is full of His glory." (Isaiah 6:3) "And the glory which You gave me, I have given them," (John 17:22)

This is what Christ said of His disciples, in His prayer to the Father. He has given us His life, and His works, in which we may triumph; and as we yield to Him to become His workmanship, His glory is stored up in us, to be revealed at His coming.

The goodness which He has wrought out and laid up for them that trust Him, is the glory which He imparts to men. Looking at Him, they are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, or goodness to goodness. Therefore, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 5:16)

These are some of the lessons to be learned from that first miracle in Christ's earthly ministry. There was a wonderful fitness in the performance of such a miracle at

the beginning of His work. It set forth the whole of the Gospel. "And His disciples believed on Him." (John 2:11)

Let us be among the number.--Present Truth, April 26, 1894--Timeline: II-6 (The Wedding Feast at Cana)--John 2:5-11.

Chapter 68

Changing the Water into Wine

The purpose to be served in making the miracles of Jesus a part of the Gospel record is clearly stated in the Scripture itself: "These [miracles] are written, that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." (John 20:31,RV)

In our study of the miracles, therefore, this object should be kept in view, that we: "Lay hold on the life which is life indeed." (1 Timothy 6:19,RV)

All the revealings of the power of God in the world about us teach the same lesson, when they are properly understood, and so the miracles should also serve as Divine interpretations of the Gospel of life and power which is proclaimed in the more familiar, and so less startling, operations of the same Master Workman.

The miracles of the Bible are not only emblems of power in the spiritual world, but also exponents of the miracles of nature-experiments, as it were, made by the Great Teacher in person, on a small scale and within a limited time, to illustrate to mankind the phenomena that are taking place over longer periods throughout the universe.--Bible Teachings in Nature, Hugh MacMillan, p. vi-vii (Preface).

When thus viewed, they will not only teach their own lesson to us, but they will also throw such a light upon God's book of nature that we may read the same lesson on every page. And thus recognizing constantly the presence and power of the living God in us and around us, we may learn to receive it in its fullness as "the power of an endless life." (Hebrews 7:16)

The record of the miracle which we are to study in this lesson is brief, simple, and natural. It is God giving us a view, at close range, of His own mighty power with the simplicity of a father explaining his work to his little child for the purpose of encouraging confidence. And the account closes with these words: "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him." (John 2:11)

In our study of the Holy Spirit's account of this miracle we should see the manifested glory just as clearly as did the disciples, and with the same result, believing for life in His name.

Note the simple facts: "They wanted wine. ... And there were set there six water-pots of stone. ... Jesus said unto them, Fill the water-pots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And He said unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bore it." (John 2:3,6-8)

Then the ruler of the feast tastes "the water that was made wine." (John 2:9) and immediately calls the bridegroom and says: "Every man at the beginning sets forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but you have kept the good wine until now." (John 2:10)

We are not told how the water was changed into wine. In obedience to the word of Jesus, they poured the water into the water-pots, and in obedience to the same word they drew out and bore to the governor of the feast that which on tasting proved to be the best wine of the feast.

There is one word, however, which gives all the explanation which is needed, and that word is "Jesus." He is the Word of God, and: "All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made. ... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory." (John 1:3,14)

And not only were all things made through Him, but He also is "upholding all things by the word of His power," (Hebrews 1:3) and "in Him all things consist," (Colossians 1:17,RV) or hold together. It is by the direct and constant revealing of the power of God through "Jesus Christ, the power of God," (1 Corinthians 1:24) that the orderly march of the stars and planets is maintained, and that the so-called operations of nature are carried forward. "My Father works hitherto, and I work." (John 5:17)

And in performing this miracle Jesus is giving a sample, as it were, of His work and revealing himself as the one through whose personal agency all the processes of vegetable growth and fruit-bearing are carried forward.

The True Vine

In the usual method of changing water into wine, the vine is the visible means of accomplishing the work. The water which has been poured upon the ground by the showers of rain, is gathered up by the roots of the vine, carried up by the stock into the branches, and becomes the juice of the grapes.

When the process is completed, and the grapes are subjected to pressure, then can be obtained the water which is now changed into wine. Several months are occupied in this work, which goes on quietly by day and by night.

But Jesus has said, "I am the true [real] vine." (John 15:1)

And the vines which we see in the gardens and the vineyards are not independent agencies for the changing of water into wine. They are simply the visible forms through which works the life of Jesus, the true vine.

And as He at Cana of Galilee, dispensing with the usual visible forms of vegetable life, and disregarding the question of time, "manifested forth His glory," (John 2:11) by changing the water into wine; so He would teach us that the same glory is manifested when the same change is wrought by Him in the way so familiar to us. And as "His disciples believed on Him," (John 2:11) when they saw that which He did in Cana of Galilee, so would He have us believe on Him, when we see what He is doing in every garden and vineyard.

And as this miracle was written in order that those who read it "might by believing, have life through His name," (John 20:31) so viewing all the processes of growth and fruit-bearing in the light thrown upon them by this miracle, and reading them as so interpreted, we may by believing "have life through His name." (John 20:31)

Manifesting Glory

It is evident that the Gospel is preached to us in this miracle, and through its teaching we may see how the Gospel is preached to us in every garden and field. The Gospel is: "the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God," (2 Corinthians 4:4,RV) "the Gospel of the glory of the blessed God." (1 Timothy 1:11,RV)

And this glory is His goodness, His character, His righteousness: "And he said, I beseech You, show me your glory. And He said, I will make all my goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will shew mercy." (Exodus 33:18-19) "The Gospel ... is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes. ... For therein is the righteousness of God revealed." (Romans 1:16-17)

And so when Jesus at Cana of Galilee "manifested forth His glory," by doing the work which He wrought that day, He was simply showing that the power which changes water into wine is the power which God uses with which to save believers. And the glory which was then manifested is the glory which brings life to the dead, for: "Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father." (Romans 6:1)

And so recognizing "the glory of His power," (2 Thessalonians 1:9) day by day as it is revealed to us in the true Vine, we who are "dead in trespasses and sins, ... [are] quickened together with Christ, And raised up with Him, and made to sit together in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus." (Ephesians 2:1,5-6)

But this is "The exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, Which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places." (Ephesians 1:19-20)

And so: "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory." (2 Corinthians 3:18)

And this is the work of the Gospel, that those who "have sinned and come short of the glory of God," (Romans 3:23) should once more be: "Crowned with glory and honor." (Psalm 8:5; Hebrews 2:9)

Fruit-Bearing

It was the work of Jesus "to preach ... recovering of sight to the blind," (Luke 4:18) that we might be able to see Him as the true Vine, and so submit ourselves unto Him that "[He] who makes grass to grow upon the mountains," (Psalm 147:8) and hangs the

luscious fruit upon the branches of every vine and tree, may "[fill us] with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." (Philippians 1:11) "I am the Vine, you are the branches: He that abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing." (John 15:5)

And this is the Gospel which He would teach in the miracle in Cana of Galilee.--Present Truth, July 7, 1898--Timeline: II-6 (The Wedding Feast at Cana)--John 2:3-11.

Chapter 69

The Wine that the Lord Makes

The word "wine," as well as its equivalent in the Greek, is not specific. There are various kinds of wine, but nobody can tell the nature of the article referred to by the unqualified word "wine;" some qualifying word must be connected with it, in order for us to know whether the article referred to is good or bad, fermented or unfermented, unless there is something else in the text that indicates it, as, for instance, the effect that it produces. For, just as a tree is known by its fruit, so wine is known by the consequences of drinking it.

There is good water and bad water-water that is pure, and water that is stale and nauseous. Fresh water is good, but the same water that is good today will be unfit to drink if allowed to stand a few days. It is water, however, even after it has stood till it is teeming with disease germs; and its name, "water," unqualified, does not convey any idea as to its character.

Just so it is with wine. When it is first pressed from the grapes it is pure, refreshing and wholesome; but after it has stood exposed to the air for a season it undergoes fermentation, or decay, and is then poisonous. It is still wine, however, although no longer good wine; and the term "wine," if unqualified, does not tell us anything as to which kind it is.

That the fresh, pure, unfermented juice of the grape is really wine, is seen from the following portions of Scripture: "As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one says, Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it; so will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all." (Isaiah 65:8)

Here we see that not only the freshly expressed juice of the grape, but even the juice while it is yet in the cluster in the vine, is real wine.

Again, we read in the dream of Pharaoh's butler: "In my dream, behold a vine was before me; And in the vine were three branches; and it was as though it budded, and her blossoms shot forth; and the clusters thereof brought forth ripe grapes: And Pharaoh's

cup was in my hand; and I took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand." (Genesis 40:9-11)

Thus we see that not only is the wine found in the cluster of ripe grapes, but it is such wine as in ancient time was thought to be a drink fit for a king; for Pharaoh's butler dreamed of what he had been used to doing.

Now as to the wine that Jesus made for the guests at the marriage feast in Cana. It is true that the word has no qualifying adjective in the narrative of that event; but the circumstances unmistakably indicate its character.

In the first place, let us remember that only good things come from the hand of the Lord. He sends blessing, not a curse; and we have just read that the blessing is in the wine that is found in the cluster.

On the other hand, we are told that they who drink the wine "when it gives his color in the cup, when it moves itself aright," (Proverbs 23:31) that is, when it is fermented, have "woe, ... sorrow, ... contentions, [and] wounds without cause," (Proverbs 23:29) and that such wine at the last, "bites like a serpent, and stings like an adder." (Proverbs 23:32)

It takes away a man's senses, so that he is like "he that lies down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lies upon the top of the mast." (Proverbs 23:32)

Can anybody charge the Lord with preparing such a drink for men? Who that reverences the Saviour can for a moment entertain the thought that He would deliberately manufacture, and order to be given to the guests at a marriage feast, such wine as would tend to take away their senses, inflame all their passions, and set them in an uproar, and possibly cause them to fight?

Still further: If it were true that on this occasion Jesus made fermented wine, it would furnish a most unnatural exception to God's work; for never in nature has such a thing as fermented wine been known. On the contrary, God takes the utmost pains to prevent the wine that He makes from fermenting. Let us study the case for as moment.

Examine a cluster of grapes. See how firm the skin is upon each grape, and how closely it is fastened to the stem. The skin of the grape, like that of other fruits, is its protection against decay or fermentation. As long as the skin remains unbroken, fermentation cannot possibly take place. Each grape is, in fact, a small bottle of unfermented wine, hermetically sealed so as to preserve it from fermentation. While the grapes are in that condition they are good to eat-delicious and wholesome.

But let us take another cluster. On this one there are some grapes that have been braised, so that the skin is broken, and some have been half-way pulled off the stem. What is their condition? They have begun to decay; a little mould is seen in each wounded grape, and no one would eat them, not even the drinker of fermented wine, unless he had already drank so much of it as to lose his wits.

Yet that which has begun on those wounded grapes is exactly what must take place in the expressed juice, in order that it may become fermented wine. You say the grapes that have been broken are rotten. So they are, or at least they are beginning to rot, and nobody likes to eat rotten grapes; yet the very same people who reject the decayed grapes, will eagerly drink the grape juice when it has rotted still more. How inconsistent!

If the grape is unhealthful when it is diseased because of a wound, how can it be healthful when the disease has progressed so far that it has produced death? The fresh juice is life-producing; the fermented juice produces death.

Can you not now see clearly that the first state of wine, as the Lord makes it, is always unfermented? And not only so, but that unless man interferes, and changes the Lord's plan for the grape, the wine will always remain unfermented? God never makes fermented wine; that is always a product of the curse. Wine must stand some little time exposed to the air, before it becomes fermented wine.

Now we have the question answered as to the kind of wine that Jesus prepared for the wedding guests. Just as the sun ripens the sap that is stored up in the cluster, so Christ, the Light of the world, the Sun of righteousness, made the same change in the water that was in the waterpots; and it would be as forced and absurd to suppose that it was fermented, as to expect to find fermented wine in the grape cluster.

The wine was drawn out and at once carried to the governor of the feast. If any of it was left over, and allowed to stand exposed to the air for a time, it would undoubtedly ferment, just the same as any other wine that the Lord makes.

Such wine as Jesus made on that wedding day in Cana is good enough to be drunk in heaven, and will be furnished to all the guests at "the marriage supper of the Lamb." When Jesus passed the cup to His disciples on the night of the Passover,--a time when no leaven or ferment could be found in any Jewish house,--He said, "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." (Matthew 26:29)

It is hardly possible that there is anybody so irreverent as to suggest that the wine ("the fruit of the vine," mark you) on that occasion will be such as could by any possibility produce intoxication, that is, wine which is of a poisonous nature.--Advent Review, December 24, 1901--Timeline: II-6 (The Wedding Feast at Cana)--John 2:1-11.

Chapter 70

A New Man

Human nature was the same nineteen hundred years ago that it is today. Nicodemus opened his conversation with the Lord in the same way that men now greet a preacher: "Ah, doctor, that sermon just suited me; it was just what I have always believed."

The height of some people's religion seems to be attained in complimenting the preacher: "An able man; preaches just what I believe."

It is well to encourage a minister, as well as any other laborer; but the best encouragement any true minister of the Gospel can receive is to see the truths that he presents accepted and put into practice. "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." (3 John:4)

We have no reason to doubt the sincerity of the words of Nicodemus when he said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that you do, except God be with him." (John 3:2)

But Jesus himself knew that He had come from God, even though every man denied it; and so He did not need any assurance from men, to encourage Him; He therefore ignored the compliment, and came straight to realities: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3)

Nicodemus was willing enough to acknowledge that Jesus was a Teacher come from God, yet as soon as Jesus brought the truth home to his own heart, laying bare its need, he was irritated, and began to argue with the Master.

There was never a teacher so great, nor clothed with so great authority nor such good credentials, that men would not argue with him about that of which he is master, and they know nothing, if it does not coincide with their preconceived ideas, or with their practices.

Indeed, the teacher from God is really the only one whose words are challenged to any great extent. When a man comes talking words of his own imagination, the multitude are ready to receive him without any protest. Jesus said, "I am come in my Father's name, and you receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him you will receive." (John 5:43)

The new birth is necessary, not merely that one may enter heaven, but that one may be a Christian. The kingdom of God is here and now. John on Patmos was "in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ." (Revelation 1:9) "[God the] Father...has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; Who has delivered us from the power of darkness, and has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son." (Colossians 1:12-13) "[Christ has] loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, And has made us kings and priests unto God." (Revelation 1:5-6)

But the kingdom has no sort of connection with the kingdoms of earth. Christ admitted before Pilate that He was a King, but He said, "My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence." (John 18:36)

So little harmony is there between the kingdom of God and this world, that: "The friendship of the world is enmity with God; whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." (James 4:4)

In order to belong to that kingdom, or even to see it, a man must be made over entirely new; he must be a new creature, fashioned and controlled wholly by the Spirit of God. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." (Romans 8:9) "I give you to understand that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed; and that no man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." (1 Corinthians 12:3)

Flesh and blood cannot reveal the Son of God, nor can flesh and blood comprehend the things that pertain to His kingdom. "And Simon Peter answered and said, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed are you, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you, but my Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 16:16-17) "But as it is written, Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. But God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit

searches all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knows no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." (1 Corinthians 2:9-12) "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither does corruption inherit incorruption." (1 Corinthians 15:50)

In order therefore to be really a subject of the kingdom of God, one must be delivered from the flesh. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwells in you." (Romans 8:7-11) "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." (Galatians 5:24-25) "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20)

What have we in all this? Just this, that to be a Christian indeed, which is the same as entering the kingdom of God, one must be as much different from what he is by nature as what he is by nature is different from what he was before he had any existence.

Think of the body as literally dead, and awaiting burial. Now it has no connection whatever with anything in this world. Its life is ended; its love, and hatred, and envy are now perished. "Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun." (Ecclesiastes 9:6)

Now think of the coming of the Spirit of God, and entering that body. "The body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." (Romans 8:10)

The Spirit now makes that body alive, but its life is wholly that of the Spirit. The Spirit having rescued it from death, has sole control of it. It is animated and moved by the Spirit alone. It breathes only the atmosphere of heaven.

It is evident that such a body would be indeed a new man, and its life would be perfectly pleasing to God. The flesh is the same that it was before, but it is kept under by the Spirit. The man no longer fulfills the desires of the flesh, for the flesh cannot assert itself. Instead of being subject to "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience," (Ephesians 2:2) it is wholly guided by the Spirit from above. The only question is, "Is it possible for the Spirit of God thus to take possession of and control a body herein this world?"

The answer is found in the life of Christ. The Spirit of the Lord was upon Him, "the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord," (Isaiah 11:2) so that He breathed in the fear of the Lord. "But can any other person have the same experience?"

Most certainly; for Christ came for that very purpose. He did not need to come to this earth on His own account. The fact that the Spirit had complete possession of His body, which was just the same as the body of any other person born of a woman, shows that the Spirit can dwell in and control anybody that is willing. "[He has] power over all flesh." (John 16:13)

As to the making a new man, that is taught to us in nature every day; for God is in nature teaching us Gospel lessons. The things that we see, and of which we have experience, are to teach us concerning the things of the kingdom of God.

You cut your finger, and it soon heals. A severe wound is suffered, but in a short time new flesh, now skin, new nerves, and even new bones, are formed. Every day our bodies are throwing off old substance, and new matter is taking its place. Thus our youth is renewed. Someone may say, "That is only a physiological change."

True enough, but it is a change effected only by the power of the life of God. In everything that is made, the everlasting power and Divinity of God are seen: "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead." (Romans 1:20)

"[He] is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us." (Ephesians 3:20)

If we are willing that the work should be done, that power which works in us day by day, to keep us in life, will work far above the highest flights of imagination, to make us wholly new creatures in Christ. The power is present, and all that is necessary is that we yield to it. "Why," says one, "I thought that it was a mystery!"

So it is. Do you understand the mystery of life and growth? "As you know not what is the way of the Spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child; even so you know not the works of God who makes all." (Ecclesiastes 11:5)

Jesus in His talk to Nicodemus indicated that the work of the Holy Spirit in effecting the new birth is like that which we call "the operations of nature." "The wind blows where it lists, and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it comes, nor whither it goes; so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." (John 3:8)

It was a thing to be wondered at that a master in Israel did not know these things. Strange that the wise men who are continually observing the working of God in the things that are made, should stumble over the question of the new birth. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, We speak that we do know," (John 3:11) and testify that we have seen; and you receive not our witness. "If I have told you of earthly things, and you believe not, how shall you believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?" (John 3:12)

The study of "natural phenomena" leads to the knowledge of God; and true science is "the word of truth, the Gospel of our salvation." (Ephesians 1:13)--Present Truth, February 1, 1899--Original title: Jesus and Nicodemus. A New Man.--Timeline: III-3 (Discussion with Nicodemus)--John 3:1-18.

Chapter 71

In Heaven

When Jesus talked to Nicodemus of heavenly things He said that no one could make them known except "the Son of man which is in heaven." (John 3:13)

John also tells us that: "The only begotten Son ... is in the bosom of the Father." (John 1:18)

Christ was on earth when He was talking to Nicodemus, yet He was in heaven. That is, heaven is wherever Christ is. He brings heaven to earth.

So that those who "rejoice in Christ Jesus," (Philippians 3:3) have a heaven in which to live while going to heaven. The song therefore, tells Scripture truth when it says,

Amazing grace! 'tis heaven below,
To feel the blood applied.
--Mrs. Phoebe Palmer, Hymn: The Cleansing Wave.

--Present Truth, September 13, 1894--Timeline: III-3 (Discussion with Nicodemus)--John 3:13.

Chapter 72

Looking to Others

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3:14-15)

Some people refuse Christianity because others who profess it are not upright; but even were all men upright, it would be fatal to look to them in the shaping of our own course.

For when all beings were pure and upright, before sin had entered God's universe, Lucifer began to look at himself and admire his beauty and perfection, and persuaded others to look to him, and by this they fell. The same thing would result no better today.

We must look to God, and we can all look to Him, for as the serpent was lifted up by Moses in the wilderness, so Christ has been and is lifted up, that He may draw all unto Him. In looking upon Him is life.--Present Truth, July 25, 1895--Timeline: III-3 (Discussion with Nicodemus)--John 3:14-15.

Chapter 73

The Gospel Gives

It makes all the difference in the world how one looks at the Gospel. If one looks at it as taking away from us things that we have always prized because they are peculiar to us, it is hard; if we look at it as giving us the best possible things, it is easy. The one who says, "If I am a Christian, I shall have to give up this or that thing," can see nothing but bondage in it; while the one who knows that if he accepts Christ he receives everything worth having, sees joy and gladness in the Christian life.

The Gospel gives, instead of taking away. "God so loved the world, that He gave [-what?] His only begotten Son." (John 3:1) "Whom He has appointed heir of all things." (Hebrews 1:2)

Now, "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32)

All that the Lord asks us to give up is our own evil way, which we try to persuade ourselves is good enough, but which the Lord says is but "filthy rags." "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." (Isaiah 64:6)

But He offers us instead His own perfection. Imagine now a poor beggar with filthy garments that will scarcely hold together, saying to his companions,

"I am invited to go to Mr. X's house; but if I go I shall certainly have to give up all these clothes of mine." "What! and go naked?" asks one. "Oh, no; he will give me a fine new suit." "Well, then," some sensible fellow would say, "you have stated the case wrong. What you ought to say is that if you go you will receive some good clothes, and instead of complaining, you ought to rejoice."

Even so the one who knows the Lord will, instead of complaining that he must give up the filthy rags of his own misdeeds, say: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness." (Isaiah 61:10) "Thanks be unto God

for His unspeakable gift." (2 Corinthians 9:15)--Present Truth, December 17, 1896--Timeline: III-3 (Discussion with Nicodemus)--John 3:16.

Chapter 74

God's Way Versus Man's Way

Here is the expression of God's love: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:6-8)

The Scriptures tell us that God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and that evil shall not dwell with Him. He hates sin, because sin is utterly foreign to His nature.

In the foregoing texts we see how God manifests His hatred of sin; for the measure of God's hatred of sin is His love for sinners: He gave himself to save them from it.

In this we see the difference between God's way and man's way, and note how infinitely higher is His way than man's. When men wish to show their abhorrence of sin, and to emphasize their non-complicity in it, they sacrifice the sinner; but God shows His abhorrence of sin, and emphasizes His perfect freedom from it, by sacrificing himself. "Teach me your way, O Lord." (Psalm 27:11)

It is a dangerous thing to pin faith to man, or to follow even the best of men; for there is no man that is absolutely perfect; and such is the perversity of human nature that we naturally tend to follow the poorest instead of the best.

Indeed, this is inevitable, for when we follow men, we use only our own strength, and so we cannot lift ourselves above the faults and errors of those whom we follow. Jesus says, "Follow me." (John 12:26)

And this we may safely do, for: "There is no unrighteousness in Him." (Psalm 92:15)

There is in Him no error to lead us astray; He is the Highest, and He gives us His own life to lift us to His own level. Thus we can indeed follow Him.

When we follow men, our sin increases; but when we follow Christ, it is removed; "For we know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin." (1 John 3:5)--Signs of the Times, January 6, 1898--Timeline: III-3 (Discussion with Nicodemus)--John 3:16.

Chapter 75

Everything from Heaven

When John the Baptist was reminded by some of his disciples that his influence among the people was waning, and that the multitudes were flocking to Jesus, he replied, "A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven." (John 3:27)

If the truth of this answer were recognized and believed by all men, there would be a perfect condition of society. It is well worth studying.

In the first place, it shows us the uselessness of seeking a position and influence for ourselves. "A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven." (John 3:27)

Therefore he does not really possess that which he has gained, by his own self-seeking. Or, to put it more correctly, that which one gets, by his own selfish seeking, is nothing. Whoever, therefore, seeks position and influence for himself, is pursuing a shadow. Such seeking is worse than useless.

Again, the will of heaven towards us cannot be thwarted by any other person. The reception of the gifts of heaven depends solely upon ourselves. If we are willing to receive what heaven has for us, no person on earth can stay it from bestowing them.

Therefore it follows that we shall most certainly have everything that the God of heaven wishes us to have. A belief of this would produce perfect contentment in us.

Moreover, if any position or influence is taken from us, we may know that it was taken by the will of heaven. We are not to blame men for it. Even the man who may possess it instead of us is not to be blamed. If there be any blame, we are the ones to whom it belongs.

God may have taken it away because we did not use it properly. Or there may be no blame at all, but the purpose for which God gave it to us may have been served. But in any case we are not to blame men for what we have lost, since gifts are only at God's disposal.

With these words of John we may place those written by the Apostle James, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." (James 1:17)

Therefore we need not mourn if we lose the position which was good, and which offered such facilities for serving God; because when it goes we may know that it would not be good for us anymore.

Not only are we certain to have every good thing that God has for us, if we are willing to receive it, but everything that comes from God is good. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God." (Romans 8:28)

Who cannot see that it is worse than foolish to complain when good comes to him?

Let good or ill befall,
It must be good for me,
Secure of having Thee in all,
Of having all in Thee.
--Henry Francis Lyte, Hymn: Psalm 31, 1834.

One thing more should be learned, and that is not to boast. Since a man can receive nothing except that which is given him from heaven, what wickedness it is to boast of any gifts that we may possess. "Who makes you to differ from another? and what have you that you did not receive? now if you did receive it, why do you glory, as if you had not received it?" (1 Corinthians 4:7)

He who remembers that God gives only good things, and everything that is good, and who lives in constant recognition of the fact that he is dependent on heaven alone, and who therefore commits himself to the heavenly keeping will, though poor and unknown, find even on earth the riches and satisfaction of heaven.--Present Truth, July 18, 1895--Timeline: III-4 (Ministry in Judea)--John 3:27.

Chapter 76

He Must Increase

The disciples of John were jealous for his sake, and felt that a wrong was being done him in that the multitudes were now flocking to Jesus, instead of to him.

But no trace of jealousy was awakened in his breast. He likened himself to the friend of the bridegroom who found his joy complete in the happiness of the one whom he had served.

Then he said of Jesus, "He must increase, but I must decrease." (John 3:30)

At first thought it seems as though that was the most easy and natural thing in the world for John to say. We think of the difference between Christ and John,--the latter a mere man, and the former the Son of God,--and it seems very easy to say, "He must increase, but I must decrease." (John 3:30)

We imagine that we should have said the same thing, not realizing that the answer of John furnishes one of the grandest instances of preferring another above self that there is on record. Consequently we lose the lesson that we should learn from it.

Let us not forget that Jesus was here on earth as a man. He was man then, as He is even now in heaven, "the Man Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 2:5)

To all appearance, He was only a man. Nothing in His outward appearance, nothing that could be discerned by the senses, indicated that He was: "God with us." (Matthew 1:23)

John was a great prophet, and he had preached to many thousands. Now Jesus comes, another great prophet, and He has the ears of the people. The disciples of John could see no difference between John and Jesus--no reason why John should not have the same power and influence as Jesus.

Even John, who knew that Christ was preferred before him, had not seen Him except as a man among men. Nevertheless his word was, "He must increase, but I must decrease." (John 3:30)

This marks the true follower of Christ. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto your name give glory." (Psalm 115:1)

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.
--Augustus Montague Toplady, Hymn: Rock of Ages, 1776.

This is more than mere rhyme to the Christian. Self-effacement, that only Christ may be seen, is true Christianity. Christ must be lifted up, and self must be abased.

Now as one thinks of Christ in glory, the leader of a host of heaven, it seems as though one could not think anything else than that He alone should be exalted. But Christ does not yet appear to us in glory. The saints who in glory shall give honor to Christ alone, will have learned to do the same to Him in His humiliation. There is something intensely practical in being able to say, "He must increase, but I must decrease." (John 3:30) "The Word was made flesh." (John 1:14)

Christ has for ever identified himself with men. Their cause is His. Whatever good or ill is done to men He counts as being done to Him. "For I was hungry, and you gave me meat: I was thirsty, and you gave me drink: I was a stranger, and you took me in: Naked, and you clothed me: I was sick, and you visited me: I was in prison, and you came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying, Lord, when did we see You hungry, and fed You? or thirsty, and gave You drink? When did we see You a stranger, and took You in? or naked, and clothed You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and came unto You? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me. Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was hungry, and you gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and you gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and you took me not in: naked, and you clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and you visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister

unto You? Then shall He answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me." (Matthew 25:35-45)

The man who turns the poor beggar away with harsh words, sees nothing but an insignificant man; but Christ says that He is the one who is slighted. The one who in the kindness of his heart receives a needy wayfarer, does not realize that he is sheltering Christ; but so it is.

Christ has so completely identified himself with humanity, that no act can be done to a fellow-man without being done to Him. Our treatment of our fellows shows exactly how we would treat the Lord himself. Not only so, but it shows how we do treat Him.

Now let us say, "He must increase, but I must decrease." (John 3:30)

What does it mean? It means to be "kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honor preferring one another." (Romans 12:10)

It means obedience to the exhortation, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." (Philippians 2:3)

It means the regarding of others just as though we could see "the Lord of glory" standing in their place. "My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons." (James 2:1)

There is wonderful help for us in putting ourselves actually in John's place as regards our fellows. When tempted to envy another; when the thought is suggested that another has more honor and attention than we have, and that he even has it at our expense, what a blessed peace and content comes to us when we put Christ in his place, and say from the heart, "He must increase, but I must decrease." (John 3:30)

It must be so; it is absolutely necessary, from the very nature of things, that Christ be exalted above us. It should be a pleasure to us to acknowledge that fact, since our fullness of joy is found only in His supremacy over all. Remembering this, and also that He identifies himself with every man, becomes delightfully easy to say of our brother who has more honor than we, "He must increase, but I must decrease." (John 3:30)

Then instead of the demand of unrest that continually gnaws at the hearts of those who are ambitious, "The peace of God, which passes all understanding," (Philippians 4:7) shall keep our hearts and lives. Then indeed will Christ be lifted up even in us, and we ourselves shall be made sharers of His exaltation.--Present Truth, August 1, 1895--Timeline: III-4 (Ministry in Judea)--John 3:30.

Chapter 77

Speaking the Words of God

"He whom God has sent speaks the words of God." (John 3:34)

This admits of no exception. Of course it primarily applies to Christ, but also to all whom He sends to teach.

His words are: "As my Father has sent me, so send I you." (John 20:21)

This, then, is the test of a teacher sent from God. If He speaks only the words of God, he has Divine authority; if he speaks his own words, he is not from God.

Every religious teacher should remember these words. He has no right to speak from his own wisdom. Even the Holy Ghost has said, "He shall not speak from himself; but what things soever He shall hear, these shall He speak." (John 16:13)

The teacher therefore has nothing to do with opinions. He must not put forth his own opinions, even though he be asked for them. Even though he expressly declares that it is only his own opinion, somebody will take it as authority, and thus he leads men to trust in man, instead of in God. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." (1 Peter 4:11)

On the other hand, there is a responsibility resting on the hearers. The command of Christ is: "Take heed how you hear." (Luke 8:18)

When anyone receives God's message from one of His servants, he is to receive it as the word of God, and not of man. "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when you received the word of God which you heard of us, you received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually works also in you that believe." (1 Thessalonians 2:13) "But how are we to know that it is the word of God?"

By the word itself. You are to become acquainted with the voice of the Lord. Jesus says, "I am the Good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine." (John 10:14)

Do you ask how you are to get this acquaintance with Him? The answer is,

• Talk with Him;

• Meditate in His word, and

• Ask and receive the promise of the Spirit.

Those who have learned and have submitted to the Spirit, are thus addressed: "You have an unction from the Holy One, and you know all things. ... The anointing which you have received of Him abides in you, and you need not that any man teach you." (1 John 2:20,27)

This is in accordance with the promise of the new covenant: "And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least to the greatest.

This cannot possibly be intended as a depreciation of teachers, because God has set teachers in the church. "And God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." (1 Corinthians 12:28)

But the teachers whom He sends are to speak His words, and therefore their teaching is not the teaching of men. Although men know the Lord, that does not signify that there is no possibility of their learning anything more. "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." (Colossians 1:9-10)

The teachers whom He sends speak His words to men, in order that those who do not know the Lord, may become acquainted with Him, and that those who do know

Him, may "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 3:18)

It is possible for a man to hear the words of God, and to receive them as the words of man. Then they do him no good, no matter how much he remembers. What is the evidence that one has received the word of the Lord as the word of man? Simply this, that he connects the light and knowledge which he has received, with a man who uttered the words.

When a man says, "Brother So-and-So says," etc., that shows that God has not taught him the truth which he may have a feeble hold of. He has taken it as from man.

But when the truth of God, uttered by man, comes to him as a revelation from God himself, so that he forgets the agent, and feels that God has spoken to him directly, then he knows the truth. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." (1 Peter 4:11)

And let him who listens hear as if God did beseech him by the speaker.--Present Truth, November 23, 1893--Original title: Front Page--Timeline: III-4 (Ministry in Judea)--John 3:34.

Chapter 78

The Spirit and the Word

"He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives not the Spirit by measure [unto him]." (John 3:34,RV)

In the common version the words "unto him" are added, although they are not in the text, as is indicated by their being in italics. However, it makes really no difference whether they are in or not, for the meaning is the same either way.

The plainly expressed idea is that God gives the Spirit without measure unto the one whom He sends, and who fulfills his mission by speaking the words of God. Of course there is no question but that this refers primarily to Christ: "[God] sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4:10)

God had said to Moses concerning Christ: "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto you, and will put my words into His mouth; and He shall speak unto them all that I shall command Him." (Deuteronomy 18:18)

So Jesus said, "Whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak." (John 12:50)

And again, "The word which you hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me." (John 14:24)

It was "through the eternal Spirit" (Hebrews 9:14) that Jesus offered himself to God. It was by the Spirit, therefore, that He spoke. But the word was not simply in His mouth but in His heart. The testimony of Christ was: "I delight to do your will, O my God; yea, your law is within my heart. I have preached righteousness in the great, congregation; lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, You know." (Psalm 40:8-9)

The word being in His heart, it guided all His acts as well as His speech; so that Jesus both lived and spoke the words of God. And the Spirit was with Him without measure, both to speak and to do whatever the Father required of Him.

But Jesus said of His disciples: "As You have sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." (John 17:18)

He said also: "I have given them your word." (John 17:14)

He whom God has sent is sent to speak the word of God. This word of testimony cannot be truly spoken except by the

Spirit; for: "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." (1 Corinthians 12:3)

The word of truth cannot be spoken unless it fills the heart, "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." (Matthew 12:34) "And these words, which I command you this day, shall be in your heart: And you shall teach them diligently unto your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up." (Deuteronomy 6:6-7)

Therefore it is evident that he who truly speaks the word of God, lives the word of God. Such a one lives "by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4)

He does not slight one precept.

Now comes in the fullness of the promise that he who fulfills the mission on which he is sent, namely, to speak the word of God, will have the Spirit without measure. It is for this special purpose that the Spirit was promised and given. Jesus said, "You shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and you shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

The Spirit was manifested in the church without limit, as long as the church held forth the Word of God.

It was only when the professed people of God turned from the mission from which they were sent, leaving the Word of God for fables, that the powerful manifestations of the Spirit disappeared.

Do you desire the full baptism of the Holy Spirit? Give yourself wholly to the Word of God, to hold it forth in its wholeness and perfection, and the Spirit will be given without measure.--Present Truth, July 18, 1895--Timeline: III-4 (Ministry in Judea)--John 3:34.

Chapter 79

A Drink of Good Water

What would you think of a man who should take his stand in the midst of the soldiers who are doing service in South Africa, under a burning sun, which shines with a heat to which they are altogether unaccustomed, and where they often suffer such intolerable thirst that they would almost risk their lives for a drink of cool water, and should call out to them: "If any man is thirsty, let him come to me and drink."

And then when the men flocked to him should say that he did not mean that they could drink then and there, but that he would give them a drink when they came to a place where there was plenty of water?

You would say he was a heartless man, and you would not be surprised, nor pity him very much, if he received severe punishment for the cruel joke.

You would say that the men were warranted in supposing that he meant that he had water for them to drink as soon as they came where he was, and that they could not get any other idea from his words, and that if he did not have any water to give them, he was guilty of a base deception. There surely will not be two opinions on this matter.

Well, one day Jesus stood in the midst of a crowd of people, many of whom had traveled long distances on foot, and cried out, so that all could hear: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." (John 7:37)

What if some poor, dusty traveler had come to Him, and had said, "Sir, I am almost famished with thirst; will you please give me some of that water?"

Do you think that Jesus would have given him some real water to moisten his parched lips, and to refresh his whole body? or would He have said, "My dear friend, you are altogether too literal; I have no real water to give to anybody; what I said was meant to be taken in a spiritual sense; sit down here, or find a good place to stand, and listen to the sermon which I am about to deliver, and see if it does not refresh your soul."

The man would surely reply, "I am too thirsty to listen to a sermon, and I would not listen to you anyhow, because you are a fraud; you make sensational announcements simply to get people to hear you, and then you give nothing but words."

And nobody could say that the man's conclusion was not justified.

Don't be alarmed, and think that we are irreverent. We are not laying anything to the charge of Christ, for He never did such a thing as we have been supposing. Jesus never raised false hopes, and He never promised anything that He could not bestow.

But a great many professed believers in Christ do in fact charge Him with just such heartless dealings as in the case that we have supposed; they never think that He has real water to give to any thirsty person, or that He gives here and now anything else that is real and tangible.

We should like to have all consider this matter seriously, and see what a charge they are really bringing against the Lord, when they talk about spiritual things as not being literal and real.

We are studying things that are real. This lesson deals with real things. The narrative of Jesus at Jacob's well, as well as every other thing that is told of Him, was written for the purpose of teaching us that the gifts of Christ are something to be taken and enjoyed as really as our daily food and drink. These are the facts:

- Jesus was weary with His journey, and was sitting on the ancient well of Jacob to rest. There was a real well there, and it had good, cool, refreshing water.

- There came a woman to the well, with a real jug on her head, to draw some water for family use.

- Jesus was thirsty, and asked for a drink of water. The woman was surprised at His request, not because she could not give Him the water for which He asked, but because she did not think that a Jew, as He evidently was, would receive a favor at the hands of a despised Samaritan.

- But Jesus told her that He was so far from despising her, that if she had asked Him, He would have given her living water that was far superior to that in the well.

But unless the water that He could supply would do all that the water in Jacob's well would do, and a great deal more, then it was not better. The lesson to be learned is that Jesus gives water that satisfies every want of spirit, soul, and body.

Nothing Real That Is Not Spiritual

There was a multitude of people in the wilderness, and they were suffering from thirst. They had large herds of cattle, and it seemed as if both men and beasts must die of thirst. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Go on, before the people, and take with you of the elders of Israel; and your rod, wherewith you smote the river, take in your hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before you there upon the rock in Horeb; and you shall smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel." (Exodus 17:5-6) "[They] did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that went with them; and that Rock was Christ." (1 Corinthians 10:4) "Then it was spiritual, after all."

Certainly; for there is nothing that God does that is not spiritual; for: "God is Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and truth." (John 4:24) "Didn't the people and their cattle in the wilderness get any real water to drink?"

Indeed they did. "He clave the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink as out of the great depths. He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers." (Psalm 78:15-16)

It was as real, literal water as any you ever saw or drank; but it was spiritual, nevertheless. There is nothing real unless it is spiritual; all else is only an illusion.

Miracles are God's Daily Work

"Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." (Romans 10:4)

The Lord performs miracles, but does not overturn the course of nature. He makes no monstrosities. He does not at any time work merely to create a sensation, and make people stare. He is always the same.

We gaze on His works, and actually see Him at work day after day and year after year, and scarcely ever stop to think that it is God working. Many do not know it. He is a God that hides himself, and we see results, rather than the operations. "Verily You are a God that hides yourself, O God of Israel, the Saviour." (Isaiah 45:15)

But once in a while He removes a portion of the veil that hides His working, and allows us to see more than usual, and then we call it a miracle. A miracle it truly is, but really no more of a miracle than what we see all the time. Miracles are God's ordinary ways of working.

God is so great that no human mind can ever comprehend His works. If we had eyes that could see, and senses acute enough to appreciate the spiritual, we should daily be lost in wonder at the sight of miracles exactly the some as that wrought in the desert. Indeed, we should see the very same thing done again and again.

There is not a drop of water that flows from spring or well that does not come from Christ. Every drink is spiritual drink, coming from the spiritual Rock that still goes with His people; and if we received it as coming from Him, discerning Him in it, we should be made spiritual by it.

This is not speculation or fancy. Just as truly as that water in the desert was real water, exactly like that which men and beasts drink today, so surely is the water that we drink today spiritual drink, just as that was. This is the lesson that the Samaritan woman learned that day, and it is what the Holy Spirit would have us learn.

Avoid Trifles

Human nature is ever the same. Jesus was unfolding to the woman the deepest spiritual truths, vital truths, which would make her entirely new; but as soon as He came to the very heart of the matter, she branched off upon a technicality, and began to talk about the proper place to go to meeting.

Even so it is now. Instead of feeding upon the corn of heaven, and drinking of the water of life, men are spending their time discussing forms and ceremonies. Begin to talk with a person about his soul's salvation, and offer to him that which will make him a new creature, and he will probably, when you are at the most important part of the matter, ask you to give your opinion upon some detail of no consequence whatever.

Thus it is that Satan seeks to snatch away the good seed before it can take root. Do not give place to him. Keep steadily to the all-important matter. "Seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness." (Matthew 6:33)--Present Truth, February 8, 1900--Subtitle: Jesus at Jacob's Well--Timeline: III-5 (The Samaritan Woman)--John 4:5-26.

Chapter 80

Christ the Water of Life

Jesus, wearied with His journey from Jerusalem, was sitting at noon by the well of Jacob, near the city of Sychar in Samaria, while His disciples were in the city in search of food. As He sat there a woman of the city came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me to drink. Then said the woman of Samaria unto Him, How is it that you, being a Jew, ask drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, Give me to drink; you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you living water. The woman said unto Him, Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; from whence then have you that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinks of this water shall thirst again; But whosoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." (John 4:7,9-14)

Truly it is no wonder that the woman said to Jesus, "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come here to draw." (John 4:15)

As yet she did not realize the nature of the water which Jesus promised. But afterwards when she found out just what He meant, she was still as willing to receive of it. What that water is, which Jesus gives is made very clear by His words on the last day of the feast of the Jews: "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believes on me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly [out of his very being] shall flow rivers of living water." (John 7:37-38)

Here we have the promise of living water, the same as He promised to the woman of Samaria. Here, as there, the water is to be in the very being of the one receiving it. And here we are told that that water of life is the Spirit of God, which is given to every believer in Christ.

Let us now read another statement. The Spirit of God through the apostle Paul said: "They that are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwells in you." (Romans 8:8-11)

Here we have a parallel to the statement that the water that Christ gives will be in the believer a well of water springing up into everlasting life. It is life itself, because it is righteousness. The apostle has said that to be spiritually minded is life in peace. "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." (Romans 8:6)

And we have also read that: "The Spirit is life because of righteousness." (Romans 8:10)

This, then, is that birth of the Spirit, which makes one an entirely new man; it makes the sinner a righteous man, a keeper of the law of God. "For we know that the law is spiritual." (Romans 7:14)

That is, the law is of the nature of the Spirit of God. This is further shown by the fact that those things that are in harmony with the law of God, are the fruit of the Spirit: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." (Galatians 5:22-23)

So the reception of the Spirit of God makes the sinner another person, with a different nature. It makes him living a different life.

The Spirit is the Spirit of God, and its righteousness is the righteousness of God, and that is expressed in the ten commandments. The Spirit ministers this righteousness to the man, and lives in him. His character is then the character of God, because he is one with God, he has been made a new creature, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. "[He has] put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." (Ephesians 4:24)

This is the beginning of eternal life, for the life of the Spirit of God is eternal, and it is that life which the man now lives. This is the life of Jesus manifest in mortal flesh. "For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." (2 Corinthians 4:11)

It is of this that the beloved disciple speaks in his epistle, when he says that he who confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is born of God: "Hereby know you the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God." (1 John 4:2)

God dwells in that man as truly as His life was manifest in Jesus of Nazareth. Not because there is anything in the man himself comparable to Jesus of Nazareth, but because Jesus, who was the fullness of God dwells in him. "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit." (1 John 4:13)

This life is received by faith, and must be retained by faith. So long as a man keeps the faith, so long as he lives the life, for "the just shall live by faith." (Romans 1:17)

He may go to the grave, but nothing can affect his eternal life. That is "hid with Christ in God." (Colossians 3:3)

As it was not possible that the grave should hold Jesus, "Whom God has raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be held of it," (Acts 2:24) so it is not possible that the grave should hold him. When he breathes his last he is just as sure of eternal life as he ever was. For Jesus said, "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." (John 4:14)

And again, "If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwells in you." (Romans 8:11)

The power of the life that is given to the man at conversion, raises him from the dead, if he dies in faith. But let us read further as to the nature of this life which may be drank in as water.--Present Truth, December 15, 1892--Timeline: III-5 (The Samaritan Woman)--John 4:7-15.

Chapter 81

The Life and the Law

"The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." (John 4:14) "For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light shall we see light." (Psalm 36:9) "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." (John 1:4)

These texts, together with those in the preceding article, show very clearly that Christ is the life of all who receive Him. His life is the life of God. And we have seen that this life is righteousness; which means that it is of the very nature of the law of God, for it is declared to be the righteousness of God.

A fountain is a place from which water flows freely and constantly. Therefore life may be received from God just as one would drink from a fountain to refresh himself. That this is the way that righteousness is to be obtained, the Scriptures plainly show. Let us trace the figure: "Moreover, brethren, I would not that you should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank ofthat spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ." (1 Corinthians 10:1-4)

Unmistakable reference is here made to the bringing of water from the rock in the wilderness, that the Israelites might drink. Let us turn to that. We find the record in the 17th chapter of Exodus. The people were in the desert, and there was no water. The Lord Himself had brought them there, but they did not think of that, but concluded that they were about to perish. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with you of the elders of Israel; and your rod, wherewith you smote the river, take in your hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before you there upon the rock in Horeb; and you shall smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel." (Exodus 17:5-6)

Notice that this rock whence the water came, was in Horeb. Horeb and Sinai are the same, for whereas in Exodus the law is said to have been spoken from Sinai, in Deuteronomy it is said to have been spoken from Horeb; and in Malachi we read,

"Remember the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments." (Malachi 4:4)

So the water came from the same mountain from which the law was afterward spoken. Moreover, the water was flowing at the very time that the law was spoken. For there was no water in that place except what came from the rock, and if it had ceased flowing as soon as the people had once quenched their thirst, they would soon have been as bad off as they were before.

Now notice well whence the water came. Moses smote the rock, but he did not give the water to the people. Christ stood on the rock; and in 1 Corinthians 10 we read that the people drank from the Rock which is Christ. The water came in a miraculous manner from Christ Himself. It was the same miracle that was afterwards performed in giving the multitudes bread, as we read in the last paper.

Of the manna we read that it was given that they might know that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. "And He humbled you, and suffered you to hunger, and fed you with manna, which you knew not, neither did your fathers know; that He might make you know that man does not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord does man live." (Deuteronomy 8:3)

So it must have been with the water. It was to teach the people trust in the Lord, not only for temporal blessings, but for spiritual life also.

Now when we remember that Jesus says that He gives the water of life to all who believe in Him, and that this water is the Holy Spirit, which ministers the righteousness of the law of God, we must know that by giving the Israelites water in that miraculously manner, He meant to teach them that just as they drink that water to refresh their physical life, so they might by believing Him, drink of His righteousness.

That this is so is indicated by the words of Jesus in the sermon on the mount: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." (Matthew 5:6)

Sinai stands as the embodiment of law. "[But] by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified." (Romans 3:20)

This was indicated in the giving of the law. It was given amid thunders and lightnings, and an earthquake. It was death to so much as touch the mount. That indicated that no one could approach the holy law that was spoken therefrom, to obtain righteousness. "The law works wrath." (Romans 4:15)

It has only death to give to the sinner. Yet it was a fact that no one could have life except he had the righteousness of that same law. What hope, then, was there for the people?

Why, this was the lesson that they were to learn from the circumstance, and which we are to learn from the record of it. Although righteousness cannot be obtained from the law, any more than the people could touch the mountain from which it was spoken, yet as they could stand afar off and drink of the water which was flowing from the mountain, so they could drink in the righteousness of the law by receiving Christ, the giver of the water. Happy would it have been for them if they had learned the lesson.

Thus we see that in the very giving of the law, the people were plainly taught that righteousness could not be gained from the law, but only through Christ. The law was ordained in the hands of a Mediator: "Wherefore then serves the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator." (Galatians 3:19)

And Christ is the one Mediator between God and man. "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 2:5)

He is not Mediator in the sense that He shields us from the wrath of God, for God does not hate us; He loves sinners. But Christ is Mediator in the sense that through Him the righteousness of God is conveyed to us, so that we may be reconciled to Him. The water flowing from the rock as the law was spoken, was an indication that they could through Christ just as freely drink of the righteousness which the law demanded, and thus have eternal life. "Out of the heart are the issues of life." (Proverbs 4:23)

And the law of God was in the heart of the Lord Jesus. "I delight to do Your will, O my God: yea, Your law is within my heart." (Psalm 40:8)

Therefore the life which comes from Him to us is the righteousness of the law. Now see how things in the heavens were pictured out before the faces of the children of Israel, and before our faces, too, if we receive the Bible record as the living word of God.

The law of God is the foundation of the throne of God: "Justice and judgment are the habitation of your throne: mercy and truth shall go before your face." (Psalm 89:14)

God dwells between the cherubim: "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, You that lead Joseph like a flock; You that dwell between the cherubims, shine forth." (Psalm 80:1)

In the sanctuary which Moses built, there was an ark, upon the cover of which were two cherubim, and within which, underneath the cherubim was the law of God, the ten commandments. It was between these two cherubim, over the law, that the glory of God appeared, and from there He spoke to the people. "And they shall make an ark of shittim wood: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof. And you shall overlay it with pure gold, within and without shall you overlay it, and shall make upon it a crown of gold round about. And you shall cast four rings of gold for it, and put them in the four corners thereof; and two rings shall be in the one side of it, and two rings in the other side of it. And you shall make staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold. And you shall put the staves into the rings by the sides of the ark, that the ark may be borne with them. The staves shall be in the rings of the ark: they shall not betaken from it. And you shall put into the ark the testimony which I shall give you. And you shall make a mercy seat of pure gold: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof. And you shall make two cherubims of gold, of beaten works hall you make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat. And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end: even of the mercy seat shall you make the cherubims on the two ends thereof. And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be. And you shall put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark you shall put the testimony that I shall give you. And there I will meet with you, and I will commune with you from above the

mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give you in commandment unto the children of Israel." (Exodus 25:10-22)

Thus the ark was a symbol of the throne of God, showing that the law is literally the basis of it; for the earthly tabernacle was a pattern of things in the heavens: "It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." (Hebrews 9:23-24) "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." (Revelation 22:1)

This river is a real, literal river, yet it is of it that we are to drink even now. For the call is, "Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Revelation 22:17)

And Jesus says, "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of water of life freely." (Revelation 21:6)

This river of water of life comes direct from the throne of God, and in that throne is the law. Of it we may drink freely.

But as it comes from the throne of God, it is as it were charged with the righteousness of that law, so that as we drink it, we drink in the righteousness of God. And as that water is our life, just as earthly water gives fresh life to our fainting bodies, therefore our lives are filled with righteousness.

It was to impress this lesson upon the minds of the children of Israel in the desert that the things took place in connection with Sinai. And it was to impress the same lesson upon our minds that the record of those occurrences was written.

The mountain was the embodiment of law; the law had nothing but terror for them; but the water was flowing from the same mountain; it however came from Christ, from whom the law also came. All this was to teach us that the law which was spoken from

Sinai is the standard of righteousness, but that while it is death to us when we come to it ourselves alone, it is life to us when we drink of it as Christ ministers it to us.

And thus may we know that His commandment is life eternal, and that whosoever will, may drink freely of the fountain of life, and thereby be filled with righteousness.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Behold I freely give
The living water; thirsty one,
Stoop down, and drink, and live."
I came to Jesus, and I drank
Of that life-giving stream;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
And now I live in Him.
--Horatius Bonar, Hymn: I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say, 1846.

--Present Truth, December 15, 1892--Timeline: III-5 (The Samaritan Woman)--John 4:14.

Chapter 82

Spiritual Worship

True worship is always spiritual: "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." (John 4:24)

Men, however, are prone to lose sight of the spiritual nature of worship and retain only the letter; the form, without the life. With men, the mere letter is of much value. With it they can satisfy their neighbors, and very often their own hearts, as regards their Christian attainments.

But it is of no value in the sight of God. No forms and ceremonies, in themselves, have any value whatever. To worship God in the letter only, without the Spirit, is more offensive to God than not to worship at all.

Without the Spirit the worship of God becomes perverted, so that God and the real nature of His requirements are not discerned. Perverted worship is not the worship of God, but of something else. He who worships God must know God; otherwise he cannot give honor and glory to Him, for He will not know in what His honor and glory consist. Paul tells us that: "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils and not to God." (1 Corinthians 10:20)

They do not intentionally sacrifice to devils; but not knowing God (for he who knows not God is a Gentile and a heathen), the devil puts himself in the place of God in their minds, and they do not know the difference. He does not, of course, present himself in the traditional hoofs, horns, tail, and other diabolical features with which popular theology has clothed him. He knows better than that. He presents himself as an angel of light: "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." (2 Corinthians 11:14)

His character is not shown by his appearance, but by his words and actions.

Satanic Conceptions

Among the more ignorant heathen, prayers are commonly offered to the deity for success in stealing or murdering or for some other design which enlightened people recognize as intrinsically wrong. It is the devil which prompts such design; yet the prayers are supposed to be offered to God. This is how the devil puts himself in the place of God, so that the worship which belongs to God, and is supposedly rendered to Him, is given to himself.

The conception which the heathen have of God is nothing else than a conception of the devil; hence their worship cannot but be the worship of the devil.

And this is just as true of the enlightened and civilized heathen as of those who are ignorant, only the example of the latter is a little better for illustration. No one, however "enlightened" and "civilized" can know Him but he to whom the Son reveals Him: "All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knows the Son, but the Father; neither knows any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." (Matthew 11:27)

And whoever does not know God, makes God such a one as themselves; he clothes Him with the attributes of humanity. He must do so, because naturally, he has no higher conception in his mind. God says His ways are as much higher than man's ways as the heavens are higher than the earth: "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:9)

Therefore no man can possibly know God's ways and His thoughts by his own wisdom. He can know them only by revelation. And until he knows them by revelation, he attributes to God such actions as he himself would do, and such motives as he himself would have were it left to him to deal with the world and with sinners.

But a man's own natural attributes are the attributes of the devil; for they were acquired, as the devil acquired his, by sinning against God. Through Adam, every man is by nature evil. And therefore when a man clothes the being whom he worships with his own attributes,--with envy, pride, spite, revenge, and all or any of those which make up the sum of human nature,--he simply clothes Him with the attributes of the devil and worships the devil in the place of God.

And this is what everyone does whose worship is of the letter without the spirit, for no one, without the Spirit, can know God. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God, and reveals them unto us, so that we may have the mind of Christ. "But God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God. For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ." (1 Corinthians 2:10,16)

Knowing God, we can worship Him intelligently; we can do that which meets His mind, and which meets the requirements of the case; and only thus can our worship contribute to His honor and glory. To worship Him without knowing Him (if such acts could be called worship) would be like an African bushman offering himself as assistant to an astronomer.

The Jews knew not God, and therefore their worship degenerated into the mere letter of worship, which was nothing more than an attempt to observe the commandments of God in the wisdom of man. It was not the true letter of the commandments, for that cannot exist alone, but is quickly perverted when the Spirit is lacking.

So the Jews had perverted and added many things to the letter of the commandments-"grievous burdens," as our Saviour called them-and the history that is given us of their deeds and their words in the days of our Saviour afford some striking illustrations of the truth we are here considering.

Keeping the Sabbath

For example, consider the case of the impotent man whom Christ healed at the pool of Bethesda. He had had an infirmity thirty and eight years, and when the Saviour found him he was lying beside the pool waiting for the angel to trouble the waters. "When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, He said unto him, Will you be made whole?" (John 5:6)

And when the impotent man had stated his case to the Saviour, "Jesus said to him, Rise, take up your bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed and walked; and on the same day was the Sabbath. The Jews therefore said

unto him that was cured, It is the Sabbath day; it is unlawful for you to carry your bed." (John 5:8-10)

They were outwardly strict observers of the Sabbath; but it was all mere form and ceremony. Of observance in the spirit and in truth they knew nothing. To their assertions the man who had been healed replied, "He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up your bed and walk." (John 5:11)

Such an answer should have been satisfactory to any one of sufficient intelligence to comprehend that something more than human power had been exercised in his miraculous restoration; but it was not so to the Jews. They had entirely lost sight of the real nature of the Sabbath and the object of Sabbath observance. They were not observing it to the glory of God; and therefore notwithstanding all their professions and outward show, they were not observing it at all.

Had they been worshiping God in spirit and in truth,--had they known God and what He requires and what constitutes His glory,--they would have seen that the course of the restored invalid was in strict harmony with the true spirit of Sabbath observance.

They would have understood that the object of Christ's miracle and the object of the Sabbath are one and the same; namely, to call attention to the true God, who alone has creative power to manifest in bringing into existence a world with all its various forms of life, or in restoring to strength a man who has lain helpless for thirty and eight years.

By taking up his bed and walking, the attention of all would be signaling a call to the power which had wrought so mighty a change, and thus God would be glorified and the real purpose of Sabbath observance would be fulfilled.

All man's worship amounts to nothing if its end be not the glory of God; and the end cannot be the glory of God if the worshiper does not know God and what is required to honor Him. God is a God of mercy, and has said, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." (Matthew 9:13; Hosea 6:6)

And Jesus said to the Jews that had they known what these words meant, they would not have condemned the guiltless: "But if you had known what this means, I will

have mercy, and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the guiltless." (Matthew 12:7)

Had they believed the words which God spoke to Moses when He passed by before him and proclaimed His name on Mount Sinai, they would not have lost sight of the good done to the impotent man in his seeming violation of the strict letter of the Sabbath law.

And this truth has a practical application in our own day. No one, however learned and great, can know God except the one to whom Christ will reveal Him; and no one who knows not God can worship Him in Spirit and in truth. And he who does not so worship Him will not keep the law of God, and will condemn the one who does keep it. Jewish history in the days of Jesus of Nazareth will repeat itself--is already doing so--in our own time.

Christ has revealed the Father to the world, and all may know Him who sincerely desire to know Him and do His will. God has no favorites; He gives equal privileges to all. God has spoken to the world by His Son Jesus Christ: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom Hehas appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds." (Hebrews 1:1-2)

And whosoever will believe His words and take the Spirit that is freely given to guide us into all truth, will have understanding to worship God aright. By the word of God we are born again, and passed from the natural man, which discerns not the things of God, to the new man, and become capable of spiritual discernment.

That word is the Bible. Therefore let us diligently search it and receive it into our hearts in faith, that we may be made wise unto salvation.--Present Truth, February 1, 1894--Timeline: III-5 (The Samaritan Woman)--John 4:24.

Chapter 83

True Worship of God

"The hour comes, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeks such to worship Him. God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth." (John 4:23-24)

Mark, that spiritual worship is not a privilege merely, but a necessity. Jesus did not say that they that worship God may worship Him in Spirit, but that they must do so.

There is no worship of God but spiritual worship. All professed worship of God, that is not in spirit, is but idolatry, and the taking of His name in vain.

How can we worship Him in spirit? By taking His Spirit, which He freely gives to all. Men cannot give it to us, they cannot compel us to have it; but God gives it as freely as the air, and we may have it as abundantly.--Present Truth, December 28, 1893--Timeline: III-5 (The Samaritan Woman)--John 4:23-24.

Chapter 84

The Woman of Samaria

The woman of Samaria, with whom Christ talked at Jacob's well, left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and said to the men, "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" (John 4:29)

Yet we have no record that Jesus told her anything of her past life except the one fact that she had had five husbands, and was then living with a man who was not her husband. But that was enough.

It was not necessary for Christ to enumerate every individual act of sin; the mention of the one laid bare her whole life. All that she had ever done was in that one thing that Christ told her. She did not attempt to excuse herself by saying that she had no other fault, at any rate, but recognized in that one thing the picture of her whole life.

An important thing for us to note in this connection is that the woman found Christ in the conviction of sin. This is the way God would have it with us all. It is the Holy Spirit that reproves and convicts of sin; but He is at the same time the Comforter, and He convicts but to comfort.

Instead of sinking down in discouragement when we are reproved for our faults (and how quietly and tactfully the Lord reproves), we should take courage from the reproof, knowing that it is the way God takes to reveal to us the Christ who saves from sin. In the conviction we find healing. "For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life." (Proverbs 6:23)

Another very important lesson for us to learn is that when the Lord forgives one thing, He forgives everything. There is no half-way work with Him. Just as in the mention of one sin, He brought to the woman's remembrance her whole life, even so, when we come to Him penitently confessing any sin that comes to our attention, and humbly asking forgiveness, we may know that in forgiving it He forgives all the sins of our life. "[We are] saved by His life." (Romans 5:10)

And that life is not given to us piecemeal. Christ gives himself to us whole and undivided. "To everyone of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." (Ephesians 4:7)

And that gift is infinite, so that in Him is plenteous grace found to cover all our sin. "Where sin abounds, grace much more abounds." (Romans 5:20)

Therefore we may always be joyful in God. "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice." (Philippians 4:4)--Present Truth, August 2, 1900--Original title: Back Page--Timeline: III-5 (The Samaritan Woman)--John 4:29.

Chapter 85

Meat That You Know Not Of

Jesus, weary and hungry, sat alone by the well; His disciples were gone away to buy bread.

Then came an ignorant woman needing instruction, a sinner needing salvation, and He devoted himself to the task of supplying her needs. He gave her to eat of the Bread of Life, and to drink of the water of salvation. When she ran to call her neighbors to join the feast, He gladly supplied the needs of all who came.

By and by His disciples came and besought Him, saying, "Master, eat." (John 4:31)

But He had ceased to hunger, and to their surprise replied, "I have meat to eat that you know not of.Then they questioned one with another, Has any man brought Him anything to eat? Jesus said unto them, My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me." (John 4:32-34)

In ministering to the wants of others He received His own daily bread.--Present Truth, March 26, 1903--Timeline: III-5 (The Samaritan Woman)--John 4:31-34.

Chapter 86

Our Need

"After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, He said unto him, Will you be made whole? The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steps down before me. Jesus said unto him, Rise, take up your bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath." (John 5:1-9)

The real problem in the world is how to get rid of sin. Everybody knows this way down in the heart. It is not information that we need; it is help.

When Christ found the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, no amount of talk about his condition and how he came there would have availed, nor discussion about what he ought to do. The man was helpless, and could do nothing, and knew it. Christ gave him what he lacked,-strength and life. This was Christ's way.

The scribes and doctors of the law followed Him about discussing technicalities, and reasoning among themselves; but those who wanted help received it.

We today, of ourselves, are just where the impotent man was; helpless, unable to separate ourselves from the sin that holds us. Therefore, "[Christ] gave himself for our sins, that He might deliver us." (Galatians 1:4)

We need that true sorrow and repentance for sin which shall make us long for this deliverance; but we have not to reproach and condemn ourselves in the vain effort to work repentance so deep that God will pity us. God's love and pity are already upon the

sinner, and in Christ is provided the repentance to all who will look to Him; for: "Him has God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." (Acts 5:31)

We need strength, and "to them that have no might He increases strength," (Isaiah 40:29) "according to His glorious power." (Colossians 1:11)

New life, also, we need, and He came "that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly." (John 10:10) "God shall supply all your need according to His riches and glory by Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:19)--Present Truth, January 4, 1894--Timeline: III-9 (The Invalid at Bethesda)--John 5:2-9.

Chapter 87

Will You Be Made Whole?

"When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, He said unto him, Will you be made whole?" (John 5:6)

That was the question that Jesus put to the poor, impotent man at the pool of Bethesda. It is the same question that He puts to everyone of us; and He is just as willing to heal us as He was to heal that man. He is not only willing, but He is intensely anxious to make us all whole; for whenever He saw a great multitude on earth, "He was moved with compassion for them, and He healed their sick." (Matthew 14:14)

Why then are we not well? Simply because we either do not see Him standing beside us, with all power in heaven and on earth, and lovingly and longingly asking us, "Will you be made whole?" (John 5:6)

Or else we in some way object to the condition, which is that we shall abide in Him. "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can you, except you abide in me." (John 15:4)

The healing involves an exchanging of self for Christ. The lame man at the gate of the temple was healed "in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth." (Acts 3:6)

And it was in His name, "even in Him," that He stood before the people perfectly whole. "That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him." (Ephesians 1:10) "And His name through faith in His name has made this man strong, whom you see and know: yea, the faith which is by Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all." (Acts 3:16)

How sad it is to think that so much of the Scriptures seems to have been written in vain, even for the professed followers of Christ. Why is it? It is because they follow Him as the multitude followed Him on the way to the house of Jairus, and do not come into conscious, definite, purposeful touch with Him, as did the poor woman with the issue of blood.

There is infinite power, both for body and mind, awaiting those were willing to receive it in the Lord's way, and to hold it always subject only to His service.--Present Truth, October 2, 1902--Timeline: III-9 (The Invalid at Bethesda)--John 5:6.

Chapter 88

Being Made Whole

The miracles of Christ are recorded for us that we may believe in Him, and believing, find life in His name.

"But these are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life through His name." (John 20:31)

Therefore when we read of the many interesting circumstances that were connected with His works of healing, we are not to think of them as applying solely to the persons who were healed, but to learn from them what we may expect when we ourselves come to Jesus for help in time of need.

The people who received His blessing in Judea and Galilee displayed many characteristics which we recognize as belonging to human nature at the present time, and we may learn from their experience how the Saviour deals with us under similar circumstances.

We read in the 5th chapter of John's Gospel of man who had had an infirmity thirty-eight years. He was greatly desirous of being freed from his disease, and with this object he lay beside the pool of Bethesda. At certain times the water was troubled, and then there was a rush on the part of the sick people who clustered round the pool to get first into the water, that they might be healed.

As Jesus walked one Sabbath by this place He saw the man, and knowing that he had now been a long time in that case, He asked him, "Will you be made whole?" (John 5:6)

Notice what a despairing answer the man returns: "Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steps down before me." (John 5:7)

He desired to be made whole earnestly enough, but he only saw one possibility of this being accomplished, and that was that some man would take pity on his helplessness and wait for an opportunity to help him into the water.

Doubtless most of the sufferers lying round the pool had friends with these, and the man who had the most friends stood the best chance. The greatest thing that this man could think of that Jesus could do for him would be to undertake to wait by his side till the waters were again troubled. "Jesus said unto him, Arise, take up they bed and walk. And straightway the man was made whole, and took up his bed and walked." (John 5:8-9)

This is what Jesus does for men. He comes to everyone and says, "Will you be made whole?" (John 5:6)

And He desires to do as much for us as He did for the impotent man on that occasion.

We too may have been held by our infirmities thirty-eight years, or even more. Inherited tendencies to evil may have grown into fixed habits that are part of our lives, and that we cannot possibly overcome, but it is as easy for Christ to make us whole, and free from them, as though they were not a day old.

When He calls the dead from the grave at the resurrection, it will be as easy for Him to raise Adam and Eve as those that have only lately turned to dust.

Jesus sees us in bondage to the lusts of the flesh, led captive by Satan, and defiled with the leprosy of sin, and he wants to make us every white whole, but, like the man by the pool of Bethesda, we to often put Him off by saying that if we only had the help that others have, we would be all right. If only we were as free from trouble and temptation as others that we know, we would soon be whole. If some man would help us, or other men would cease to hinder us, all would be well.

The Saviour does not want us to lean upon these broken reeds, which always disappoint, and wound those who trust them. He has, all ready for us, all that we can desire and, passing by as worthless all our plans for helping ourselves, He solves the whole problem at once, by giving directly what we need.

If we are willing to abandon our confidence in our own methods and devices, acknowledge our weakness, and trust implicitly in His all-powerful, all-sufficient Word, we may pass straightway from the condition of weakness and infirmity, no matter of how long standing, and enter at once into the joyful experience of freedom in the Lord from all the power of the enemy.

All the years that the impotent man had been lying by the pool had brought him not a single step nearer the attainment of his desires. All our own efforts to make ourselves whole, leave us further from the end than before.

A word from Jesus accomplished immediately more than the man had dared to hope. "And this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you." (1 Peter 1:25)--Present Truth, February 16, 1899--Timeline: III-9 (The Invalid at Bethesda)--John 5:6-9.

Chapter 89

Good Works

The Bible holds out no promise of a reward for laziness.

In God's plan no provision is made for idleness. Heaven is pictured before us as a place of activity, and heavenly beings as untiring workers. The Saviour said: "My Father works hitherto, and I work." (John 5:17)

And again: "I must work the works of Him that sent me." (John 9:4)

Of the angels we read that they are all "ministering spirits sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation." (Hebrews 1:14,RV)

This being the case, it cannot be thought that those who are to inherit salvation should be idle. The apostle Paul labored with his hands, as an example to the believers, and left on record the divine commandment, "If any will not work, neither let him eat." (1 Thessalonians 3:10,RV)

But the frequent exhortation to work is with special reference to spiritual things, rather than physical. Jesus said: "Labor not for the meat which perishes, but for that meat which endures unto everlasting life." (John 6:27)

So the apostle Paul says that the reward will be given to those who patiently continue in well doing: "To them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life." (Romans 2:7)

And the Saviour says: "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." (Revelation 22:12)

Again we read that: "[Christ] gave himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a people for His own possession, zealous of good works." (Titus 2:14,RV)

And again the Holy Spirit, through the apostle James, puts a premium upon good works, in these words: "But he that looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and so continues, being not a hearer that forgets, but a doer that works, this man shall be blessed in his doing." (James 1:25)

Many other texts might be quoted to show that the Christian life is to be one of activity, and that good works are not only necessary, but are the one indispensable requisite.

Works, and works alone, in the judgment, will determine a man's condition for eternity. "[God] will render to every man according to his works." (Romans 2:6)

The question which the judgment will settle will not be, "What has this man believed?" nor "How has he felt?" but "What are his works?"

There is no place for the cavil of those who think that they are enunciating a principle of which the Bible is ignorant, when they say, "God will not damn a good man for his opinions nor for his belief."

People are neither condemned nor saved because of their opinions, but because of their deeds. "What!" exclaims one, "are you going to deny the doctrine of justification by faith?"

Not by any means. I would go so far as to claim that the doctrine of justification by faith is the one great theme of the Scriptures, and that all other things are but parts of it. But the thing to be emphasized by the above remarks and quotations is that faith works. "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision avails any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which works by love." (Galatians 5:6)

No truer statement was ever made than this, that "faith is not a sedative, but a stimulant." Faith is intensely active, and the source of all spiritual activity.

While it is true that only a man's works will be considered in the judgment, it is equally true that the character of his works will be determined by his faith. Where there is no faith, there can be no enduring works.

The works which are acceptable to God are "good works." But perfect goodness resides in God alone. "And Jesus said unto him, Why do you call me good? there is none good but one, that is, God." (Mark 10:18)

The righteousness which we must have is God's righteousness. "But seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matthew 6:33)

Of His own ways God says: "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:8)

Who, then, can hope to present to God the good works that will be equal to His? None but those who, like Paul's brethren, are ignorant of God's righteousness, would be presumptuous enough to think such a thing possible. Only God can do the works of God. Therefore when the Jews said to Christ, "What shall we do that we may work the works of God?" (John 6:28)

He replied, "This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent." (John 6:29)

The words of Paul: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," (Philippians 2:12) are often quoted by those who forget the words immediately following, "For it is God which works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." (Philippians 2:13)

God himself does the good works which, when exhibited in the lives of men, render them pleasing to Him. So the Saviour said: "But he that does truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." (John 3:21)

How, then, do they appear in men? This is "the mystery of godliness." (1 Timothy 3:16)

It is the mystery of "God manifest in the flesh." (1 Timothy 3:16) "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt, among us." (John 1:1,14)

This was done to demonstrate the possibility of God's dwelling in human flesh. The mystery of the works of God being manifested in the lives of men, is simply the mystery of the incarnation. "In [Christ] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." (Colossians 2:9)

Therefore when Christ in His completeness dwells in the heart by faith, that person will be: "Filled with all the fullness of God." (Ephesians 3:19)

What words could be more full of comfort, and more suggestive of the infinite possibilities of the Christian life than those in: "O how great is your goodness which You have laid up for them that fear You; which You have wrought for them that trust in You before the sons of men!" (Psalm 33:19)

Think of it! God himself has wrought the good works with which we are to appear before His throne. And how are we to get them? Simply by trusting Him; by appropriating those good works by faith. God himself comes to dwell with those who believe His word, and He lives out His own life in them. This thought is enough to fill every soul with love and joy and confidence.

The Christian life means an actual life. But life means activity. To live a godly life, therefore, means the living of a life in which the acts of God himself are manifested. The apostle Paul said: "But by the grace of God I am what I am; and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all." (1 Corinthians 15:10)

And then he added, "yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." (1 Corinthians 15:10)

And again: "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20)

The secret of the whole matter is to acknowledge that in us dwells no good thing, and that God alone is good; that we are nothing, but that He is everything, that we are weakness, but that power belongs to God, and that God has the power to manifest

himself in the flesh today as well as eighteen hundred years ago, if we will but let Him, and to submit ourselves to the righteousness of God.

Exaltation comes only through self-abasement. Christian activity comes only through passive submission to God, as the clay is passive in the hands of the potter. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto your name give glory, for your mercy and for your truth's sake." (Psalm 115:1)--Present Truth, August 11, 1892--Timeline: III-10 (Rejection by the Sanhedrin)--John 5:17.

Chapter 90

Whom Shall We Hear?

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that hears my word, and believes on Him that sent me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." (John 5:24,25)

The voice which we are to hear is always the voice of the Son of God. Only that voice will give life; only they that hear that voice shall live. If man speaks, he is to be but the mouthpiece; the voice is to be God's. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." (1 Peter 4:11)

If anyone speaks with his own voice, him we are not to hear.

Some of the Samaritans believed on Christ because of what was told them by the woman whom Christ met at the well. But: "Many more believed because of His own word; And said unto the woman, Now we believe; not because of your saying, but we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." (John 4:41-42)

Their faith rested on the true foundation,--Christ's word. No belief that does not rest on this will be enduring.

When many of Christ's disciples turned from Him because they could not receive His sayings, and Jesus had asked the twelve if they also would go way, Peter said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that You are that Christ, the Son of the living God." (John 6:68-69)

There was none other than Christ who had the words of eternal life; there is none other now. And those who hear His words, believe and are sure that He is the Son of God. They have a knowledge that is possessed by none others. Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me." (John 10:27)

When the true Shepherd "puts forth His own sheep, He goes before them, and the sheep follow Him; for they know His voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers." (John 10:4-5)

The true Shepherd "calls His sheep by name." (John 10:3)

This is how they know His voice. He speaks directly to them, to each one individually, and they know it. This is how we know the voice of the Son of God. And for that voice, and that only, we are to listen. Many voices are crying, many saying, "Lo here!" and "Lo there!"

But the Shepherd's voice is different from them all. That is the voice of One whom, when we hear it, we know to be acquainted with us,--with our past lives, and the motives and thoughts and perplexities of our individual hearts. He knows us by name; and if we will hear His voice He will make known unto us His name. And: "His name, through faith in His name, shall make us whole, as it did the cripple at the beautiful gate of the temple." (Acts 3:16)--Present Truth, February 1, 1894--Timeline: III-10 (Rejection by the Sanhedrin)--John 5:24-25.

Chapter 91

Salvation and the Resurrection

The power of salvation is the power of the resurrection. Jesus said: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." (John 5:25)

This agrees with the striking words of the Lord by the prophet Isaiah: "Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live." (Isaiah 55:3)

Those who hear the voice of the Son of God will live by the power of the endless life which the Father has given the Son to have in himself: "For as the Father has life in himself; so has He given to the Son to have life in himself." (John 5:26)

But how may we know that such a wonderful thing as changing a man from the death of sin to the life of righteousness can be accomplished? "Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, And shall come forth." (John 5:28-29)

The power by which men are made righteous now is the power by which those who are in the graves will be raised at the last day. And that this can and will be done is assured by the fact that: "Now is Christ risen." (1 Corinthians 15:20)

Every Gospel messenger is therefore simply a witness to the resurrection of Jesus. Do you know that Christ is risen from the dead? If so, how?--Present Truth, November 25, 1897--Timeline: III-10 (Rejection by the Sanhedrin)--John 5:25-29.

Chapter 92

The Jewish Rulers and Moses

The Jewish rulers in the days of Jesus made their boast of Moses. That Moses against whom their fathers so often rebelled, had been exalted to the place of Deity. Professor Graetz says of this, in his History of the Jews:

His memory and name were endeared to all the Judeans within and beyond Palestine. They took oaths in the name of Moses, and bestowed that name on no other man. They carried their devotion to such an extreme that he who spoke against the name of Moses was treated as one who blasphemed God.

Yet Jesus said to these men: "There is one that accuses you, even Moses, in whom you trust. For had you believed Moses, you would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if you believe not his writings, how shall you believe my words?" (John 5:45-47)

They did not believe the very writings that they counted it blasphemy to speak against. Jesus showed that their profession of regard for Moses and also, on another occasion, for the prophets, was but a theological formula. Because they did not believe the Scriptures which they read through the traditions of the schools, they fulfilled them in condemning Christ.

There is a lesson in this for us. Not a theoretical belief that the Bible is from God, but a yielding of the heart and life to it is the essential thing. Multitudes, called Evangelical, are ready to fight higher critics for the inspiration of the Bible who nevertheless will not receive it, as God's voice, meaning just what He says, when the voice calls for practical reform in the life.

The Bible is talked of in all Christendom, but yet Christendom is swiftly running on in the very course of apostasy that the Bible marks out and warns against.--Present Truth, September 2, 1897--Timeline: III-10 (Rejection by the Sanhedrin)--John 5:45-47.

Chapter 93

One Voice

The Jews professed to believe the writings of Moses, but they did not. Christ said to them: "For had you believed Moses, you would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if you believe not his writings, how shall you believe my words?" (John 5:46-47)

The man who rejects one word from God really rejects the whole; for it is the same voice throughout.

This is illustrated in the progress of so-called Biblical criticism.

• The critics began with the Old Testament, and the writings of Moses.

• Then Isaiah and the other prophets, and the Psalms were disposed of, higher criticism deciding what portions should be received.

• Now the critics deal with the words of Christ in the New Testament in the same manner.

This is as Christ said, "If you believed not his [Moses'] writings, how shall you believe my words?" (John 5:47)

Christ spoke by Moses and the prophets as verily as by His own lips. It is the same voice, the same tone, and the same Gospel, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever." (Hebrews 13:8)--Present Truth, January 11, 1894--Timeline: III-10 (Rejection by the Sanhedrin)--John 5:46-47

Chapter 94

As Free as a Bird

The Lord Jesus Christ began His earthly ministry by reading in the synagogue at Nazareth the following words from Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." (Luke 4:18-19)

And then He said to the congregation, «This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." (Luke 4:21)

Turning to the place from which Christ read, we find these words: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." (Isaiah 61:1)

The Hebrew term which in Isaiah is rendered, "the opening of the prison," has the general signification of "opening," and is applied to the opening of the eyes of the blind, and the ears of the deaf. Accordingly the Saviour gave it this double application, in reading it, so that in Luke we have instead of the one statement, "the opening of the prison to them that are bound" the two statements, "recovering of sight to the blind," and, "to set at liberty them that are bruised."

The whole import of the text therefore is that Christ came to give freedom in every sense of the word. It is charged with the idea of liberty, and that to an extent that few realize. We shall be amply repaid for a few moments closer study of it, and for many hours of meditation upon it afterwards.

The word "liberty," in the statement, in Isaiah 61:1, that Christ was anointed "to proclaim liberty to the captives," is from a Hebrew word, the primary signification of which is "a swallow." This noun is derived from a verb which signifies: "to fly in a circle, to wheel in flight," like a bird in the air. From this it is easy to see how the word came to signify "freedom" and "liberty."

We learn, therefore, that the Bible idea of liberty is best represented by the graceful flight of a swallow through the air. We often use the figure, "as free as a bird," and that exactly expresses the liberty wherewith Christ makes us free.

Is it not a glorious thing? What a sense of freedom thrills the soul at the very thought of it! Sin is bondage. Jesus said, "Verily, verily I say unto you, Everyone that commits sin is the bondservant of sin." (John 8:34)

Not only is the sinner in bondage, but he is in prison. The Apostle Paul says, "The Scripture has concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed." (Galatians 3:22-23)

The word "concluded" means, literally, "shut up together." All sinners are in bondage, shut up together in prison, condemned to hard labor. The end of sin is death: "Then when lust has conceived, it brings forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death." (James 1:15)

Consequently the sinner is not only shut up in prison, condemned to hard, unprofitable labor, but he has the fear of death continually before him. It is from this that Christ delivers us: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." (Hebrews 2:14-15)

So we read in: "For He has looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from heaven did the Lord behold the earth; To hear the groaning of the prisoner, to loose those that are appointed to death." (Psalm 102:19-20)

Christ says, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed." (John 8:36)

"Free indeed." With the knowledge already gained from Isaiah 61:1, we can easily grasp the fullness of that freedom.

Imagine a bird that has been caught, and shut up in a cage. It longs for freedom, but the cruel bars make that impossible. Someone comes along and opens the door. The bird sees the opening, but has so often been deceived in his attempts to gain his liberty, that he hesitates. He hops down finds that his prison is really open, trembles a moment for very joy at the thought of liberty, then spreads his wings and wheels through the air with such rapture as can be known only by one who has been a captive. "Free indeed." As free as a bird.

This is the liberty wherewith Christ frees the captive of sin. The Psalmist had that experience, for he said: "Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers, the snare is broken, and we are escaped." (Psalm 124:7)

And this is the experience of everyone who truly and without reserve accepts Christ. But it is the truth that gives this freedom; for Christ says, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32)

He is the truth, and His word is truth. The Psalmist says, "Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and your law is the truth." (Psalm 119:142)

And he also says, "I will walk at liberty, for I seek your precepts." (Psalm 119:45)

As we learn from the margin, this is literally, "I will walk in a broad place, for I seek your precepts."

And this fits with what we learn in: "I have seen an end of all perfection; but your commandment is exceeding broad." (Psalm 119:96)

The commandments of God form an exceedingly broad place in which all may walk who seek them. They are the truth, and it is the truth that gives freedom. "The law is spiritual.' (Romans 7:14)

That is, the law is the nature of God, for: "The Lord is that Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." (2 Corinthians 3:17)

Because the Spirit of the Lord God was in Christ, He could proclaim liberty to the captives of sin. So we read the words of one who had been a captive slave, "sold under

sin." (Romans 7:14) "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which arein Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." (Romans 8:1-2)

The law of God was, and is, in the heart of Christ. "I delight to do your will, O my God: yea, your law is within my heart." (Psalm 40:8) "Out of the heart are the issues of life." (Proverbs 4:23)

Therefore the life of Christ is the law of God. When men attempt to keep the law in their own strength, they invariably get into bondage, just as surely as though they willfully broke it. The only difference is that in the latter case they are willing slaves, while in the former they are unwilling slaves. In Christ alone the perfect righteousness of the law is found, and therefore His life is "the perfect law of liberty," (James 1:25) into which we are exhorted continually to look: "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:2)

The law that shuts up to certain death the man who is out of Christ, becomes life and liberty to the man who is in Christ. We have seen that: "[The] commandment is exceeding broad." (Psalm 119:96)

How broad? Just as broad as the life of God. Therefore the liberty, or the "broad place" in which one can walk who seeks the law of God, is the breadth of God's mind, which comprehends the universe. This is "the glorious liberty of the children of God." (Romans 8:21) "His commandments are not grievous," (1 John 5:3) but on the contrary are life and liberty to all who accept them "as the truth is in Jesus." (Ephesians 4:21)

God has not given us the spirit of bondage, but has called us to the liberty which He himself enjoys; for if we believe His word we are His sons, "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ." (Romans 8:7)

Only the Spirit of God can give such liberty as this. No man can give it, and no earthly power can take it away.

We have seen that no man can get it by his own efforts to keep the law of God. The greatest human efforts can result in nothing but bondage. Therefore when civil governments enact laws requiring men to follow a certain religious custom, they are simply forging fetters for them; because religion by law means a religion of purely human power.

It is not the man who tries to do right, that is free, but the man who actually does right. But no man does the truth, except the one whose works are wrought in him by God himself.

The liberty which Christ gives is liberty of the soul. It is liberty from the bondage of sin. That, and that alone, is real religious liberty. It is found nowhere but in the religion of Jesus Christ. The man who has that liberty is free even in a prison cell. The slave who has it is infinitely more at liberty than his cruel master, even though he be a king.

Who is there who does not want liberty that is something more than a name?

And now one more word of encouragement to the slave of sin, who is heart sick because of his bondage, and is discouraged through the failure of repeated attempts to escape. Freedom is yours, if you will but take it. Read again the words of Christ, which are living words today: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." (Isaiah 61:1-2)

What is that? Liberty has already been proclaimed. Your prison doors are already open, and you have only to believe it, and to walk out, continually believing it. Christ is today proclaiming liberty to you, for He has broken the snare, and loosed your bonds. "O Lord, truly I am your servant; I am your servant, and the son of your handmaid: You have loosed my bonds." (Psalm 116:16)

He tells you that He has opened this prison door, so that you may walk at liberty, if you will only walk by faith in Him. It is faith that opens the door to the one who is shut up in sin. Believe His word, declare yourself free in His name, and then by humble faith stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. Then will you know the

blessedness of the assurance: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint." (Isaiah 40:31)--Present Truth, January 10, 1895--Timeline: IV-2 (First Rejection at Nazareth)--Luke 4:18-21.

Chapter 95

Doubt and Murder

When Jesus read the prophecy of Isaiah, in the synagogue at Nazareth, and began to say to the people, whose eyes were fastened upon him, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears; And all bore Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth;" (Luke 4:21-22)

The Spirit of the Lord was indeed upon Him, and as the result His words produced conviction. Involuntarily they responded to the power of the Spirit. Then came in another feeling. They said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" (Luke 4:22)

They gave place to doubt. True, the words which Jesus had read and spoken had come with the force of the Holy Spirit, and they had acknowledged their gracious power; but they could not make the gracious words harmonize with their reason and experience, and so they lost the blessing.

The same thing is repeated again and again in these days. People hear burning words of truth, which cause their own hearts to burn in response, and then doubt comes in under the guise of "prudence" and "caution." "We must not be too quick to accept new things;" "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on Him?" (John 7:48) "We will not commit ourselves until we see how this thing is going to turn." "We cannot be too cautious."

These and many other things hold many people back from following the convictions produced by the Holy Spirit. Looking at the matter from a worldly critical point of view, they conclude that the influence of the Spirit was only a sudden impulse, which it would be most unwise to yield to. They are confirmed in this view by the fact that, as the result of their unbelieving calculation, the Spirit's voice has been silenced, and they no longer feel that response in their hearts to the words of truth. And thus carnal wisdom proves their ruin.

But this is not the end. The Gospel narrative tells us that the very people who at first bore witness to the gracious words of Jesus, seized Him a few minutes later, and

attempted to throw Him down headlong from a precipice. Murder was in their hearts. That they did not kill Jesus was only because they had not the power.

What caused this change? Nothing but the cherishing of a single doubt. Here is a warning for those who think that doubt is a trivial matter. Every doubt has murder connected in it. Those doubts which seem so perfectly "natural" that you scarcely call them doubt, but only the manifestation of proper caution are the things which if cherished, will cry, "Crucify Him." (Mark 15:13)

It is not a light thing to doubt the witness of the Spirit of God. One of the things which made David a man after God's own heart, was the fact that: "[He] made haste, and delayed not to keep the commandments of God," (Psalm 119:60) when they were made known to him. Take heed not to quench the Spirit by doubt.--Present Truth, March 8, 1894--Timeline: IV-2 (First Rejection at Nazareth)--Luke 4:21-22.

Chapter 96

Jesus Rejected at Nazareth

"And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up: and, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read." (Luke 4:16)

We hear a great deal about the example of the apostles, and of that of the Christian church in the early centuries; and many people think that if we can but find out what they did, we have no need to look further to find out what we ought to do.

But the greatest apostle of all tells us that the apostles are but ministers, through whom the word of the Lord comes, and that: "Neither is he that plants anything, neither he that waters; but God that gives the increase." (1 Corinthians 3:7)

He tells us that it is no difference who anybody is, "God accepts no man's person." (Galatians 2:6)

And he openly rebuked Peter, because he had led many of the Jews, who followed his example, into dissimulation, contrary to the truth of the Gospel: "But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If you, being a Jew, live after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why do you compel the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?" (Galatians 2:11-14)

As for the church, even from the very days of the apostles until modern times, its history has been one of apostasy, and of persecution of those who steadfastly held to the plain Word of God. Where then can we look to know what course we ought to pursue? The answer is plain: "Your Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." (Psalm 119:105)

Then we have the living manifestation of the Word, in Jesus of Nazareth, who left us "an example, that you should follow in His steps." (1 Peter 2:21) "He that says he abides in Him, ought himself also so to walk even as He walked." (1 John 2:6)

The Custom of Jesus

Our course therefore is clear, and in the lesson before us we have a statement of one of the ways of Jesus. "He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read." (Luke 4:16)

If we intend to "follow in His steps" it is certain that we ought also to regard the Sabbath day. "In His steps" has been used as a title to a book that has been sold by the hundred thousand, so that the people are very familiar with the phrase; and "What would Jesus do?" has been asked many times of late.

But here we find what Jesus really did, and so there is an end to all doubt as to what we ought to do in order to follow in His steps. For it is certain that if Jesus were on earth today He would do exactly the same that He did when He was here nearly nineteen hundred years ago.

What Day is the Sabbath?

There is no room for question as to what day it was when Jesus went into the synagogue to worship, according to His custom. It was the day on which the Jews had regular worship. That day was and is the seventh day of the week, commonly called Saturday. It is the last day of the week, and in the cycle is immediately followed by the first day of the week, commonly called Sunday.

The day which is now almost universally devoted to business, being to many the busiest day of the week, is the day which in the beginning was sanctified by God as the day of rest and worship; and He "who is the Beginning," kept it sacredly. "And He is the head of the body, the church: who is the Beginning, the Firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence." (Colossians 1:18) The commandment that is given to us is the old commandment which was from the beginning: "And this is love,

that we walk after His commandments. This is the commandment, That, as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it." (2 John 6)

We have all wandered from the right way, and are called upon to seek the old paths, and to walk in them. "Thus says the Lord, Stand in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and you shall find rest for your souls." (Jeremiah 6:16)

The old paths are the steps of Him who is from everlasting to everlasting.

The Sabbath Unchanged

We are told that after His resurrection Jesus changed the day of rest and worship from the seventh to the first day of the week.

Is there anybody who really believes that at the very last of His earthly ministry Jesus deliberately undid all that He had done in the preceding years? What a fearful charge of inconsistency that is to bring against the Son of God! He said in the hearing of multitudes, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:17-19)

Yet in the face of this plain declaration, there are those who will tell us that Jesus himself changed the fourth commandment, and taught men to violate it! Surely, "they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34)

If it were so, then Jesus, according to His own words, would be the least in the kingdom of heaven, instead of being Lord of all.

Saved by the Life of Jesus

It is by the death of Christ that we are brought to God, and reconciled to Him; but: "We [are] saved by His life." (Romans 5:10)

When we die in Christ, which is the giving up of our own ways, and our own ideas and prejudices and wishes, we become one with the Father and the Son; then the life of Jesus,--the same life that He lived when here on earth, in Nazareth and elsewhere,--abiding in us, saves us from all lapses into sin. He is the Righteous One, and only His righteousness, His right doing, His obedience to the law, in us is of any value.

Only One Life

Some one will tell us that "Jesus was a Jew," and that therefore He naturally did as the Jews did, but that it is not by His life as a Jew that we are to be saved. That is to reject Jesus entirely as Lord; for all His life long He was the Son of David, and He was crucified as King of the Jews. The wise men came to worship Him in His infancy, as King of the Jews, and the same title was hung upon His cross.

Jesus did not live a double life; He had only one life, and He gives that to us. The "same Jesus" who was crucified, rose again, and ascended to heaven, and will come again. Whosoever therefore rejects the life of Jesus before His crucifixion, rejects His sacrifice and His coming to reign. He himself has said that: "Salvation is of the Jews," (John 4:22) because He who is our salvation is the seed of Abraham. There is no way of escape from this conclusion, and nobody ought to wish to escape from it, that if we are to follow Christ, walking in His steps, we must come back to: "That which was from the beginning." (1 John 1:1)

Bible Terms Not Obsolete

But the lesson here as to the Sabbath is not alone from the example of Christ, important as that is. Here we have a book written many years after the resurrection of Jesus, by a Christian, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, for Christians to the end of time, and in it the day on which the Jews assembled for worship is called "the Sabbath day."

If there had been any change, is it not most wonderfully strange that Jesus himself did not say a single word about it, and that the writers of the New Testament, writing many years after His resurrection and ascension, gave not the slightest hint about the matter?

If the seventh day had been superseded by the first day of the week, Luke would have said something like this: "On the day which was at that time observed as the Sabbath, Jesus went into the synagogue."

How easy it would have been to let us know of the change, if any such change had taken place. If it had taken place, we may be sure that the Lord would have told us about it. The simple facts of the case are these:

• There is a commandment forbidding the doing of ordinary labor on the seventh day of the week. "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shall you labor, and do all your work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord your God: in it you shall not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger that is within your gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it." (Exodus 20:8-11)

• The transgression of the law is sin. "Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." (1 John 3:4)

• On the other hand there is not the slightest trace of any law for the observance of the first day of the week.

• And "where no law is, there is no transgression." (Romans 4:15)

To disregard the Sabbath is therefore a sin, while to do any sort of honest labor on the first day of the week is perfectly right and proper.

Faith Receives Favors

We have left ourselves but little space to speak of this time of that which Jesus did and said on the Sabbath day under consideration; but if we learn this first lesson thoroughly, all the rest will come very easily.

The passage from Isaiah will come in due time in our lessons from that book. That which is taught by the references to the widow of Sarepta, and to Naaman the Syrian, is that everyone who is humble and receptive will be saved.

It is the same lesson that is taught in the account of the centurion who wished Jesus to speak the word, that his servant might be healed, and of whom Jesus said, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness." (Matthew 8:11-13)

Jesus will do mighty works wherever there is a desire to profit by them, but not merely for the sake of silencing carping criticism. He could not do many mighty works in His own country, because of the unbelief of the people, and He would not perform a miracle to gratify the curiosity of Herod. "And when He was come into His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence has this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then has this man all these things? And they were offended in Him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honor, save in His own country, and in His own house. And He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." (Matthew 13:54-58) "And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see Him of a long season, because he had heard many things of Him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him. Then he questioned with Him in many words; but He answered him nothing." (Luke 23:8-9)

Blindness of Unbelief

What a fearfully blinding thing prejudice is! When Jesus first spoke, the people were involuntarily touched by the words of grace that came from His lips, and they "all bore Him witness" by the customary "Amen." But very soon they began to question among themselves, "Who is this man, that he should say such things? We know him well, as well as his mother and brethren. He is only the carpenter's son, and yet he professes to have a message that will set everybody free; who is he, that he should presume to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah?"

And thus they put from them the Gospel of their salvation. For of a truth, Jesus made no pretensions at all. The same message that He bore that Sabbath day, He has commissioned His followers to bear: "For so has the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set you to be a light of the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation unto the ends of the earth." (Acts 13:47)

They might not only have been set free that day, but all that were in the house might have gone forth with shouts of rejoicing to bear the glad news of freedom to others. Instead of that, they sought to kill the One to whose gracious words they had but just before borne witness. Surely the "sentiment of the people" is a very fickle thing.

Kept by the Power of God

"And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, And rose up, and thrust Him out of the city, and led Him unto the brow of the hill, whereon their city was built, that they might cast Him down headlong. But He passing through the midst of them went His way." (Luke 4:28-30)

Jesus allowed himself to be led to the brow of the hill, but that was all. Then He did the very mighty work that they had wished to see wrought in their own country. He passed "through the midst" of the angry crowd who were seeking His life, and went His way. They had no power over Him. They could not kill Him, because His work was not done. Some one has said that: "Every man is immortal until his work is accomplished." [Editor's note: Attributed to Whitfield by some Presbyterian publications in the late 1800's, although I could not confirm this attribution. The original seems to be "Every man is immortal until his work is done."]

This is not true, for every man in this world is mortal until the Lord comes. But it is true that every mortal man who has committed himself fully into the hands of God, is proof against death until he has finished the work that God has sent him to do. Therefore instead of saying, "I am so feeble that I cannot work, and I believe that I shall not live long," the servant of the Lord ought rather to say, "I have work yet to do, and therefore I am going to have health and strength to do it." "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord." (Psalm 118:17)--Present Truth, February 15, 1900--

Subtitle: A Sabbath-Day's Lesson--Timeline: IV-2 (First Rejection at Nazareth)--Luke 4:16-30.

Chapter 97

Doubt and Murder

Jesus read the prophecy of Isaiah, in the synagogue at Nazareth, and began to say to the people, whose eyes were fastened upon Him, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bore Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth." (Luke 4:21-22)

The Spirit of the Lord was indeed upon Him, and as the result His words produced conviction. Involuntarily they responded to the power of the Spirit. Then came in another feeling. They said, "Is not this Joseph's son?"

They gave place to doubt. True, the words which Jesus had read and spoken had come with the force of the Holy Spirit, and they had acknowledged their gracious power; but they could not make the gracious words harmonize with their reason and experience, and so they lost the blessing.

The same thing is repeated again and again in these days. People hear burning words of truth, which cause their own hearts to burn in response, and then doubt comes in under the guise of "prudence" and "caution." "We must not be too quick to accept new things;" "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?" "We will not commit ourselves until we see how this thing is going to turn." "We cannot be too cautious"

These and many other things hold many people back from following the convictions produced by the Holy Spirit. Looking at the matter from a worldly critical point of view, they conclude that the influence of the Spirit was only a sudden impulse, which it would be most unwise to yield to.

They are confirmed in this view by the fact that, as the result of their unbelieving calculation, the Spirit's voice has been silenced, and they no longer feel that response in their hearts to the words of truth. And thus carnal wisdom proves their ruin.

But this is not the end. The Gospel narrative tells us that the very people who at first bore witness to the gracious words of Jesus, seized Him a few minutes later, and

attempted to throw Him down headlong from a precipice. Murder was in their hearts. That they did not kill Jesus was only because they had not the power.

What caused this change? Nothing but cherishing of a single doubt. Here is a warning for those who think that doubt is a trivial matter. Every doubt has murder connected in it. Those doubts which seem so perfectly "natural" that you scarcely call them doubt, but only the manifestation of proper caution are the things which if cherished, will cry, "Crucify Him."

It is not a light thing to doubt the witness of the Spirit of God. One of the things which made David a man after God's own heart, was the fact that he "made haste, and delayed not" to keep the commandments of God, when they were made known to him: "I made haste, and delayed not to keep your commandments." (Psalm 119:60)

Take heed not to quench the Spirit by doubt.--Present Truth, March 8, 1894--Timeline: IV-2 (First Rejection at Nazareth)--Luke 4:21-22.

Chapter 98

Depart From Me

These words were addressed by Simon Peter to the Lord on one occasion when the Saviour had manifested His Divinity by causing a miraculous draught of fishes. "And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon Him to hear the word of God, He stood by the lake of Gennesaret, and saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And He entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And He sat down, and taught the people out of the ship. Now when He had left speaking, He said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto Him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at your word I will let down the net. And when they had done this, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net broke. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink." (Luke 5:1-7)

Peter said, when he saw the miracle, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." (Luke 5:8)

It was the expression of the natural feeling of the human heart, when made by the presence of God to realize its sinfulness. It is the feeling in the hearts of many today who are touched by the Spirit of God, and convicted of sin, and know not what to say.

But the Saviour did not depart from Peter, and in this there is encouragement for all sinners who feel their unworthiness in the sight of God. The fact that Peter realized that he was a sinful man, so far from being a reason for Christ's leaving him, was the very reason why Christ could not leave him.

He had come all the way from heaven to earth, at the sacrifice of all that He had, to be with sinners and to take them by the hand and lift them out of their fallen state. And therefore He could not then, and He cannot now, leave a man because he realizes that he is a sinner.

When we feel and acknowledge our unworthiness in His sight, so far from doing anything to drive Him from us, we are presenting to Him His own all-powerful reason for not leaving us to ourselves.

The Saviour does not stay where He is not wanted; but there is a vast difference between this petition of Peter's and that of the inhabitants of the country of the Gergesenes, who came and besought Him to depart out of their coasts.

There was no enmity in Peter's heart towards the Lord, no aversion to the Divine principles which shone out in Jesus' life. His aversion was all for himself. He asked the Lord to depart because he felt himself to be sinful and the Lord good--a state of mind exactly opposite to that of those who wish the Lord to depart because they feel themselves to be good and the Lord evil. It is this latter class of sinners from whom the Saviour departs, because they feel not their need of Him, and His grace cannot reach their hearts.

So when we feel our sinfulness and our need of Divine aid, we may come boldly to the throne of grace, presenting before God the reason He himself has furnished us, namely, our need of Him. Instead of feeling that the Lord will turn us away because of our wickedness, and destroy us with His judgments, we may feel the assurance of His own words, that: "The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." (Luke 9:56)

And we may gather assurance from the fact, which the inspired word reveals, that it is for the glory of God that He should receive sinners; and that therefore in asking God to receive and pardon us, we are really asking Him to work for His own great glory.

We may read this thought in Paul's letter to the Ephesians. The apostle says, "But God, who is rich in mercy for His great love wherewith He loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ (by grace you are saved); And has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness toward us, through Christ Jesus." (Ephesians 2:4-7)

And so now, in receiving the vilest sinners, the great Father is but preparing the way to manifest to the universe the exceeding riches of His grace through the ages of eternity,--that grace which reaches the lowest depths of sin, and lifts up from thence the helpless sinner to a place at His own right hand.

The great God has no word of discouragement for the sinner who feels his sinfulness. To all such He says, as He did to Peter, "Fear not." (Luke 5:10) "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)--Present Truth, June 21, 1894--Timeline: IV-4 (The Call by the Sea)--Luke 5:1-8.

Chapter 99

Working With Him

Behold in the miraculous draught of fishes, recorded in the 5th of Luke, the difference between working without the Lord and working with him. Jesus said, "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught." (Luke 5:4)

Peter answered, "Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at your word I will let down the net." (Luke 5:5)

The result was that "they enclosed a great multitude of fishes." (Luke 5:5)

This miracle, which immediately preceded the calling of four of the apostles, was designed as a lesson for them, and for us as well. We may learn that work under the direction of the Lord, and with his presence, will bring great results, even after much more serious toil in the same place, without him, has accomplished nothing.

We hear a great deal in these days about working for the Lord, but very little about working with him. Now this latter is what the Bible speaks of, while it says nothing about the former. There is a vast difference. Many people, in their zeal to work for the Lord, set tasks for themselves which he has not required. This is not always the case; but if one is content to work only with the Lord, such a mistake can never be made.

He who works for the Lord often labors with all his might, but with only his own might, and then asks the Lord to bless his efforts. He who labors with the Lord asks the Lord to work in him "both to will and to do of His own good pleasure." (Philippians 2:13)

He who speaks only the words of the Lord, needs not to ask the Lord to "give power to the word," because he knows that: "No word from God shall be void of power." (Luke 1:37,RV) "My word ... shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." (Isaiah 55:11) "We, then, as workers together with Him, beseech you also that you receive not the grace of God in vain." (2 Corinthians 6:1)--Present Truth, March 22, 1894--Timeline: IV-4 (The Call by the Sea)--Luke 5:4-6.

Chapter 100

A High Calling

When Peter, in his boat on the Sea of Galilee, saw the power of Jesus of Nazareth over the sea and its inhabitants, he fell down before the Lord, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." (Luke 5:8)

It was the same feeling that prompted Isaiah, when he saw the same Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, to exclaim, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." (Isaiah 6:5)

It is worthy of note also, that both these men who thus confessed their sinfulness, were at once accepted as workers. To Peter, the Lord said, "Fear not; from henceforth you shall catch men." (Luke 5:10)

Literally, "you shall be catching men alive." But Peter had to be converted before he could strengthen the brethren; and likewise the coal from off the altar had to touch the lips of Isaiah, and purge his sin, before he could say, "Here am I, send me," (Isaiah 6:8) to the call, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" (Isaiah 6:8) and could be told, "Go." (Isaiah 6:9)

Herein is a hope and a wondrous calling for every sinner. "[Christ] came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Mark 2:17)

He receives and saves sinners, and then, having received them into His confidence, He sends them forth as His representatives, to carry His message of mercy to other sinners. He takes us as associates with Him.

He was made flesh, and took the nature of fallen humanity, in order to save men; and so He commits the work not to angels, but to those who have felt the power of the sins that oppress those to whom they are sent.

To thus work with Christ is the highest honor that the universe can bestow.--Present Truth, March 29, 1894--Timeline: IV-4 (The Call by the Sea)--Luke 5:8.

Chapter 101

Jesus Healing in Capernaum

Compare this with the lesson of last week. We have another instance of the custom of Jesus to observe the Sabbath day. Remember that all that Jesus did was an example for us.

People say that times have changed very much from what they were when Christ was on earth in the flesh. That is true in some respects; but the Lord has not changed. "[He is] the same yesterday, and today, and for ever." (Hebrews 13:8)

If He were visible in the flesh, today, He would do no differently from what He did in the days of old. Moreover, the Scriptures have not changed. There has been no new Bible written. The Scriptures written by the prophets and apostles, and other holy men, were for all time.

The language of the Bible is to be the language of Christians till the end of time. We are to call things by the same names that they did. They, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, called the day on which the Jaws were accustomed to worship, the seventh day of the week, the Sabbath; therefore we ought to call it the same, and to keep it as such. Someone may say, "Yes; I believe that we ought to say Sabbath, instead of Sunday."

Oh no; nothing of the kind, Sunday is not the Sabbath, and our calling it so cannot make it so. Sunday is the first day of the week, but: "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work. ... For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it." (Exodus 20:10-11)

And for those who keep the Sabbath, calling it a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable, there is such a blessing as they have never dreamed of. It is most blessed to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

Jesus taught with authority. The same statement is made at the close of the account of the discourse on the mount: "For He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." (Matthew 7:29)

The teachers of the day, the scribes, did not teach with authority. It was not that they were not arbitrary, and did not ask people to believe what they said. Far from it. The most arbitrary people are they who have the least authority. There is no real authority in their words, and so they try to make up for the lack by a pompous manner.

There are no men who are more arbitrary than the priests of the Roman Catholic Church. They require the people to accept everything they say without question; the fact that they have spoken is considered sufficient. Yet they do not teach with authority. Take one instance as a sample of what frequently occurs:

A few months ago the writer saw in a secular paper a letter written by a priest, in which he entirely repudiated a book that he had recently written. He declared that it was all wrong. Why was this? Simply because his bishop had said that the book was heretical, and had ordered him to retract the teaching that he had put forth in it.

You say that in obeying the bishop he showed a humble spirit. Let that pass; but how much authority can there be in the teaching of a man who holds his views subject to the will of another?

He who teaches with authority, teaches the truth, and only the truth, and he knows that it is the truth, so that the thunders of all the Church and State councils on earth could not make him retract it, as was the case with Luther.

In the teaching of Jesus there was nothing doubtful. He taught those things that He had learned with the Father, and had no need to be afraid to declare them. They were His own life, and therefore He could speak with a power that carried conviction.

An Evidence of Authority

Immediately after the teaching in the synagogue, Jesus gave a practical demonstration of the authority of His teaching, There was a man present, who had an unclean spirit; he was possessed by the devil. He snarled out at Jesus, because he was

uncomfortable in the presence of the Holy One of God, and Jesus said, "Hold your peace, and come out of him," (Luke 4:35) and the devil left the man. Then the people were still more amazed, and said: "What is this? a new teaching! with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him." (Luke 4:36)

The authority of the teaching of Christ was such that the devils were cast out by it. The very same power and authority must characterize the teaching of the Gospel now. The devil works in the children of disobedience, and must be expelled. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation from the power of Satan; it is to deliver man from the bondage of sin, and therefore from the devil; for: "He that commits sin is of the devil." (1 John 3:8)

Gospel teaching that does not succeed in driving the devil out of men is of no value. The doctrine, or teaching, of Christ does not consist in formulae and platitudes, but it expels the evil spirit from men. The age of miracles is not past. The teaching that can drive the devil out of a man, can accomplish any other work that needs to be done. Any teaching that does not expel the unclean spirit, is not the teaching of Christ.

Practical Teaching

Having departed from the synagogue, Jesus entered into the house of Peter for refreshment. Here there was another manifestation of the authority with which He taught. Peter's mother-in-law had a severe fever, and all the household arrangements were thrown out of order. There was no dinner, for all were absorbed in waiting on the sick one. "And they besought Him for her. And He stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her; and immediately she arose, and ministered unto them." (Luke 4:38-39)

That was practical teaching. There was real authority. That authority has not departed from the earth, inasmuch as Jesus, with all power in heaven and in earth, is with His true followers till the end of the world.

The spirit of fear and unbelief in the church has obscured the authority to a great extent, but it will again appear as vividly as when Jesus went about in Galilee. When the people of God stand unscathed in the midst of pestilence and plagues, which will devastate the earth even before "the seven last plagues" are poured out, there will be

such authority to their teaching as comes only from those who have learned of God, and are in direct touch with the Lord. The life of Jesus manifest in mortal flesh will be a testimony that none can gainsay or resist. "And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto Him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door." (Mark 1:32)

It was the Sabbath day, and the people waited until the Sabbath was past, which is at the setting of the sun, before they brought their sick to Jesus. Jesus was just as ready to heal on the Sabbath day as on any other, for such work was not a violation of the Sabbath, but was simply a manifestation of His teaching; but the people were at least outwardly strict in the observance of the Sabbath, so they waited until sunset.

In this connection we cannot refrain from calling attention to that most beautiful hymn, number 431 of "Sacred Songs and Solos," which begins,

At even, ere the sun was set,
The sick, O Lord, around You lay.
--Henry Twells, Hymn: At Even, Ere the Sun Was Set, 1868.

That should be changed, because it contradicts the Bible. The author had evidently not looked at the account for some time when he wrote the hymn. It was not before the sun set, but after, that the sick were brought to Jesus. We must be as careful to sing the truth as to speak it.

Great Joy

What joy there must have been in that city that night! We read that: "All the city was gathered together at the door," (Mark 1:33) and that: "They brought unto Him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils." (Mark 1:32)

And we are told that: "He cast out the spirits with His word, and healed all that were sick." (Matthew 8:16)

He laid His hands on everyone of them, and healed them. So there was not a single sick person in that city that night, and not one person left under the influence of the

devil. Was it not wonderful? That is what the teaching of Christ does; are you acquainted with it?

Jesus did not suffer the devils to say that they knew Him. He did not care for any testimonials from that quarter. He made them to hold their tongues. There are many agents of Satan to be found in congregations today, "Whose mouths must be stopped," (Titus 1:11) but the man who does it must have authority. It must not be that sort of authority that must be enforced by muscular power, but the authority must be in the word spoken. When Jesus commanded, the devils could do no other than obey.

The Secret of Authority

What was the secret of this power and authority? The answer is given in the Gospel by Matthew. All this was done. "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses." (Matthew 8:17)

He had all the diseases of all the people in the city of Capernaum on himself that night, yet He did not die, nor did anybody discern that He was in the least weakened by the load of infirmities that He bore. He tasted death, and swallowed it up in His own eternal life. The authority was the inward life. That same eternal life, "which was with the Father, [is still] manifested unto us." (1 John 1:2)

Christ's touch has yet the same healing power that it had in Capernaum. He still bears our sicknesses as well as our sins. His authority has not diminished in the least.

If Christ dwells in our hearts by faith to the extent that we are "strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man, ... according to the riches of His glory," (Ephesians 3:16) so that we are "filled with all the fullness of God." (Ephesians 3:19)

And this "inward man is renewed day by day," (2 Corinthians 4:16) so that constantly the life of Jesus is made manifest in our mortal flesh. "For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. ... For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." (2 Corinthians 4:11,16)

We shall bless the Lord with soul and body, because He has forgiven all our iniquities, and healed all our diseases, redeeming our life from destruction, and crowning us with lovingkindness and tender mercies: "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases; Who redeems your life from destruction; who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies." (Psalm 103:1-4)

It is a glorious thing to be completely subject to the authority of the Lord Jesus.--Present Truth, February 22, 1900--Original title: Teaching with Authority. Jesus Healing in Capernaum--Timeline: IV-5 (The Demoniac in the Synagogue), 6 (Peter's Mother-in-law; The Sick Healed at Even)--Mark 1:21-34. "And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the Sabbath day He entered into the synagogue, and taught. And they were astonished at His doctrine; for He taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes." (Mark 1:21-22)

Chapter 102

Undesired Testimony

When the unclean spirit in the synagogue cried out to Jesus, "I know You, who You are, the Holy One of God, Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold your peace." (Mark 1:24) "And unclean spirits, when they saw Him, fell down before Him, and cried, saying, You are the Son of God. And He straitly charge them, that they should not make Him known." (Mark 3:11-12)

He who said, "I receive not testimony from men," (John 5:34) would naturally not receive testimony from devils. The testimony that the Lord desires is the testimony of the life. He says that the honoring of Him with the lips, while the heart is far from Him, is hypocritical and vain. "You hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people draws nigh unto me with their mouth, and honors me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." (Matthew 15:7-9) "Why do you call me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46)

And yet even to this day many religious teachers think to advance the cause of God by quoting testimony from Napoleon and others, whose whole lives where a denial of everything godly. To such the Lord says, "Keep still."

Their patronizing words are only a damage to His cause, in that if unrebuked, they tend to cause men to think that mere words, without deeds, are of some value, or that they are even sufficient to identify one as a Christian.--Present Truth, March 3, 1898--Timeline: IV-5 (The Demoniac in the Synagogue)--Mark 1:24-25.

Chapter 103

The Cleansing Touch and Word

"And it came to pass, when He was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy; who seeing Jesus, fell on his face, and besought Him, saying, Lord, if You will, you can make me clean. And He put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him." (Luke 5:12-13)

This is one of the things that are written that we might know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and it is a forcible illustration of how if we believe we may have life through His name.

Such a wonderful cure had never been performed before since the world began. From that day to this, medical science has been impotent in the presence of the dreaded disease, leprosy. It was a most loathsome disease. The one who had it was shut off from human society, except from those who had the same disease. They were regarded as in the highest degree unclean.

As the disease progressed, the different members of the body dropped off. It was actually a living death. The man could look on and see the death preying upon him, ever advancing, and had the certainty before him of final, complete death. For him there was no hope.

Full of Leprosy

This man was "full of leprosy." He was evidently in the last stages of the disease. It had begun to prey upon his vitals, and in a short time he would drop into the grave. It was then that he saw Jesus; and when we consider his condition, we can appreciate the wonderful faith shown by the words, "Lord, if You will, You can make me clean." (Luke 5:12)

There was not the slightest doubt of Christ's power to save. Jesus immediately responded to the cry of faith, saying, "I will; be clean." (Luke 5:13)

And immediately the leprosy departed from him.

The Leprosy of Sin

Sin is a sore disease that is preying upon the vitals of every man. Like the leper, men are filled with it. "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that deal corruptly; they have forsaken the Lord, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are estranged, and gone backward. Why will you be still stricken, that you revolt more and more? The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and festering sores; they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with oil." (Isaiah 1:4-6,RV)

Sure Death

Like the leprosy, sin is progressive death: "The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law." (1 Corinthians 15:56) "Then when lust has conceived, it brings forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death." (James 1:15) "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is notsubject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." (Romans 8:6-7) "For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing; for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not. ... O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:18,24)

Separated Because of Sin

The leprous person was separated. So the sinful person is separated from God. He is unclean. "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God." (Isaiah 59:2) "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." (Ephesians 4:17-19)

Made Nigh

But although the sinner is by his very uncleanness separated from God, yet God is not afraid to come near and touch him. Jesus was moved with compassion as He saw the poor leper, and He is the same now. "For we have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." (Hebrews 4:15)

Therefore, like the leper, we may "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:16)

For: "[There is a] fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." (Zechariah 13:1)

And though the person be full of sin and uncleanness, our High Priest "is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him." (Hebrews 7:25)

Cleansed by the Word

Jesus not only has the healing touch, but His words have power to heal. The Psalmist says concerning His dealing with His people of old that: "He sent His word, and healed them." (Psalm 107:20)

Mark, recording the healing of the leper, said that Jesus touched him, saying, "And as soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed." (Mark 1:42)

The word of Christ also cleanses from sin, and it was to make us realize this fact that the healing of the leper was recorded. Said the Saviour: "I am the true Vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that bears not fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." (John 15:1-3)

Do You Believe?

Do we believe that the word and touch of Jesus made the leper clean? Then we may know that the same word and touch will make us clean from sin.

He who does not believe that the Lord can cleanse him from sin, no matter how vile he may be, does not believe the Bible record of the miracles of Christ. But merely saying that we believe does not answer the purpose; we must accept the cleansing.

Full Assurance of Faith

There is another important truth taught in this lesson. Jesus said, "I will; be clean." (Luke 5:13)

Read these words of inspiration: "Grace be to you, and peace, from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." (Galatians 1:3-4) "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." (Luke 12:32) "It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." (Matthew 18:14)

So we ought to come to the Lord with a great deal more boldness and confidence than the leper did. He knew that the Master had the power to heal him, but he said, "if You will." (Luke 5:12)

God has given us such abundant evidence of His willingness to save us from our sins that it would be casting discredit on His word if we should say, "Lord, if You will, You can save me." "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

Thus has He shown not only His willingness, but His longing desire, to save men. He has left nothing undone, and has kept nothing back. "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?" (Isaiah 5:4) "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:31-32)

He who doubts the willingness of God to hear and save those who wish salvation, must doubt the very existence of God.

Our Confidence

Well, then, what is the final lesson? Just this: "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He hears us." (1 John 5:14)

Now we have learned that it is the will of God to save people from sin. That is why Christ came to earth to die. There can be no question that it is the will of God to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Therefore we know that whenever we come and ask for cleansing, that moment He hears us. But this is not all. "And if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him." (1 John 5:15)

So, as soon as we ask in faith, the work is done.

The Word Has Been Spoken

The word of salvation has already gone forth. "To you is the word of this salvation sent." (Acts 13:26)

The word is full of healing power. We come to the Lord, saying, "Lord, I know that You have the power to cleanse me, and I know that You will."

We know then that He hears us. We do not then have to wait for the word to come to us, "I will; be clean." (Luke 5:13) for it has already been spoken. So, when "we know that He hears us, ... we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him." (1 John 5:15)

Our faith appropriates the power of the word, and its righteousness is ours.

Who is there that does not need freedom from sin? It is ours, if we will but receive it.

Thousands say that they believe, and yet they find no relief. To such the miracles of Christ are not a reality. They are but as idle tales.

When they receive the word as it is indeed, the living word of God, then they will believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and, believing, they will have life through His name.--Present Truth, September 22, 1892--Timeline: IV-8 (The First Leper)--Luke 5:12-13.

Chapter 104

Separate from Sinners

When the leper came to Jesus, saying, "Lord, if You will, You can make me clean, Jesus put forth His hand and touched him." (Luke 5:12-13)

The leper was an unclean being, and great was the fear of contagion; yet Jesus was not afraid to touch him, and He suffered no injury from the touch. This is a likeness of Christ's connection with sin. "[He] bore our sins in His own body on the tree." (1 Peter 2:24) "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:6)

Yet although He was made to be sin for us, "[He] knew no sin." (2 Corinthians 5:21) "[He] did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." (1 Peter 2:22)

He could come into the closest contact with sin and not be defiled by it. He received sinners, and was their friend, associating freely with the worst of them, yet He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." (Hebrews 7:26)

So may it be with us, if Christ dwells in us. We may work for the degraded, coming in contact with them, and giving them the sympathetic touch, as He did, and not be defiled. We may be "unspotted from the world," while coming close to it as Christ did. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." (James 1:27)

It is possible that we may not be in high repute with the world for so doing; but that matters nothing if we have the mind that was in Christ, who "made himself of no reputation." (Philippians 2:7) "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might be rich.--Present Truth, November 17, 1892--Timeline: IV-8 (The First Leper)--Luke 5:12-13.

Chapter 105

Willing and Able

The teachings of the epistles of the New Testament are all illustrated by the life of Christ. For instance, we read: "[Christ] gave himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." (Galatians 1:4)

The will of the Father was manifest in the Son, and that will is that we might be delivered from this present evil world. This is practically illustrated by the miracle of cleansing the leper, which is recorded in Luke 5:12-15. The leper said to Christ, "Lord, if You will, You can make me clean." (Luke 5:12)

Jesus put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, "I will; be clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him." (Luke 5:13)

Here we see the effect of the will of God in Christ Jesus, upon one who submitted to it. "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." (1 Thessalonians 4:3)

How easily that will is accomplished is seen in the case with which the leper was cleansed. From that we are to learn how to be cleansed from the leprosy of sin. Knowing that it is the will of God that we should be cleansed from sin, and that He has given Christ power over all flesh, we may approach Him with confidence. "As You have given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him." (John 17:2) The apostle says: "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He hears us; And if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him." (1 John 5:14-15)

So we may come to the Lord, not as the leper did, saying, "Lord, if You will, You can make me clean," (Luke 5:12) but saying, "Lord, I am unclean; You can cleanse me, and it is your will to do so; therefore I know that You do hear and answer, and I have cleansing from You."

For the promise is, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)--Present Truth, March 22, 1894--Timeline: IV-8 (The First Leper)--Luke 5:12-13.

Chapter 106

The Healing Touch

One of the most striking of the miracles of Jesus is told in the following few words: "And it came to pass when He was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy; who seeing Jesus, fell on his face, and besought Him, saying, Lord, if You will, You can make me clean. And He put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, I will;be clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him." (Luke 5:12-13)

Leprosy was one of the most loathsome diseases known to the ancients, and the one the most dreaded. The leper was an outcast, compelled to keep away from even his own family. The disease was a slow, progressive death, the victim's members dropping off one after another until death ended his misery.

No other disease more aptly illustrates the defilement of sin; and this man, who was full of leprosy, very closely resembled the description given of the people, by the prophet Isaiah: "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores; they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." (Isaiah 1:5-6)

So as we study the miracle of the cleansing of the leper, we may know that we are to learn how we can obey the direction, "Wash yourself, make yourself clean." (Isaiah 1:16)

In the first place, the leper had confidence in the power of the Lord to heal him. He said, "You can make me clean." (Luke 5:12)

That is a great point. Very few really believe that Jesus Christ can cleanse them from sin. They will admit that He can save from sin in general,--that He can save others,--but they are not convinced that He can save them. Let such learn a lesson from the power of the Lord. Hear what the prophet Jeremiah said by inspiration of the Holy Spirit: "Ah Lord God! behold You have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for You." (Jeremiah 32:17)

He who brought the heavens and the earth into existence by the power of His word, can do all things. "Our God is in the heavens; He has done whatsoever He has pleased." (Psalm 115:3) "His Divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness." (2 Peter 1:3) "He is able also to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him." (Hebrews 7:25)

Christ has been given: "Power over all flesh." (John 17:2)

So much for His power. Of that the leper was assured; but he was not sure that the Lord was willing to cleanse him. He said, "Lord, if You will, You can make me clean." (Luke 5:12)

We need not have so much hesitancy as that. We know that He can, and He has given us ample assurance of His willingness. Thus we read that: "[Christ] gave himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." (Galatians 1:4)

It is the will of God that we should be sanctified: "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification." (1 Thessalonians 4:3)

Christ comprises everything. "[He is] the power of God, and the wisdom of God." (1 Corinthians 1:24)

All things in heaven and in earth are in Him. "For in Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through Him, and unto Him; And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist." (Colossians 1:16-17,RV)

Therefore the Apostle Paul says: "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32)

The willingness of God to cleanse us from sin, is shown in the gift of His only begotten Son for that purpose. "These things have I written unto you, that you may know that you have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of

God. And this is the boldness which we have toward Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us; And if we know that He hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we have asked of Him." (1 John 5:13-15,RV)

So we may "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need," (Hebrews 4:16) knowing that: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

But the most striking feature of this miracle is the fact that Jesus touched the leper. There was not another person in all the land, who would have come within a yard of him. But Jesus "put forth His hand, and touched him." (Luke 5:13)

With that touch the hateful disease vanished. It is worth noting that in very many cases Jesus touched those whom He healed. When Peter's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, "[Jesus] touched her hand, and the fever left her." (Matthew 8:15)

That same evening, "All they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto Him; and He laid His hands on everyone of them, and healed them." (Luke 4:40)

In His own country the people were so unbelieving that: "He could there do no mighty work, save that He laid His hands on a few sick folk, and healed them." (Mark 6:5)

In Matthew we are assured that this healing of the sick was: "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, himself took our infirmities, and bore our diseases." (Matthew 8:17,RV)

We know that healing went from Him to the suffering ones who thronged round Him to touch Him: "And the whole multitude sought to touch Him: for there went virtue out of Him, and healed them all." (Luke 6:19)

And Matthew 8:17 assures us that He received into His own person their diseases, in exchange for His healing power. Now we have the blessed assurance that although He is "passed into the heavens," (Hebrews 4:14)

He has not lost His sympathy with us, but is still "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." (Hebrews 4:15)

He comes close to us in pity, because: "He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust." (Psalm 103:14)

In all our sin and degradation, we may have the inspiring thought that Jesus does not despise us, and is not ashamed to come into the closest companionship with us, in order that He may help us. The prophet, speaking of God's dealing with ancient Israel, said, "In all their afflictions He was afflicted." (Isaiah 63:9)

Even so it is now. As an eagle bears her young on her wings, so the Lord puts himself under His people, bearing all our sin and sorrow. He takes it upon himself, and in Him it is lost, by the same process by which at the last: "He will swallow up death in victory." (Isaiah 25:8)

Christ took upon himself the curse, in order that the blessing might come upon us. "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." (Galatians 3:13-14)

Although He knew no sin, He was "made to be sin for us, ... that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5:21)

He suffered the death to which we were doomed, that we might share His life. And this exchange is made when we come into touch with Him, by confessing that: "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh." (1 John 4:2)

How much we lose by holding Jesus off as a stranger, or by regarding faith in Him as a theory. When we know that He identifies himself with us in our fallen condition, taking upon himself, and from us, our infirmities, how precious becomes the assurance, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matthew 28:20)

The healing of the seamless dress

Is by our beds of pain;
We touch Him in life's throng and press,
And we are whole again.
--John G. Whittier, Poem: The Master (from the book, The Panorama, and Other Poems, 1856).

--Present Truth, March 29, 1894--Timeline: IV-8 (The First Leper)--Luke 5:12-13.

Chapter 107

The Leper's Friend

"1 When He was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. And, behold, there came a leper and worshiped Him, saying, Lord, if You will, You can make me clean. And Jesus put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed." (Matthew 8:1-3)

A writer who describes a visit to one of the leper hospitals of Jamaica, in the West Indies, draws from it an encouraging lesson; for the Lord treats the leprosy of sin as the leprosy of the flesh: "A more pitiful, loathsome sight we never beheld. There were patients with fingers gone, some with portions of their feet missing, and others with faces one mass of revolting decay. One boy was treating his own decaying foot with a cleansing wash and then applying a balsam. We knew then and now, as never before, what the leprosy of the Bible means. Instinctively we turned away from disease and affliction which it was not within our power to relieve. In Jamaica the leper is free to go where he will. He can remain at this hospital and be made comfortable as long as he chooses so to do, but if he desires to return to home and friends there is no constraint put upon him. The impressions made upon us by our visit to this colony of lepers are imperishable. We find our thought returning to the subject again and again, and particularly as illustrative of the outgoing love and tender compassion of the Saviour of men for the leper. The Jew proscribed the leper, and the only attention shown him was the eagerness with which he was shunned. It was a violation of the Jewish law for a Hebrew to touch a leper."

"Room for the leper, room!" And as he came
The cry passed on: "Room for the leper, room!"
"Room for the leper!" And aside they stood-
Matron and child, and pitiless manhood, all
Who met him on his way-and let him pass.
And onward through the open gate he came,
A leper with the ashes on his brow,
Sackcloth about his loins, and on his lip
A covering, stepping painfully and slow,
And with a difficult utterance, like one

Whose heart is with an iron nerve put down,
Crying, "Unclean! Unclean!"
--Nathaniel Parker Willis, The Leper, 1831.

But there was one heart so large that it could not be hedged in, in its ministry, by any ecclesiastical tenet or conventional custom. There was one hand so pure that it could not contract defilement. And so Jesus approached the sufferer, put His own tender hand upon that leprous flesh, and with the calmness of the conqueror, but with the might of God, said, "Be clean!" and his leprosy left him for ever.--Present Truth, May 9, 1895--Timeline: IV-8 (The First Leper)--Matthew 8:1-3.

Chapter 108

I Will

The man who was "full of leprosy" came to Jesus worshiping Him, and saying, "Lord, if You will, You can make me clean." (Matthew 8:2)

Jesus immediately replied, "I will; be clean." (Matthew 8:3)

"If You will" is the same as, "If You are willing," or, "If you wish to." "I will," is but another form of "I am willing," or, "I wish to." The leper said, "Lord, You can make me clean if You wish to."

And Jesus replied, "I wish to." "We have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." (Hebrews 4:15)

Why not? "For that He himself also is compassed with infirmity." (Hebrews 5:2)

We have not to appeal to Him, and stir Him up to sympathy with us, but He has the sympathy already. We have not to labor to secure the good will of the Lord, because He wishes to help us. "[Christ] gave himself for our sins,...according to the will of God." (Galatians 1:4) "[He] went about doing good," (Acts 10:38) and was always looking for the opportunity. Every appeal found Him ready and willing.--Present Truth, October 24, 1895--Timeline: IV-8 (The First Leper)--Matthew 8:2-3.

Chapter 109

Laying Hold of Man

Although Jesus could heal any disease with a single word, He was not content with that when the man full of leprosy came to Him, saying, "Lord, if You will, You can make me clean." (Matthew 8:2)

The words, "I will; be clean." (Matthew 8:3) would have been amply sufficient to do the cleansing, but more was added. "Jesus put forth His hand, and touched him." (Matthew 8:3)

The word showed the power of the Creator, who "spoke, and it was." (Psalm 33:9)

The touch showed the omnipotent Creator hand in hand with weak humanity.

The first definition of the Greek word rendered "touched" is: "to fasten, or bind to; to fasten oneself to, cling to, hang on by, lay hold of, grasp, touch."

So we need not imagine Jesus stretching out His hand, and touching the leper with one of His fingers, at arm's length; but we may see Him coming close to the afflicted one, and laying His hand upon his shoulder, as brother with brother.

In this we have an illustration of the statement that: "He takes hold of the seed of Abraham." (Hebrews 2:16,RV)

It showed what was the actual fact, namely, that Jesus, the Son of God, identified himself with humanity. So in the same chapter which tells of His touching the leper, we read that He healed all that were sick, "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, He took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses." (Matthew 8:17)

Sympathy lightens suffering, although human sympathy is powerless to take it away. But the sympathy of Jesus is a veritable sympathy; it is really a feeling the same thing. "[He is] touched with the feeling of our infirmities." (Hebrews 4:15)

He takes them upon himself, that we may be freed from them. "The Word was made flesh." (John 1:14)

What flesh was the Word made? Human flesh, and not the flesh of some particular man or race, to the exclusion of others, but He was made the flesh of human-kind, which is the same in all, for: "There is one kind of flesh of men." (1 Corinthians 15:39) "In all things He was made like unto His brethren." (Hebrews 2:17)

At every age of life, at every point of human experience, in every ill and infirmity, He touches us. "Both He that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." (Hebrews 2:11)

There is healing in the touch of the Lord. He comes down to our level, that He may elevate us to His level. And He did not sever His connection with humanity when He ascended on high. The same flesh that He had during His earthly ministry, was nailed to the cross; it was that very flesh that was not allowed to see corruption; in that flesh He rose from the tomb; and to all eternity the scars in His hands and feet, and the wound in His side, will show Him be "the Man Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 2:5) "He was made to be sin for us." (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Therefore we can come to Him in confidence, even in our lowest state of degradation, knowing that He cannot despise us, since He is one with us. That is His name, "God with us." (Matthew 1:23)

Let us gladly receive Him, that from the companionship we may receive all the blessing that God designs for us.--Present Truth, October 31, 1895--Timeline: IV-8 (The First Leper)--Matthew 8:2-3.

Chapter 110

Separate from Sinners

When the leper came to Jesus, saying, "Lord, if You will, You can make me clean, Jesus put forth His hand, and touched him." (Matthew 8:2-3)

The leper was an unclean being, and great was the fear of contagion; yet Jesus was not afraid to touch him, and He suffered no injury from the touch. This is a likeness of Christ's connection with sin. "[He] bore our sins in His own body on the tree." (1 Peter 2:24) "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:6)

Yet although "He was made to be sin for us, [He] knew no sin." (2 Corinthians 5:21) "[He] did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." (1 Peter 2:22)

He could come into the closest contact with sin and not be defiled by it. He received sinners, and was their friend, associating freely with the worst of them, yet He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." (Hebrews 7:26)

So may it be with us, if Christ dwells in us. We may work for the degraded, coming in contact with them, and giving them the sympathetic touch, as He did, and not be defiled. We may be "unspotted from the world," (James 1:27) while coming close to it as Christ did. It is possible that we may not be in high repute with the world for so doing; but that matters not if we have the mind that was in Christ, who "made himself of no reputation." (Philippians 2:7)--Present Truth, January 9, 1896--Timeline: IV-8 (The First Leper)--Matthew 8:2-3.

Chapter 111

The Healing Touch

Jesus said to the leper, "Be clean," (Matthew 8:3) and reached out His hand and touched him, and immediately his leprosy was cleansed. In like manner the woman, and multitudes of others, touched Him, and were healed.

Does this teach us that we must all expect instantaneous healing, and must utterly reject all "means"? By no means, any more than the turning of water into wine, and the feeding of the 5,000 teach us that we are to expect our wine to be provided for us from the tap, and bread to grow out of the cupboard; and that we are not to cultivate fruit trees or till the earth and raise corn.

They show us that in the growth of grapes and in the ripened grain we are to recognize the Lord; so the miracles of healing are to teach us that it is by coming into touch with the Lord's life that we get healing, and that we are to use whatever means will bring us into communion with that life.--Present Truth, January 22, 1903--Timeline: IV-8 (The First Leper)--Matthew 8:3.

Chapter 112

The Paralytic Healed

In studying this lesson, no one should fail to compare the parallel passages in Matthew 9:1-8 and Luke 5:17-26. In these accounts of the miracle a few items are recorded, that are not found in Mark, which add materially to the lesson.

The Story

The story is very quickly told, and very easily learned. Jesus had returned to Capernaum, and had entered the house where He was accustomed to stay when He was in the city. It was quickly noised abroad that He was at home, and soon the house was filled to overflowing with people anxious to hear Him speak, and a great crowd gathered round the door, eager to get within the sound of His voice. These people were not alone from the town, but: "There were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee and Judea, and Jerusalem." (Luke 5:17)

So we see that: "This thing was not done in a corner." (Acts 26:26) "The redemption that is in Christ Jesus," (Romans 3:24) was that day made known throughout all the land. "The power of the Lord was present to heal." (Luke 5:17)

Whether any of those who were sitting by availed themselves of this opportunity to be healed, or not, we are not told; but there were some who were determined not to let the chance go by. While Jesus was teaching, four men came bearing a fifth on a stretcher, seeking to get near to Him. The fifth man was a paralytic, utterly unable to help himself. But the crowd about the door was impenetrable, and no one would move, to give place to the new-comer.

The faith of the five, however, was not dampened; mounting with difficulty to the flat roof of the house, they tore off the tiles, and let the man down directly in front of Jesus. They were bound to attract His attention, and would not be thwarted. Such faith could not be ignored, even if the compassionate heart of Jesus had not been moved by the sight of the suffering. To the palsied man He said, "Son, your sins be forgiven you." (Mark 2:5)

Then, when those sitting by began to murmur, and to talk about blasphemy, Jesus asked them which they thought was easier, to forgive the man's sins, or to make him arise and walk. Without waiting for an answer, He turned again to the man, still lying on his couch, and said, "Arise, and take up your bed, and go your way into your house." (Mark 2:11)

Immediately the palsied man arose, took up his bed, and went his way glorifying God, while the people said, "We have seen strange things today." (Luke 5:26) "We never saw it like this before." (Mark 2:12) "And they glorified God, who had given such authority to man." (Matthew 9:8)

That is the whole story; what lessons may we learn from it?

Man's Chief Need

The first thing that is every man's chief need, no matter what his condition, is forgiveness of sins. The Lord always does the most important thing first, and the first thing He did for this man was to make known to him the forgiveness of his sins. This is man's chief need, for, as we shall see, it includes everything else. "Sin came into the world, and death by sin." (Romans 5:12)

As sin has brought every misery and woe with it, the remission of sins removes every other ill.

We learn also that the palsied man was more troubled over his sinful condition than over his illness of body. Read the words of the Lord: "Son, be of good cheer; your sins be forgiven you." (Matthew 9:2)

This shows that the man was sad and despondent, and that his sadness was over his sins. All that was needed to make him of good cheer, in spite of his helpless condition, was to know that his sins were forgiven.

The words of Jesus brought peace to the troubled heart, and the man felt that now he could be content to die. He had wished for healing, that he might "live a different life." How many have longed for "another chance," not knowing that without a new life

from the Lord they could not live any different life from that which they have been living.

But now the man's sins were forgiven; the words announcing the fact came with such positive assurance that he could not doubt it. He believed, and was at peace, for: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:1)

Two Kinds of Wisdom Contrasted

While the paralytic himself believed, the others doubted. If they had not, they too might have been healed, for the power of God was present to heal them before this man appeared on the scene.

Here we have true and false wisdom contrasted. The poor, sick man believed the words of Jesus, and he knew that he was forgiven; he had positive assurance of the fact; there was a power-the power of the Spirit-that came into him, and he needed not that any man should testify to him concerning Christ. He knew that He was the Son of God, the Son of man, with power on earth to forgive sins. "He that believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself." (1 John 5:10)

But the wise men sitting by began to "reason" in their hearts. "And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?" (Luke 5:21)

In their minds the thing was not reasonable, and they would not believe it. Note especially that their "reasoning" consisted in doubting. That is the wisdom of this world, and it leads to blindness, ignorance, and folly. We have here the same word that is used in: "Knowing God, they glorified Him not as God, but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened." (Romans 1:21)

Human reasoning leads to ignorance of God, and that is the worst kind of foolishness. It is lack of sense, for God is so plainly revealed in His works that whoever does not recognize Him is a fool, with less perception than the dumb brutes.

Simple faith is the highest sort of wisdom. The unlettered man who has learned to recognize God, and who believes in Him, has more wisdom than the most scholarly infidel. This does not by any means disparage learning; on the contrary, it exalts it; for the man who believes the Lord, and who follows Him, has the key to "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," (Colossians 2:3) while the wisdom of this world shall "come to naught;" (1 Corinthians 2:6) for it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." (1 Corinthians 1:19)

But the Lord will never destroy anything that has in it real worth.

Beware of the Gospel of Doubt

Above all things beware of a negative Gospel, which is no Gospel at all. There are many people who seem to have no other message than to warn the people against some other person's supposed errors. Their preaching is always negative.

They have nothing themselves to give, that will build up and set free, and they devote a large portion of their time picking flaws in what some other person has said. Their talk always tends to unsettle. After hearing them, people say, "Well I declare, I don't know what to believe."

Not always, however; some, like the palsied man, believe in spite of the reason that consists in doubting. "The Gospel ... is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes." (Romans 1:16)

Doubt finds no place in it; we are not even to spend time doubting the teachings of the enemy of souls, but to meet everything with a positive, "It is written." (Matthew 4:4)

Nobody ever saw a doubting man joyful in the Lord. Don't talk doubts; don't tell what you do not believe; speak always the words of faith. "He takes the wise in their own craftiness." (Job 5:13)

The palsied man needed no demonstration to prove to him that his sins were forgiven; but Jesus would show the doubters the foolishness of their "reasonings." He who forgives sins also heals disease. The man could tell by the witness in himself that he was forgiven, but there was no outward sign to indicate the fact to those who sat by.

So in order that they might know that the Son of man had power on earth to forgive sins, He said to the palsied man, "Arise, take up your bed, and go unto your house." (Mark 2:11)

Immediately the man did so, and went forth healed in body as well as in soul, while the wise reasoners were left in confusion.

The Power of Forgiveness

Learn from this narrative that there is real power accompanying the forgiveness of sins. That power is "the power of an endless life," (Hebrews 7:16) by which Jesus is High Priest. He puts His own life of righteousness into and upon all them that believe, and that sends away the old life of sin, which was death.

When we forgive a man who has done wrong, it makes no difference in him; we are to forgive him, not for his benefit, but for our own. If we refuse to forgive an offender, he is not injured by it, but we are. We forgive a man, not to clear him from guilt, but to clear ourselves; for if we refuse to forgive him, we take upon ourselves his sin, and become responsible for it.

But God forgives a man, for the purpose of cleansing him of the guilt. God's forgiveness does not consist in empty words, but it makes the man perfectly free from sin. It does not consist in simply taking no account of the outward acts that the man has done, but it removes the sinful nature. It makes the sinner a partaker of the Divine nature. This Divine nature is the life of God in Christ, so that with it comes healing of body to everyone who can discern the life as it is manifested.

Those who disparage a justified life, and say that while it is very well to live such a life, there is something far higher, cast discredit upon the righteousness of God, by which forgiveness comes. They simply do not know the power that there is in "the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," (Romans 3:24) by which we are justified. True, many people live a sort of Christian life for years, without knowing the real joy of freedom from sin, but that is not the fault of the justification which God imparts, but the fault of their own blindness. They have not known the gift of God.

In the forgiveness of sins, we have every gift that a gracious God can impart to a fallen race. We are justified by the faith of Jesus Christ, even by Christ himself; and in giving us Christ, God must of necessity give us all things. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." (Galatians 2:16)

The Sign of Forgiveness

Not the sign to the one forgiven, for he needs no sign. The fact is sufficient for him. But God gives a sign, by which others may know that He does forgive sin, so that they too may be induced to trust in His salvation.

What this sign is, we learn from the lesson before us. Jesus told the man to rise up and walk, in order that those sitting by might know that the Son of man had power on earth to forgive sins. The healing of disease in the body of the one whose sins are forgiven, and who has come to a knowledge of the power of this forgiveness,--the power of a new life,--is the sign to the world that the life is there.

True, the altered character of the mark is a sign, but the life of Christ is not divided, and since He who forgives all our iniquities by His life is the One who also heals all our diseases by the same life; the two things ought to go together. If they do not, it shows that there is a failure to appreciate all the fullness of God's life; the word is not given free course, that it may be glorified.

The Authority Given to Men

There is one more most important lesson for us to learn from this incident. When the people saw what had been done, "They marveled, and glorified God, which had given such power to men." (Matthew 9:8)

The margin of the Revised Version has "authority." Many read this carelessly, thinking that the power referred to was the power given to the man enabling him to walk. That is to lose more than half the lesson.

Who was Jesus? He himself used the common title, "the Son of man." Those who were sitting by knew Him as nothing else than the son of the carpenter. He was in every sense of the word a man, one of the people, "made in all things like unto His brethren." (Hebrews 2:17)

He appeared on earth as the Representative Man,-the representation of God's idea of a man,-a perfect man. He was the visible manifestation of God, and that is what the original man was. Indeed, without God in him, man is nothing. Only in Christ can anybody attain unto "a perfect man." (Ephesians 4:13)

That which Christ was on earth, every man may be in Him. "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, And in Him you are made full, who is the Head of all principality and power." (Colossians 2:9-10,RV) "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself,...and He has placed in us the word of reconciliation, So that He now beseeches men by us, just as He did by Christ." (2 Corinthians 5:19-20,RV)

We, that is, all who are reconciled, are "in Christ's stead." (2 Corinthians 5:20)

So God has given to every man who has come to Him in Christ, the authority to announce to men the forgiveness of sins, not in his own name, but in the name of Jesus. "Through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." (Acts 13:38)

Do you see a sad and despondent sinner mourning over his sins? Then know that to you is given the authority to say, "Be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you." (Matthew 9:2)

Aye, everyone who knows the full power of forgiveness in his own soul and body, needs no assurance of this right, for he cannot but make known to others that which he himself knows so well.

Every person who is mourning for his sins, gives evidence that he acknowledges himself to be a sinner, and unable in himself to remove his own sins; and we have the right, in the name of the Lord, to declare the forgiveness of sins to everyone who confesses them.

What a glorious gift! In this consists the greatest joy of the pardoned sinner: the power that cleanses him from sin gives him the authority to minister the gift to others. Take it as freely as it is given, and give God the glory.--Present Truth, March 1, 1900--Original title: The Reality of Forgiveness. The Paralytic Healed--Timeline: IV-9 (The Paralytic Lowered Through the Roof)--Mark 2:1-12.

Chapter 113

The Malady of Sin

"And it came to pass on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them. And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before Him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus. And when He saw their faith, He said unto him, Man, your sins are forgiven you. And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone? But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He answering said unto them, What reason you in your hearts? Which is easier, to say, Your sins be forgiven you; or to say, Rise up and walk?" (Luke 5:17-23)

On this occasion Jesus showed the people that the greatest need of all was to be healed from sin, and that the power by which the sick were healed was the power of the forgiveness of sins. "That you may know that the Son of man has power upon earth to forgive sins, (He said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto you, Arise." (Luke 5:24)

Help for All

The poor man had his sins forgiven and was healed of his infirmity. All of the Pharisees and doctors of the law were just as needy of help. They knew that they were sinners, even as every man knows that he is a sinner, though not all would honestly acknowledge it. But they were not healed of sin because they did not believe that the power of the Lord was present to heal them.

Without Excuse

Someone may say, "But they were without excuse; for they saw the power manifested before their eyes, giving life to a palsied man."

True; and we, too, are without excuse if we have not forgiveness of sins and the power of His life working obedience in us. The miracles of Christ were recorded--not for those people back there,--but for us. "But these are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life through His name." (John 20:31)

The Power Now Present

Every man sees the power of the Lord working before his eyes today. "We are saved by His life." (Romans 5:10)

The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from sin. But, "the blood is the life." (Deuteronomy 12:23)

The power of Christ's life is the power of forgiveness and cleansing, and the power which works the will of God in the believer. But that life is present with every man. Every sinner, no matter how wicked, lives by His life every day. "In Him we live and move and have our being." (Acts 17:28)

Every soul that has life, or power to move, has evidence in itself that Christ's life is given to him. And if he will only believe it, lay hold upon it by faith, that same life will cleanse from sin.

The power of the Lord is present with every man to save him from sin and work righteousness in him if he will only let it be done. It is wonderful, but it is true.--Present Truth, August 22, 1895--Timeline: IV-9 (The Paralytic Lowered Through the Roof)--Luke 5:17-24.

Chapter 114

The Power of Forgiveness

"And, behold, they brought to Him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed; and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; your sins be forgiven you. And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemes. And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Why do you think evil in your hearts? For what is easier, to say, Your sins be forgiven you; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that you may know that the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins, (then He said to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up your bed, and go unto your house. And he arose, and departed to his house. But when the multitudes saw it, they marveled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men." (Matthew 9:2-8)

One of the most common expressions to be heard among professed Christians when speaking of religious things, is this, "I can understand and believe that God will forgive sin, but it is hard for me to believe that He can keep me from sin."

Such a person has yet to learn very much of what is meant by God's forgiving sins. It is true that persons who talk that way do often have a measure of peace in believing that God has forgiven or does forgive their sins, but through failure to grasp the power of forgiveness, they deprive themselves of much blessing that they might enjoy.

Bearing in mind the statement concerning the matters that: "These are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life through His name," (John 20:31) not as simply the miracle before us. The scribes did not believe that Jesus could forgive sin. In order to show that He had power to forgive sins, He healed the palsied man. This miracle was wrought for the express purpose of illustrating the work of forgiving sin, and demonstrating its power. Jesus said to the palsied man, "Arise, take up your bed, and go unto your house," (Matthew 9:6) that they and we might know His power to forgive sin. Therefore the power exhibited in the healing of that man is the power bestowed in the forgiveness of sin.

Note particularly that the effect of the words of Jesus continued after they were spoken. They made a change in the man, and that change was permanent. Even so it must be in the forgiveness of sin.

The common idea is that when God forgives sin the change is in himself, and not in the man. It is thought that God finally ceases to hold anything against the one who has sinned. But this is to imply that God had a hardness against the man, which is not the case. God is not a man; He does not cherish enmity, nor harbor a feeling of revenge.

It is not because He has a hard feeling in His heart against a sinner that He forgives him, but because the sinner has something in his heart. God is all right, the man is all wrong. Therefore God forgives the man, that he also may be all right.

When Jesus, illustrating the forgiveness of sin, said to the man, "Arise, take up your bed, and go unto your house," (Matthew 9:6) the man arose obedient to His voice. The power that was in the words of Jesus, raised him up, and made him well. That power remained in him, and it was in the strength that was given him on removing the palsy that he walked in all the time to come, provided, of course, that he kept the faith.

This is illustrated by the Psalmist, when he says: "I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings." (Psalm 40:1-2)

There is life in the words of God. Jesus said, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." (John 6:63)

The word received in faith brings the Spirit and the life of God to the soul. So when the penitent soul hears the words, "Son, be of good cheer, your sins be forgiven you," (Matthew 9:2) and receives those words as the living words of the living God, he is a different man, because a new life has begun in him. It is the power of God's forgiveness, and that alone, that keeps him from sin. If he continues in sin after receiving pardon, it is because he has not grasped the fullness of the blessing that was given him in the forgiveness of his sins.

In the case before us, the man received new life. His palsied condition was simply the wasting away of the natural life. He was partially dead. The words of Christ gave him fresh life. But this new life that was given to his body, and which enabled him to walk was but an illustration, both to him and to the scribes, of the unseen life of God

which he had received in the words, "Your sins be forgiven you," (Matthew 9:2) and which had made him a new creature in Christ.

With this simple and clear illustration before us, we may understand some of the words of the apostle Paul, which otherwise are "hard to be understood." (2 Peter 3:16)

First read: "Giving thanks unto the Father, which has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who has delivered us from the power of darkness, and has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins." (Colossians 1:12-14)

See the same statement concerning redemption through Christ's blood, in: "Forasmuch as you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." (1 Peter 1:18-19) "And they sung a new song, saying, You are worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by your blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." (Revelation 5:9)

Mark two points:

1. We have redemption through Christ's blood, and

2. This redemption is the forgiveness of sins.

But the blood is the life.

"But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, you shall not eat." (Genesis 9:4) "And whatsoever man there be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, which hunts and catches any beast or fowl that may be eaten; he shall even pour out the blood thereof, and cover it with dust. For it is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof: therefore I said unto the children of Israel, You shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh: for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof: whosoever eats it shall be cut off." (Leviticus 17:13-14)

Therefore Colossians 1:14 really tells us that we have redemption through Christ's life. But does not the Scripture say that we are reconciled to God by the death of his Son? It does, and that is just what is here taught. "[Christ] gave himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity." (Galatians 1:4) "[He] gave himself for our sins." (Titus 2:14)

In giving himself, He gives His life. In shedding His blood, He pours out His life. But in giving up His life, He gives it to us. That life is righteousness, even the perfect righteousness of God, so that when we receive it we are "made the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5:21)

It is the receiving of Christ's life, as we are baptized into His death, that reconciles us to God. It is thus that we "put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness," (Ephesians 4:24) "after the image of Him that created him." (Colossians 3:10)

Now we may read the following and find that it is not so very difficult: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified [that is, made righteous, or doers of the law] freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission [sending away] of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." (Romans 3:23-25)

All have sinned. The whole life has been sin. Even the thoughts have been evil. "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man." (Mark 7:21-23)

And, "To be carnally minded is death." (Romans 8:6)

Therefore the life of sin is a living death. If the soul is not freed from this, it will end in eternal death. There is no power in man to get righteousness out of the holy law of God, therefore God in His mercy puts His own righteousness upon all that believe. He makes us righteous as a free gift out of the riches of His grace.

He does this by His words, for He declares-speaks-His righteousness into and upon all who have faith in the blood of Christ. In Him is God's righteousness, "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." (Colossians 2:9)

And this declaring or speaking the righteousness of God upon us, is the remission or taking away of sin. Thus God takes away the sinful life by putting His own righteous life in its place. And this is the power of the forgiveness of sin. It is "the power of an endless life." (Hebrews 7:16)

This is the beginning of the Christian life. It is receiving the life of God by faith. How is it continued? Just as it is begun. "As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him." (Colossians 2:6)

For, "the just shall live by faith." (Romans 1:17)

The secret of living the Christian life is simply that of holding fast the life which, received at the beginning, forgives the sin.

God forgives sin by taking it away. He justifies the ungodly by making him godly. He reconciles the rebel sinner to himself by taking away his rebellion, and making him a loyal and law-abiding subject. It is sometimes said, "But it is difficult to understand how we can have the life of God as an actual fact; it can't be real, for it is by faith that we have it."

So it was by faith that the poor palsied man received new life and strength; but was this strength any the less real? Was it not an actual fact that he received strength? "Cannot understand it"?

Of course not, for it is a manifestation of: "The love of Christ, which passes knowledge." (Ephesians 3:19)

But we may believe it, and realize the fact, and then we shall have an eternal life in which to study the wonder of it. Read again and again the story of the healing of the palsied man, and meditate upon it until it is a living reality to you, and then remember that: "These are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life through His name." (John 20:31)--Signs of the

Times, April 10, 1893--Apples of Gold Library No. 12, May 1894--Timeline: IV-9 (The Paralytic Lowered Through the Roof)--Matthew 9:2-8.

Chapter 115

The Call and Feast of Matthew

In studying this lesson, read also the parallel accounts in Mark 2:14-22 and Luke 5:27-39, for some particulars not mentioned by Matthew.

All the accounts tell us that the call of Matthew, or Levi, as he is called by Mark and Luke, took place immediately after the healing of the palsied man. But there is an omission in the account given by Matthew, as we learn from the other records, which is quite striking. Matthew simply tells what took place "as Jesus sat at meat in the house," (Matthew 9:10) without telling whose house, or anything about the meal.

Mark says that: "Jesus sat at meat in his house," (Mark 2:15) that is, in Matthew's house, and Luke says that: "Levi made Him a great feast in his own house." (Luke 5:29)

Matthew modestly omits all reference to what he did.

Matthew's Sacrifice

"And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and He said unto him, Follow me, and he arose, and followed Him." (Matthew 9:9)

The office of publican, or tax-collector, was a lucrative one. The men who filled the office were despised and hated by the rest of the Jews, both because they oppressed the people, and because they would consent to collect taxes for the hated Romans. Publicans had to pay a certain sum into the Roman treasury, and then they would collect it, together with as much more as they could for their own profit, from the people. Of course the system naturally led to extortion and oppression.

This, however, would not make the publicans unpopular with Pharisees, who were guilty of the same sin; but their calling, and the fact they served the conquerors of the Jewish nation, made them despised by the "better classes" of the Jewish society.

Matthew was thus a man of business, yet when Jesus called him, "he arose, and followed Him." (Matthew 9:9)

Luke states more, which Matthew modestly omitted: "And he left all, rose up, and followed Him." (Luke 5:28)

How many businessmen in these days would follow Jesus if it involved giving up their business? It is much easier to read about it, and to take it as a matter of course that the early disciples should do so, than to do it ourselves. However, there are those even now, who are willing and even glad to suffer the loss of all things, that they may win Christ. "But 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: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." (Philippians 3:7-8)

We speak of Matthew's "sacrifice" an expression very commonly used to describe a case where one has suffered the loss of property for Christ's sake. It is not, however, strictly correct, nay, it is wholly incorrect in the sense in which it is ordinarily used.

If used in the original sense of something devoted to the Lord, and thus made sacred, or sacrificed, to Him, it is perfectly correct. But if it be used to indicate that one has done some great and worthy deed, with the implied thought that a great loss has been sustained, it is incorrect.

Christ has made the only sacrifice that is worthy to be called such. In order to accept this sacrifice, one must give up all, but it is simply giving up a poor thing for a good one. Christ does the giving, we do the taking. Whoever talks or thinks about how much he has given up for the Lord, has no just sense of "the unsearchable riches of Christ." (Ephesians 3:8)

A man in his senses would never complain or make a merit of having exchanged sawdust for gold dust.

The Fault Finders

"Many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto His disciples, Why does your Master eat with publicans and sinners?" (Matthew 9:10-11)

Luke says that they murmured, or muttered. At an Eastern feast, anybody had the privilege of coming in and looking on, even though not an invited guest. An example of this freedom is seen in: "And one of the Pharisees desired Him that He would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, And stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden Him saw it, he spoke within himself, saying, This man, if He were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that touches Him: for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said unto Him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto you. And he said, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And He said unto him, You have rightly judged. And He turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, See this woman? I entered into your house, You gave me no water for my feet: but she has washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. You gave me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in has not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil you did not anoint: but this woman has anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto you, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little. And He said unto her, Your sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with Him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgives sins also? And He said to the woman, Your faith has saved you; go in peace." (Luke 7:36-50)

That the Pharisees themselves were not present as participators in the feast, is shown by their murmuring against Christ, for eating with publicans and sinners. They would not have accepted an invitation to a publican's house, much less would they sit at

the same table with those they called sinners; yet they were always present to carp at Jesus.

Their successors live today. They are present at the feast, but only to pick flaws, not to eat. They attend the meeting, but they are not fed by the discourse; they only point out something which their sharp eyes have discovered to be wrong. And so these poor, self-satisfied Pharisees starve to death on wind, while others are eating to the fill.

It is better to eat with publicans and sinners, than to stand to one side and find fault with the eaters. It is better to be among the humble followers of Christ, who acknowledge themselves to be sinners, and so have the truth abiding in them, than to hold aloof and criticize both the poor sinners and the Master who receives them. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (1 John 1:8)

Seeking the Lost

"Why does your Master eat with publicans and sinners?" (Matthew 9:11)

On another occasion, when all the publicans and sinners drew near to hear Jesus, the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, "This man receives sinners, and eats with them." (Luke 15:2)

Yes; for not only does Christ receive sinners, but: "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10)

One day I met a young man with a most dejected look, who with broken voice said, "I am lost." "I am glad to hear you say so," I replied.

His astonishment at such a reply was too great for words, but it was eloquently expressed in his face. "Yes," I continued, "I am glad to hear that you are lost, for you are just the one that the Lord is looking for; and since He is not far off, I am sure that He will find you."

This was a new view of the case, and it was not long before joy took the place of the young man's despondency.

Note that Jesus not only seeks, but He saves. "[He is] mighty to save." (Isaiah 63:1)

So that to "As many as receive Him, He gives power to become the sons of God." (John 1:12)

Jesus associates with sinners, and: "He is not ashamed to call them brethren," (Hebrews 2:11) for by His presence He saves them from their sins, and makes them indeed brethren, in that He makes them join theirs with himself.

Mark, in relating the circumstances connected with the call of Matthew, says that: "Many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many, and they followed Him." (Mark 2:15)

This is exactly the same word that is used by Matthew. He followed Jesus, and many other publicans and sinners also followed Him. So then they were sinners saved from sin. A sinner who follows Jesus is in a blessed condition.

New Wine in New Bottles

"No man puts a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up takes from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runs out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved." (Matthew 9:16-17)

The tendency is to rob Christ's teaching of its personal character, and to make it general. So this statement by Jesus, that new wine could not be put into old wine skins, nor new cloth into old garments, is made to refer to religion in general. Thus one says, "Time showed that the new, strong Christianity could not successfully patch up the holes in the worn-out religion of the Jews."

And again, "If the reformation introduced by the Baptist could retain the old form of Judaism, Christianity could not," forgetting or not knowing that John the Baptist was a Christian, and that his baptism was Christian baptism: "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." (Mark 1:4)

"Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on Him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." (Acts 19:4)

As to "the worn-out religion of the Jews," it was that which God had given them, but which they had rejected, and so Christ came, not to found a new religion, but to exalt "that which was from the beginning." (1 John 1:1)

Jesus was a Jew, and He said, "Salvation is of the Jews." (John 4:22)

All the teaching of Jesus was personal. The "new wine" of which He spoke was none other than that which the Lord through His prophet freely offered to all. "Ho, everyone that thirsts, come to the waters, and he that has no money; come, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." (Isaiah 55:1)

The "old garments" are the "filthy rags" of man's own self-righteousness. "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." (Isaiah 64:6) Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works: their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands." (Isaiah 59:6) Man's own works cannot become good garments, but Christ offers a complete new garment of salvation, a "robe of righteousness," (Isaiah 61:10) consisting of: "Fine linen clean and white." (Revelation 19:8) "I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and white raiment, that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness does not appear; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see." (Revelation 3:18) "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; ... And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Revelation 7:9,14)

He takes away "the filthy garments," and gives a complete "change of raiment." "And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke you, O Satan; even the Lord that has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood

before the angel. And he answered and spoke unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused your iniquity to pass from you, and I will clothe you with change of raiment. And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the Lord stood by." (Zechariah 3:1-5)

The work of Christ is not patch-work but new creation. The new wine of the Gospel, which was new in the days of Abraham, Moses, and Isaiah,--the old, old story that is always new,--cannot be carried in anything but new creatures. For, mark it, Christ receives sinners, in order that they may be witnesses for Him. These publicans and sinners, acknowledged themselves to be sinners, and were thus cleansed from all unrighteousness. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

Then, filled with the Spirit, they could carry the good news of salvation to others. They became vessels to honor, "sanctified and meet for the Master's use." (2 Timothy 2:21)

The Pharisees, who persisted in saying that they had no sin, could not carry the light to others. Christ came to call sinners, not the righteous. The man who insists that he is righteous, has no part in Christ; and everybody who will follow his own way, instead of the commandment of the Lord, does thus insist that he is right and the Lord is wrong.

The lesson is a personal one for us all; we cannot patch Christ's life on to our old life of sin. Let Him make us over new, and then we can wear new clothing, be filled with the new wine, and sing a new song.--Present Truth, February 3, 1898--Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons, February 13--Original title: The Call of Matthew--Timeline: IV-10 (Call of Levi Matthew), 28 (Matthew's Feast), 29 (The Question About Fasting)--Matthew 9:9-17. [Editor's note: The call of Matthew, and the feast that he made for Jesus are two separate events, although they appear together in the gospel records. The call occurred during the early Galilean ministry, after the healing of the paralytic who was lowered through the roof; the feast occurred during the Middle Galilean ministry, right after the storm on the lake, a number of months later. One commentary states: "The call of Matthew happened immediately after the cure of the paralytic" (Matthew 9:8). The feast in Matthew's house took place after the passage, to

and fro, of the lake; for it is connected by very definite marks of time (Matthew 9:11,18) with the raising of Jairus' daughter and the healing of the woman in the crowd; and that these happened after Our Lord's visit to Gadara, plainly appears from Luke 8:40-41; Mark 5:21-22. "But the call and the feast, separated in time, were connected by a far more important link,--that of cause and effect." Therefore they are narrated together in all the three Gospels. Mark and Luke record the feast as if it followed close on the call (Mark 2:15; Luke 5:29); Matthew postpones the account of his call (and therefore of the cure of the paralytic), that he may not separate the feast from the events immediately following. "In all this there is no difficulty, except what is created by ascribing a false and unreasonable importance to the order of time in the Gospel narratives."--A Commentary on St. Matthew's Gospel, Eustace R. Conder, 1866]

Chapter 116

Proper Sabbath Observance

"And it came to pass, that He went through the corn fields on the Sabbath day; and His disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn. And the Pharisees said unto Him, Behold, why do they on the Sabbath day that which is not lawful? And He said unto them, Have you never read what David did, when he had need, and was a hungered, he, and they that were with him? How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him? And He said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath." (Mark 2:23-28)

And He said, "If you had known what this means, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the guiltless." (Matthew 12:7)

This statement about the Sabbath and its purpose is from Him who made the Sabbath; for in Christ were all things created: "For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." (Colossians 1:16-17)

And without Him was not one single thing made, of that which exists: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made." (John 1:1-3)

And the Sabbath is the rest of the Creator: "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made." (Genesis 2:1-3)

The Creator, He who made the Sabbath for man, is the only one who can tell us what it is for, and how to keep it. All statements by men, to the effect that this thing

must not be done on the Sabbath, are Pharisaical and Popish additions to God's Word, which, inasmuch as they are mere human ordinances, are always sure to be wrong.

The Word of God alone is to be the guide under all circumstances; whoever holds fast to the Word, and is taught of God cannot go wrong. "The Sabbath was made for man." (Mark 2:27)

And it is therefore not something that is against him, a hard requirement,--something to hold him down,--but a thing calculated to help him in every way. But it is for man; that is, it is a blessing to a man only when he keeps it. When a man rejects that which is good, he has only the evil; so a blessing spurned leaves only a man helpless.

Therefore when it is said that all human additions to the Sabbath, and interpretations of the commandment are of no value, it must not be understood that anybody, in the world has any license to break the Sabbath. "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." (Exodus 20:8)

This is as valid a commandment as it was the day it was spoken from Sinai.

Notice that the Saviour did not excuse the disciples for breaking the Sabbath, but He declared that they had not broken it; they were guiltless.

God is not like the gods that the heathen worship who must be propitiated by human suffering. He has no delight in seeing people suffer, but only in seeing them happy. Fasting is right in its place, and acceptable to God; but, when it is done as a penance, when one makes a virtue of it, then it is an abomination to the Lord.

Jesus said that the disciples, in quietly satisfying their hunger on the Sabbath day, were guiltless. They did that which was "not lawful," only according to the traditions of the Pharisees, but not according, to the law of God. "It is lawful to do well on the Sabbath days, [said Jesus]." (Matthew 12:12)

And He it is who by obedience to the law of God magnified the law and made it honorable. "The Lord is well pleased for His righteousness' sake; He will magnify the law, and make it honorable." (Isaiah 42:21)

In these words, "It is lawful to do well on the Sabbath days," and, "The Sabbath was made for man," we have the explanation of many of the acts of Christ.

Man with the Withered Hand

The first of these statements is found in Matthew's account of the healing the man with a withered hand (Matthew 12), which occurs in immediate connection with that of the disciples eating the corn. Indeed, they went from the corn-field direct to the synagogue, where Jesus performed this miracle. The Pharisees knowing how ready and anxious Jesus was to relieve the afflicted, watched Him to see if He would heal the man on the Sabbath. He asked them, "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days, or, to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace. But when He had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, He said unto the man, Stretch forth your hand. And he stretched it out; and his hand was restored whole as the other." (Mark 3:4-5)

The Sabbath, therefore, is connected with well-doing, and stands for well-doing, since it was made for man, for his benefit. The Scribes and Pharisees had made it a burden for the people; and it was to show its real nature, that Jesus performed so many miracles on the Sabbath day. Let us look at three typical miracles, besides the one already noted, that were done on the Sabbath.

At the Pool of Bethesda

In the 5th chapter of John we have the account of the healing of the man at the pool of Bethesda, who had an infirmity that had made him unable to walk for thirty-eight years. "When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, He said unto him, Will you be made whole? The impotent man answered Him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool; but while I am coming, another steps down before me. Jesus said unto him, Rise, take up your bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked; and on the same day was the Sabbath. ... Therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath day." (John 5:6-9,16)

The Man Born Blind

Although Jesus knew how the Pharisees felt about such things, He still continued to go about doing good, no less on the Sabbath days than on other days. He said, "I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." (John 9:4-5)

As He passed by, "He saw a man which was blind from his birth." (John 9:1)

Having said that He must do the works of God, and that He was the light of the world, "He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and Heanointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam (which isby interpretation, Sent). He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing. ... And it was the Sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes." (John 9:6-7,14)

And again there was a strife among the Jews over the matter.

The Crippled Woman

On another occasion Jesus "was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. And when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him, and said unto her, Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity. And He laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation,because that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work; in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day. The Lord then answered him, and said, You hypocrite, doesnot each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day? And when He had said these things, all His adversaries were ashamed; and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him." (Luke 13:10-17)

Not Urgent Cases

One noticeable thing about all these cases is that none of them were what might be called urgent cases. There was no immediate danger of death in any of them, unless possibly the case of the man at the pool of Bethesda, and one day more could certainly not have made much difference in his case. The blind man would never have known the difference if Jesus on seeing him had said to himself, "Tomorrow, or as soon as the Sabbath is past, I will come and heal that man."

Eight or ten days even would have made no great difference so far as the man was concerned, for his life was in no danger, and he had no expectation of seeing.

The same thing is true of the woman that was bowed down, and of the man with the withered hand. They would not have suffered materially if Jesus had waited a day or two longer before healing them, especially as they were not expecting to be healed.

But Jesus did not wait, when He saw people in affliction, but gave them the blessing of health and strength at once, no matter what the day. Even when He knew that the Jews were watching Him, and that they would seek to kill Him for His Sabbath miracles, He did not put off the good work.

Why on the Sabbath?

We cannot read the record of these cases without seeing that it was not mere accident that they were healed on the Sabbath day. When the persons' lives were in no danger, and they had as it were become accustomed to their infirmity, and had not asked nor expected to be healed, and when Jesus knew that the healing of them on the Sabbath would increase the enmity of the rulers of the Jews against Him, and that they were watching Him, we can easily see that there was design in the performance of these miracles on the Sabbath day. Jesus wished to teach the people and their rulers a lesson that they needed to know.

Of one thing, however, we may be sure, the design of Jesus was not to spite the Jews, or to show contempt for the rulers. It was not any defiance of danger, or desire to assert His rights, that led Him thus to act contrary to the cherished traditions of the elders.

We know that He often went away to another part rather than stir up the animosity of the rulers, and that He did not court publicity. No; His one desire was to do good, and to show the people that the Sabbath was meant to be a blessing, and not a burden. His work was: "To heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised," (Luke 4:18) not alone in body, but in soul and spirit. The physical blindness and bondage and infirmity which the people suffered was only an evidence and a consequence of the spiritual blindness and bondage and infirmity that afflict mankind; and the power of Jesus over the one was simply an evidence of His power over the other.

He came to represent the Father, and to declare His name, who is, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." (Exodus 34:6-7)

The healing of the body was only a sign to show the reality of the blessed work of forgiving sins and cleansing from all unrighteousness. "For which is easier, to say, Your sins be forgiven you; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that you may know that the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins, (then said He to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up your bed, and go unto your house." (Matthew 9:5-6)

Now the object of the Sabbath is to cause people to know the Lord as the God who sanctifies: "Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them." (Ezekiel 20:12)

The Sabbath is God's rest, the rest which He graciously shares with all who believe Him: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shall you labor, and do all your work." (Exodus 20:8-9) "For we which have believed do enter into rest, as He said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For He spoke in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all His works." (Hebrews 4:3-4)

It stands for complete deliverance from sin in the present time, and is the pledge and assurance of the final redemption of the body and of the whole creation from every trace of the curse.

Those who cease from profaning it, and who call it a delight, and not a burden, and by the proper observance of it honor God as Creator with all power in heaven and earth, have the promise that through it they shall delight themselves in the Lord, and be made to ride on the high places of the earth. "If you turn away your foot from the sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words: Then shall you delight yourself in the Lord; and I will cause you to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father: for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it." (Isaiah 58:13-14)

It was to show all the people, including us, that the Sabbath means freedom from sin and the curse, and fullness of joy in the Lord, that Jesus performed those miracles. Let it be particularly noticed that the effect of them was to cause the people to rejoice and to glorify God.

It may be noted, in closing, that there was never any controversy or question as to which day is the Sabbath. The commandment settles that for all time, and the Bible gives no ground for any controversy over the matter. "The seventh day is the Sabbath," (Exodus 20:10) and the Pharisees and Jesus were agreed on that, since there was no room for difference. Jesus did not once intimate that the seventh day was not the Sabbath, or that He had come to change it, or that it no longer needed to be observed as strictly as formerly. He expressly stated that He had not come to destroy the law, or any portion of it, but instead to fulfill it and show how it should be observed. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." (Matthew 5:17-18) "The Lord is well pleased for His righteousness' sake; He will magnify the law, and make it honorable." (Isaiah 42:21)

His works of love and mercy, never performed for His own profit or benefit, but only for the good of others, even to His own loss, were done, not to show disrespect of the Sabbath day, but were on the contrary, the highest possible honor that could be

shown it, in that they presented it as the sign of the greatest blessing that God has it in His power to bestow.

Who will accept it as such, and in glorifying God find himself sanctified and glorified?--Present Truth, June 3, 1897--Timeline: IV-11 (Plucking Grain on the Sabbath), IV-12 (The Man With a Withered Hand), III-9 (The Invalid at Bethesda), III-10 (Rejection by the Sanhedrin), VI-6 (The Man Born Blind), VI-22 (The Crippled Woman)--Mark 2:23-28; 3:4-5; John 5:6-16; John 9:4-14; Luke 13:10-17.

Chapter 117

A Law of Love

One Sabbath day Jesus and His disciples were passing through a cornfield, on their way to the synagogue "and His disciples were a hungered, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto Him, Behold, your disciples do that which is not lawful to do on the Sabbath day." (Matthew 12:1-2)

Would Jesus defend His disciples in at unlawful course? Not by any means, for He said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, till heaven end earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." (Matthew 5:17-18)

And He used still stronger language, to show the unchangeability of the law, which includes the commandment to keep the Sabbath day holy. Said He, "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail." (Luke 16:17)

That law was in His heart. "I delight to do your will, O my God: yea, your law is within my heart." (Psalm 40:8)

It is evident, therefore, that Jesus had no sympathy with lawlessness. Yet Jesus defended the action of the disciples in plucking the ears of corn on the Sabbath day, and rubbing the grains out in their hands, and eating, to satisfy their hunger.

This was not, as some think, a setting aside or ignoring of the law, to make room for a higher claim, that of human need, but it was in view of the fact that what the disciples did was perfectly in harmony with the law. To the Pharisees Jesus said: "If you had known what this means, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the guiltless." (Matthew 12:7)

The Pharisees accused the disciples falsely, in saying that they were doing what was not lawful on the Sabbath day. "God is love." (1 John 4:8)

His law is a law of love. "The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; He shined forth from Mount Paran, and He came with ten thousands of His saints;

from His right hand went a fiery law for them. Yea, He loved the people." (Deuteronomy 33:2-3)

This is a part of "the blessing wherewith Moses, the man of God, blessed the children of Israel." (Deuteronomy 33:1)

The blessing of God is "life for evermore": "For there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." (Psalm 133:3)

And, "His commandment is life everlasting." (John 12:50)

God's law is not negative; it is positive, life-giving. It does not need to be set aside, in order that human needs should be met; no; it is impossible for one jot of its claims to abate; but the law makes provision for the satisfying of human need. Yea, the law exists for the sole purpose of "satisfying the desire of every living thing." (Psalm 145:16)

Many people get the idea, and too often they get it from professed Christians, that to serve God and keep His commandments means to make one's self miserable. What a libel that is upon God's goodness and fatherly care.

The words of the Lord are spoken to us, that our "joy may be full." (John 16:24)

To the one who knows the Lord and His law, it is a delight. It is not that one shall compel himself to like something that is disagreeable; that is not Christianity; but it is that men should find that the commandments of God are "More to be desired ... than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." (Psalm 19:10)

The true Christian rejoices in the Lord, and delights to do His will, because he cannot help liking what is so good.

In keeping with the common idea that Christianity deprives men of all that is desirable in life, very many people have the idea that the Sabbath is a yoke of bondage imposed upon them. Consequently they reject it entirely.

While others accept it in much the same way that they would take bitter medicine. They think that they must do it in order to be saved, and they reluctantly take on the Sabbath, and either pity themselves for the hard road they have to travel, or else they complacently boast of the great "sacrifice" which they have made for the Lord.

It is difficult to know just what to call such dealing with the Sabbath of the Lord; but one thing we may be sure of, and that is, it is not Sabbath-keeping. "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous." (1 John 5:3)

Therefore the Sabbath commandment is not grievous. "The Sabbath was made for man," (Mark 2:27) not against him. It is not something that is imposed upon man, but something given to him; it is not a burden for him to carry, but it carries him, and eases him of his burdens. It is not hard, but easy, to keep the Sabbath, even as it is not hard, but easy, to rest.

Rest is not work. The true keeping of the Sabbath is the entering into God's work; and since that work is finished and perfect, we find rest in it. Keeping the Lord's Sabbath,--God's rest,--is absolutely to trust in Him, allowing Him to work His perfect will in us. It is the perfection of faith in God.

God has laid up righteousness for those who trust in Him. "Oh how great is your goodness, which You have laid up for them that fear You; which You have wrought for them that trust in You before the sons of men!" (Psalm 31:19)

We are made righteous by faith. "Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe." (Romans 3:22)

He gives righteousness. "For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." (Ephesians 2:8)

All our own righteousnesses are as filthy rags: "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." (Isaiah 64:6)

There is no real righteousness except the righteousness of God, and that cannot be had apart from Him. We can have no perfect righteousness except as His presence gives it to us. But, "the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 6:23)

So the righteousness that God gives us is eternal life. The Sabbath is part of God's gift of righteousness. Indeed, it is the perfection of His righteousness, for it is perfect rest in Him. To keep the Sabbath is to trust God implicitly and absolutely, to rest in His love. Therefore the Sabbath brings to us God's free gift of everlasting life in Christ.

The greater includes the less. He who does that which is greatest, will certainly do that which is less. As nothing is too hard for the Lord, so nothing is too small for Him. Whoever believes that God will keep him alive throughout eternity must certainly know that He will provide for his needs day by day. If a man is in fear about his daily support, that shows that he does not trust God for eternal life; for it is absurd to say: "I trust God to keep me eternally, but do not trust Him for today."

So we see that the Sabbath of the Lord--the seventh day of the week--is the great test of our faith in God. It is made the busiest day in the week by the most of the world. To keep it as the commandment of God requires, seems to be the cutting one off from his daily bread. A man who has not faith in God cannot do it; but the one who trusts his whole being with God for eternity, can trust Him to give him his daily bread while he keeps the Sabbath. He will see that the Sabbath, instead of being a hardship, reveals to him God who gives to all life and breath and all things.

We see, therefore, that the record of the passing through the cornfield on the Sabbath day, as well as the miracles of healing which Jesus did on that day, is for the purpose of showing us that in the Sabbath God gives himself to us, with all the strength of His life. The lesson is, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matthew 7:38)

Do not despise or reject the gifts of God. He gives all good things. He is solicitous for our welfare. He desires that we shall live, and enjoy life.

But we must not be afraid to trust Him. We must not act as though we thought there were concealed poison in His gifts: and we must know that the Sabbath is the

blessed gift of God. It is for our good both here and in eternity. "O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusts in Him. O fear the Lord, you His saints; for there is no want to them that fear Him. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." (Psalm 34:8-10)--Present Truth, August 25, 1898--Timeline: IV-11 (Plucking Grain on the Sabbath)--Matthew 12:1-2.

Chapter 118

The Object of the Sabbath

"The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." (Mark 2:27)

The Pharisees had laid down rigid rules as to how the Sabbath should be kept. There was no allowance for difference in circumstances, but these rules were to be carried out by everybody on every occasion.

Being only human rules they could not be adapted to the condition of men. With them, the Sabbath of their own making, not the Sabbath of the Lord, was everything and man was nothing. It was far better in their eyes to let a man die than to do anything for his relief on the Sabbath day. Thus they made the Sabbath a burden, whereas God gave it to man for a blessing.

The Saviour's statement that the Sabbath was made for man does not at all convey the idea that it is a plaything for man; that man can do as he pleases with it; but it does show that it is designed for man's welfare. Man's welfare is the great consideration.

It is man that God cares for. He has not made institutions and arbitrarily commanded man to keep them, so that it makes no difference what the man may suffer, if only the institution be preserved intact. God is not a tyrant.

It is true that He has made institutions, the Sabbath among them, and that He designs that they shall be kept; but only because the keeping of them is beneficial for man. God in His wisdom has devised such institutions that the observing of them just as He has commanded, is the only way in which man can attain the highest good, and experience its richest blessings. "The Sabbath was made for man." (Mark 2:27)

Mark well the fact that this statement by the Saviour did not introduce a new order of things. He did not say that the Sabbath which God gave in the beginning had been a hard yoke, but that He had come to modify it, so that men might do with it as they chose, keeping it if convenient, and dispensing with it if they saw fit. No, "The Sabbath was made for man." (Mark 2:27)

When God gave it to man in Eden, as well as when He spoke the fourth commandment upon Mount Sinai, it was designed as a blessing for mankind. God, who made man, knew what he needed, and in the Sabbath He gave him that which would lift him to the highest possible place.

It is true that Christ did tear away from the Sabbath the senseless and burdensome restrictions which the Jews had placed upon it, by which the Sabbath was broken instead of kept; but in so doing He merely let the institution shine forth just as God gave it. He did not in the least remove any of the sanctions which had been thrown around it by the Lord; for Christ "came not to destroy." (Matthew 5:17)

Men cannot make a rule so broad and comprehensive that it can cover every possible case; in every law of man there must be exceptions or else someone must suffer. But not so with God's law; He knew how to make laws and institutions that would be applicable in every case, and yet work injustice to none.

There cannot be any circumstances in which it is not the duty of man to keep the Sabbath day; yet in no case will the keeping of it work injury to anyone. On the contrary, it is only in the keeping of the Sabbath that the greatest blessings come to man. "And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it; because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made." (Genesis 2:3)

God does not ask man to make the day holy; He did that himself. God blessed the seventh day. It is asked, "How could God bless a day, so that it would be any more holy than another day?"

That we cannot tell. One might as well ask us how God could create the world. We know nothing about how the thing was done; all we know is the fact. Of that we are very sure, because the Bible tells us.

The seventh day,--not simply the Sabbath institution,--is blessed. It and it alone, of all the days of the week, has a blessing placed upon it. It is different from all the other days of the week. Therefore in the keeping of the Sabbath there is a blessing to be found.

We do not mean that people may not be blessed upon other days of the week, for not only the Christian, but even the ungodly, will receive blessing from God on every day of the week. The Christian may, and often does, receive a large measure of the Spirit on any working day; but all that does not make the blessing of the Sabbath. On the seventh day, when it is observed as God designs, there is a blessing to be obtained, that cannot be obtained on any other day.

It is quite commonly taught that if men keep another day than the seventh, they will experience the same blessing. As evidence of this, we are told by strict observers of the first day of the week that they have all the blessing on that day that they could possibly have on the seventh day.

But this they cannot know, because they have never kept the seventh day. That they do experience a blessing in their worship, need not be denied, but that they do not experience the blessing of the Sabbath, is as sure as the Bible.

The reason why is very simple. A thing can never be found where it is not. A man cannot be found in London if he is in Liverpool. One may go to the Cape of Good Hope in search of the North Cape, but he will never find it there. He will find a cape, but it will not be the North Cape.

Now the Lord has blessed the Sabbath day, the seventh day. He has never blessed any other day. The blessing which He placed on the seventh day in the beginning has never been taken off. It could not by any possibility be taken off. Therefore if one wants to find the blessing of the Sabbath day he must find it in the keeping, according to the commandment, of the seventh day.

Many will not believe this; they think that it is foolish to suppose that there is any difference in days. But whoever tries it, not in form merely, but in Spirit, keeping in reality the Sabbath of the Lord, will know that it is so.

It was Christ who blessed and sanctified the seventh day. Since it was by Him that all things were created, it is evident that He must also have rested at the close of the six days of creation. He created, He rested, He blessed, and He sanctified. Therefore the blessing of the Sabbath day is the blessing of Christ. The blessing of Christ is to turn

man away from iniquity. "Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away everyone of you from his iniquities." (Acts 3:26)

The Sabbath, therefore, is for the purpose of turning man away from their sins--not simply from the sin of Sabbath breaking, but from all sin. How can this be? A few words will indicate the answer, which will be treated further in another paper. (See the footnote on the next page for the location of the articles that are related to this one) The Sabbath is the memorial of creation. The Sabbath was made for the reason that: "In six days the Lord made heaven and earth and all that in them is." (Exodus 20:11)

And from the fact that every day man may see something of the works of the Creator, the Sabbath is given for the especial purpose of keeping God in mind as the great Creator. But for the Sabbath rest, men would forget God. And forgetting God, they fail to avail themselves of His power, in overcoming sin. So we have the words of the Lord as to why the Sabbath was given: "Moreover also, I gave them my Sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them." (Ezekiel 20:12)

God sanctified the Sabbath for man, that man might know that he is the One that sanctifies from sin.

It was Christ that blessed the Sabbath, and sanctified it, so that the seventh day is the Lord's day. The blessing of the Sabbath is the blessing of Christ, and that is sanctification, for: "[Christ] is of God made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." (1 Corinthians 1:30)

Here again we see that the Sabbath means sanctification.

The Sabbath is the memorial of creation, but redemption is creation. David prayed, "Create in me a clean heart." (Psalm 51:1) "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature." (2 Corinthians 5:17) "The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation." (Romans 1:16)

And the power of God is seen only in "the things that He has made." (Romans 1:20)

So the power of the Gospel is the power that created the worlds. Therefore, the Sabbath, in commemoration of creation, makes known to man the power of God to save from sin. As it calls to remembrance the power of God as shown in the works of His hands, it reminds us of the words of the apostle: "By grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained, that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:8-10)

This, and this alone, is the object of the Sabbath. This object can be gained only by the keeping of the Sabbath in just the way that God designed from the beginning that it should be kept. More in this line may be given in the next paper. [Editor's note: This is the first article in a series of four. The following three articles are not contained in this collection but are available in the book, Sabbath Compendium, in the section, "The Blessing of God's Rest." I did not include them in this book, as they were not based on verses from the Gospels]--Present Truth, December 1, 1892--Timeline: IV-11 (Plucking Grain on the Sabbath)--Mark 2:27.

Chapter 119

Just Like Him

"And it came to pass also on another Sabbath, that He entered into the synagogue and taught; and there was a man whose right hand was withered. And the scribes and Pharisees watched Him, whether He would heal on the Sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against Him." (Luke 6:6-7)

It is not so very strange a thing to see an afflicted person in any assembly; why then should these Pharisees be so specially on the watch when they saw this one present? What was it that made them think that Jesus would heal them?

Ah, it was because it was just like Jesus to heal any afflicted person whom He saw. What wonderful tribute those jealous Pharisees paid to Christ!

And what a wonderful comfort this contains for us! We are infirm; but: "[He is] touched with the feeling of our infirmities." (Hebrews 4:15)

And whenever He sees infirmity, His impulse is to heal. He is on the lookout to do good. "He delights in mercy." (Micah 7:18)

Therefore, "Be of good cheer," (Matthew 9:2) "Jesus Christ makes you whole." (Acts 9:34)--Present Truth, February 10, 1898--Timeline: IV-12 (The Man With a Withered Hand)--Luke 6:6-7.

Chapter 120

Some Sabbath Miracles

The reason why we have the record of so many of the miracles of Jesus, is thus given: "Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; But these are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life through His name." (John 20:30-31)

In the teaching of Jesus and the apostles we are told the way of life; but in the miracles which God wrought by them we have visible manifestations of the reality of the life, and of its power. There is not a spiritual truth set forth in the Epistles, that does not find an illustration in some of the miracles performed in the bodies of men. God gave to Jesus "power over all flesh, that ... He should give eternal life" (John 17:2) to all who come to Him. "And you will not come to me, that you might have life." (John 5:40) By the power which He had to deliver the bodies of men from disease, He showed power to release their souls from sin. "For whether is easier, to say, Your sins be forgiven you; or tosay, Arise, and walk? But that you may know that the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins, (then He said to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up your bed, and go unto your house. And he arose, and departed to his house. But when the multitude saw it, they marveled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men." (Matthew 9:5-8)

Some of the most striking of the miracles of Jesus were done on the Sabbath day, and to a few of these we wish to call special attention.

The Man with a Withered Hand

First we read the story of the healing of the man with a withered hand: "And it came to pass also on another Sabbath, that He entered into the synagogue and taught; and there was a man whose right hand was withered. And the scribes and Pharisees watched Him, whether He would heal on the Sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against Him. But He knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth. Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the Sabbath days to do

good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it? And looking round about upon them all, He said unto the man, Stretch forth your hand. And he did so; and his hand was restored whole as the other." (Luke 6:6-10)

The right hand is one of the most necessary parts of the body, especially to the laboring man. Very difficult indeed would be to work with the right hand hanging useless at the side, and many kinds of work would be impossible. What Jesus did was to give that man power to work. The man stretched forth his hand in faith, and was made strong to work, thus illustrating the words of Jesus, "This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent." (John 6:29)

The Man Blind from Birth

"And as Jesus passed by, He saw a man which was blind from his birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day; the night comes, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.6 When He had thus spoken, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing. ... And it was the Sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes." (John 9:1-7,14)

By this miracle Christ gave a visible proof of the fact that He is the light of the world. The blind beggar listened to the words of Christ, and so received his sight. From this we may know the truthfulness of Christ assertion: "I am the light of the world; he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8:12)

When the blind man's eyes were opened he was able to see the light of the sun, but nevertheless Christ was his light, showing that the light which the sun in the firmament sheds upon the earth is only the light which it has received from the Sun of Righteousness.

We cannot see Christ, and it is impossible for our minds to comprehend how His life can be given to us, so that we may have eternal life and righteousness; but we do

know the fact that the sun gives light to the earth, and that in its light there is life; and since in the miracles of giving sight to the blind we have the evidence that this light and life come from Christ, we may in like manner know the fact that He can impart to us His life of righteousness.

It is just as easy to believe in Christ as the Saviour from sin and death, as it is to believe in the sun as the cause of life and fruitfulness to the earth.

Sin is darkness. The hearts of men became darkened when they did not glorify God as God. "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." (Romans 1:21) "[They had] the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God." (Ephesians 4:18)

Christ gives the light of life, so that just as He gave sight to the blind, He takes away the darkness of sin from all who accept Him in truth.

Healing the Infirm Woman

"And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. And when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him, and said unto her, Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity. And He laid His hands on her; and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work; in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day. The Lord then answered him, and said, You hypocrite, does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day? And when He had said these things, all His adversaries were ashamed; and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him." (Luke 13:10-17)

This woman had been bound by Satan. The loosing of her, therefore, was a striking illustration of Christ's power to free from sin, for: "Whoever commits sin is the bond-

servant of sin," (John 8:4) and "is of the devil;" (1 John 3:8) and "Of whom a man is overcome, of the same is He brought in bondage." (2 Peter 2:19)

The woman could not lift herself up. So every sinner may truly say, "My iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up." (Psalm 40:12)

But the same sinner, seeing the power of Christ on the infirm woman, may also say, "You, Lord, are a shield for me, my glory, and the lifter up of my head." (Psalm 3:3)

The woman "had a spirit of infirmity." Christ had compassion on her and healed her. So we may know that: "We have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." (Hebrews 4:15)

And we may also know that His sympathy is of a practical kind. In this miracle and the one preceding, we have a blessed illustration of the power that is in Christ: "To open [the] eyes [of men] and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." (Acts 26:18)

The Impotent Man Healed

"After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered ... And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, He said unto him, Will you be made hole? The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool; but while I am coming, another steps down before me. Jesus said unto him, Rise, take up your bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked; and on the same day was the Sabbath. ... And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath day. But Jesus answered them, My Father works hitherto, and I work." (John 5:1-9,16-17)

The man had no strength. Moreover, it was sin that had reduced him to that condition, as we learn from Christ's words to him, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto you." (John 5:14)

This is a practical lesson for us, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." (Romans 5:6)

We have no power, but He is able to strengthen us with might by His Spirit.

Why Done on the Sabbath?

It will be observed that the fact that these miracles were done on the Sabbath is specially noted. Take notice also that in none of them was the need so urgent that the healing might not have been deferred another day.

The blind man could have waited another day without special inconvenience. The man who lay by the pool was not in such imminent danger that he must necessarily be healed immediately. So also in the other cases, their infirmities were not immediately endangering their lives.

Besides, none of them were expecting to be healed, so that they would not have suffered any disappointment if Jesus had said nothing to them until the Sabbath was past. But Jesus did not delay an hour. Moreover He healed them on the Sabbath day, knowing full well that it would offend the Pharisees, and increase their hatred for Him.

These things show that He had a special object in doing these miracles on the Sabbath day, and that the Holy Spirit had a purpose in calling our attention specially to the day in which they were performed. What was that object?

The answer is easy. We may dismiss at once the supposition that Jesus acted in a spirit of bravado, to show His contempt for the Pharisees, or that He would unnecessarily stir up their hatred towards Him. The miracles were done for the same purpose that they were recorded, "That you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life through His name." (John 20:31)

Neither did Jesus do these miracles out of disrespect to the Sabbath day, for He kept all the commandments. Some have the mistaken idea that Jesus did them to show that the Sabbath may be broken in case of necessity. But Jesus did not break the Sabbath, although the Jews falsely accused Him of so doing. It is never necessary to break the Sabbath, but Jesus himself said, "It is lawful to do well on the Sabbath days." (Matthew 12:12)

We learn therefore that Jesus, instead of breaking the Sabbath, as the blind Pharisees suppose, was showing its true meaning. True, He worked upon it, but how? It was by His Word. Ever since the creation of the world, when the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their host, and: "God did rest the seventh day from all His works," (Hebrews 4:4) He has still continued to work by the Word of His power, which upholds all things. God gave the Sabbath that we might know that He is the God that sanctifies us: "Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them." (Ezekiel 20:12)

So in performing those miracles on the Sabbath day, Jesus was showing that the Sabbath is to free men from bondage, and not to be a bondage to them. It commemorates creative power, by which all who believe are made new creatures in Christ. "For we which have believed do enter into rest," (Hebrews 4:3) even God's rest. God rested when He had finished His work. He rested upon His Word of power. So we find rest through work,--not our work but God's work. "This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent." (John 6:29)

But believing, as we have seen, gives us rest. The work of God gives us rest from sin, for we triumph in the work of His hands. "For You, Lord, have made me glad through your work: I will triumph in the works of your hands." (Psalm 92:4)

So by these miracles Christ teaches us that the Sabbath, even the day which the Jews held as the Sabbath, but which they did not keep according to God's commandment, is the crowning glory of the Gospel. Kept as God has given it to us, it enables us to see Christ as both Redeemer and Creator,--as Redeemer because He is Creator.

The Sabbath of the Lord--the memorial of creation--reminds us of: "The power of God to salvation to everyone that believes." (Romans 1:16)

It reveals to us, as nothing else can, Christ as the anointed by the Holy Spirit, "to preach the Gospel to the poor;...to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord." (Luke 4:18-19)--Present Truth, September 19, 1895--Timeline: IV-12 (The Man With a Withered Hand), IV-9 (The Paralytic Lowered Through the Roof), VI-6 (The Man Born Blind), VI-22 (The Crippled Woman), III-9 (The Invalid at Bethesda)--Luke 6:6-10; Matthew 9:5-8; John 9:1-14; Luke 13:10-17; John 5:1-17.

Chapter 121

The Beatitudes (1900)

In this lesson we see the loss that people sustain when they begin and end their Scripture reading according to the divisions of the chapters. In beginning to read,

"And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain." (Matthew 5:1) we get no idea of why the multitudes came to Jesus. Even the last verse of the 4th chapter, which is included in this lesson, and which says that: "There followed Him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan," (Matthew 4:24) does not give us the desired information. For this we must go still further back, and read that: "Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people." (Matthew 4:23)

Literally, "healing every sickness and every weakness among the people."

happened that He had so great an audience that He was obliged to go up into the mountain. He had something to give the people, and it met their needs. Notice what is said: "They brought unto Him all the people that had any kind of disease, or were afflicted in any way whatever; and He healed them." (Matthew 4:24)

Now we know why the multitudes came to Him, and how it happened that He had so great an audience that He was obliged to go up into the mountain. He had something to give the people, and it met their needs. Notice what is said: "They brought unto Him all the people that had any kind of disease, or were afflicted in any way whatever; and He healed them." (Matthew 4:24)

Then there were no sick and infirm people left in His track. This was the preaching of the Gospel of the kingdom, the same Gospel which is to be preached in all the world as a witness unto all nations, until the end comes.

In the Spirit, Jesus is just as really here with us now as He was in Galilee and Judea, and He has the same message to proclaim to us, with the same power. If we personally believe on Him, as did the people who saw Him in the flesh, we may

experience the same blessings. Jesus heals every sickness and every weakness. Follow Him now, and let Him do it for you.

Much depends upon a proper understanding of the force of the word "blessed," which occurs so often in this lesson. To most people it has a far-off meaning; it is a "religious" word, and they have difficulty in bringing it into daily affairs. It is, however, the common word for "happy." It occurs in the texts, "If you know these things, happy are you if you do them." (John 13:17)

Paul said to King Agrippa, "I think myself happy, King Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day." (Acts 26:2)

It was the common word among the Greeks for "fortunate," and indicated "the highest human happiness." It was said of persons who were well off, wealthy. It also expresses the happiness of the glorified saints, as: "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." (Luke 14:15)

When you read the beatitudes, remember that all this happiness is said to be the present possession of those in the conditions mentioned.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:3)

These are the people who have a low estimate of themselves, and who are usually despised by the self-confident. They have nothing of which to boast, and are conscious of it; therefore they depend wholly on the Lord. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven. It belongs to them, and is their portion now. When Jesus began to preach, He said, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 4:17)

Later on He said, "The kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:21)

All the joy of the kingdom of heaven belongs in this present time to those who are poor and despised, and even oppressed. What a pity that so many of them do not believe it, and so do not experience it!

"Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted." (Matthew 5:3)

There is here no limiting of the mourners. Christ does not say that a certain class of mourners are blessed, but includes all. He is anointed with the Holy Spirit, "to comfort all that mourn." (Isaiah 61:2)

No matter whether they mourn for sin, or for sickness and death; on their own account; or for others; the blessing applies to those that mourn. If people believed this, they would be found saying, "You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; You have put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness." (Psalm 30:11) "They shall be comforted." (Matthew 5:4)

Let no one try to deprive himself or others of the comfort of this promise, by saying that the comfort is future. Hear the words of Inspiration: "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

The Holy Spirit, Christ's abiding Presence, is the Comforter. He does not leave us, but abides with us forever; therefore the Comfort of the Gospel is ours continually in this present life.

But even if the comfort spoken of were admitted to be future, it cannot be denied that the Lord says that they that mourn are happy. "Happy are they that mourn." No mourning or cause of mourning can be so great that the one who knows the Lord cannot find joy in it. "We glory in tribulations also." (Romans 5:3) "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong." (2 Corinthians 12:10)

What must the joy of heaven be, when the presence of God is so gloriously great and comforting that it can manufacture joy out of sorrow?

"Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth." (Matthew 5:5)

They do not have much of the earth at the present time. If a man would possess much of this world's goods, he must press his own claims against those who are seeking

to enrich themselves at his expense. This is not the characteristic of meekness. The motto of this world is, "Every man for himself."

And the meek are crowded to the wall. Yet the earth is the inheritance of the meek. Meekness was the chief characteristic of Christ, the Prophet like unto Moses, and He had no place where to lay His head.

Where then does the blessing of the text come in? Ah, it is "the world to come," that is given to the meek. It is "the first dominion," the earth made new, which was the possession of man in the beginning. "And you, O tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto you shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem." (Micah 4:8) But man was then a king. Exactly, and the meek, even though they be despised and snubbed by the "great" ones of this world, are all kings.

Meekness does not mean meanness or cowardice. Picture the first man in his Godlike majesty, innocent and pure, yet ruling over all creation, or Christ before Pilate and the angry mob, or standing calmly before the raging demoniacs, or stilling the tempest, and you have the perfection of meekness. "He that is slow to anger is greater than the mighty; and he that rules his spirit than he that takes a city." (Proverbs 16:32)

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." (Matthew 5:6)

It is a blessed thing to hunger and thirst. Too few know what it means. Thousands know what it is to be hungry and thirsty, and if they only understood that the hunger of the body is but the crying out of the weakened nerves and muscles for that which God's immediate presence alone can supply, they would experience the happiness of hunger.

By the food which we can see, God teaches us our absolute dependence upon Him. We see the food that we eat, but we cannot see the life that it contains, that which is the reality of it, and which alone makes it valuable to us.

God has life infinitely beyond what is contained in the food and drink that He supplies to us, and if we recognize Him in these gifts, we shall be in a position to accept

the infinite gifts that His Spirit bestows. Then even our eating and drinking will be a means of securing the righteousness of God. The seen will teach us of the unseen.

The promise to those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, is that they shall be filled. With what will they be filled? Evidently with that for which they hunger and thirst, namely, righteousness. And when shall they be filled? When they hunger, of course.

So if we but understand the fact that the calling of our bodies for food is but the craving of the system for the life of God, to supply its lack, and that the life which He gives as in the food that satisfies the body is the very same life that cleanses us from all sin, and that it will do for us "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think," (Ephesians 3:20) if we but take it for everything it is designed to be to us, we shall be "filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." (Philippians 1:11)

"Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy." (Matthew 5:7)

If we consider that the converse of this is true, it will come home to us more forcibly. There is nothing arbitrary in the fact that the merciful shall obtain mercy, or that those who are unmerciful cannot obtain it. God gives to every person just what he desires and loves.

If a man shows mercy, that indicates that he loves mercy, and such a one will obtain mercy. But if a man is unmerciful, even though it be to the smallest creature, he shows that he does not love mercy; and no matter how much he may cry out for mercy, his actions give the lie to his words, and the mercy that he has rejected does not come to him.

Just as the kingdom of God is within, so all the joys of heaven must spring from within. Those who accept the gift of Christ, cannot but receive with Him all good things.

"Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God." (Matthew 5:8)

They shall see God, because their eyes are open to see Him. God's everlasting power and Divinity, "that which may be known of God," are clearly to be seen in everything that He has made; but: "God is Spirit, and" (John 4:24) "spiritual things ... are spiritually discerned." (1 Corinthians 2:13,14)

Not alone in the future state, when the curse is removed, will it be that: "They shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads;" (Revelation 22:4) but they that know the joyful sound are even now blessed: "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of your countenance. In your name shall they rejoice all the day: and in your righteousness shall they be exalted." (Psalm 89:15-16)

There are sights every day for those whose hearts are cleansed by the blood of the Lamb, which are as hidden from the eyes of skeptics as are the tints of the rainbow from the blind man. God's Spirit gives sight to the blind, enabling them to "see that Just One." (Acts 22:14)

"Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God." (Matthew 5:9)

This is but natural, for God is: "The very God of peace." (1 Thessalonians 5:3)

There is no better way to make peace, than to carry it in one's own heart and life. "[Jesus] is our peace," (Ephesians 2:14) because He gives to us His life, reconciling us to God. The most successful peacemakers are not those who go about intermeddling with strife belonging not to them, but those who themselves have the peace of God ruling in their hearts. "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you are called in one body; and be thankful." (Colossians 3:15) "O that you had hearkened to my commandments! then had your peace been as a river, and your righteousness as the waves of the sea: ... There is no peace, says the Lord, unto the wicked," (Isaiah 48:18,22) but only to those who hearken to His commandments.

Therefore the only way we can make peace is to proclaim and present the righteousness of the law of God. The preachers of righteousness are the true peacemakers.

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:10)

The persecuted ones have even now the same thing that the poor in Spirit have. "He gives more grace. Wherefore He says, God resists the proud, but gives grace unto the humble." (James 4:6)

The meaner one's position, and the worse his circumstances, the more of the grace and glory of heaven does he receive. God supplies every need, according to His riches in glory.

It is the knowledge of this fact that makes the persecuted ones meet persecution with joy, and march even to the stake with songs of joy, glorifying God even in the very fires. It is not bravado, but the overflowing of the joy of leaven which is in their hearts. It is no use trying to explain this to those who do not know the Lord. They must taste, and see for themselves that the Lord is good, and that there is no want to them that fear Him. "O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusts in Him. O fear the Lord, you His saints: for there is no want to them that fear Him." (Psalm 34:8-9)

Moses found the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt. "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." (Hebrews 11:24-26) He did not look back with longing eyes to the glories of Pharaoh's court, nor did be waste breath in vain longings for the time when he could throw off the heavy burden, and cease bearing the arose, and enjoy the bliss of heaven. No; he found all the bliss of heaven in his daily round of duties, and in the midst of the overwhelming burdens, because: "He endured as seeing Him who is invisible." (Hebrews 11:27)

The unseen was constantly before His eyes, and while men are beholding the unseen, even their afflictions make for them "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." (2 Corinthians 4:17)

"Blessed are you, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake." (Matthew 5:11)

"Rejoice, and be exceeding glad for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." (Matthew 5:12)

This is the culmination of blessing, as it is the culmination of evil to be suffered. With this in mind, and in his heart, no one can spend time seeking to answer false accusations, or mourning over them.

If you endeavor to defend yourself against a false charge, no one believes you, except your friends, who did not believe the charge; and for them the explanation is unnecessary. The best answer to a false accusation is its own falseness and time will demonstrate this, no matter how plausible it is made to appear at present. So rejoice in the knowledge of the fact that it is false.

A woman once complained bitterly to the writer on account of false charges that were made against her husband, who was engaged in Christian work which made him a target for the envious. She said, "I think it is too bad that such things should be said, when there is not a word of truth in them."

To this I replied, "Would you feel better over the matter, if the charges were true? Would you like to know that your husband was guilty of the things charged against him? Ought you not to be glad that his enemies cannot find anything to bring against him, except that which is false?"

She had not looked at the case in that light, and felt much relieved. What an honor, to be counted worthy to be classed among the prophets which were before us! Who would not count it all joy, to share the bliss of being reckoned with Moses and Jeremiah? Then do not shrink from whatever cruel blow may fall. "Tribulation works patience; And patience experience; and experience hope: And hope makes not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." (Romans 5:3-5)

One thing must not be overlooked, and that is that the blessing, the happiness, spoken of here is not something which we have to manufacture, or which we can possibly produce, but that it comes with the condition specified. The peace of God

cannot be produced by men. The joy of heaven must come spontaneously from the spring of eternal life in our heart. "You have put gladness in my heart." (Psalm 4:7)

This is the exclamation of the one who knows the comfort of the Holy Ghost. We may simulate joy, but this will not do. Joyful people often shout and sing for joy; but mere singing and shouting, no matter how lustily, will not produce the joy of the Lord. The joy of the Lord is strength, and shows itself in victory over the temptations of the devil. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." (Nehemiah 8:10)

God says, "Rejoice!" and when we receive His Word into our hearts, the joy will be there, and we shall have only to give expression to it. "Happy is that people whose God is the Lord." (Psalm 144:15)

Are you happy? If not, why not?--Present Truth, March 22, 1900--Timeline: IV-7 (First Galilean Tour), 15 (Sermon on the Mount)--Matthew 4:23-25; 5:1-12.

Chapter 122

The Beatitudes (1898)

Each one of the beatitudes is amply sufficient for an entire lesson, so that it can scarcely be expected that any teacher will cover the whole of them in one lesson. We shall therefore select only a few for consideration at present.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:3)

The Greek word here rendered "poor" means literally "beggar;" it indicates abject poverty. There is also the idea of cowering or cringing,--the opposite of self-assertion,--such as would be expected in a beggar.

The ones here referred to are those who do not insist on their own rights, because they do not feel that they have any. Nevertheless they have everything. He who demands, and gets his rights, gets very little, for it is but little that we deserve. Far better is it to let our "rights" alone, so that we may have the infinitely larger gifts that mercy bestows.

God has a special care for the poor. It is common for people to think that God is indifferent to the needs of the poor, and the poor themselves often think that He does not care for them; but the fact is that there is more said in the Bible about the poor than about any other class. To them are the richest promises. Thus, for example: "Has not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He has promised to them that love Him?" (James 2:5) "I know that God will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor." (Psalm 140:13) "He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts up the beggar from the dunghill to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory." (1 Samuel 2:8)

God has pronounced a blessing upon the poor, but not upon the rich, thus showing that the best use a man can make of riches is to get rid of them in the Lord's cause. To the church in Smyrna the Lord said: "I know your works and tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich)." (Revelation 2:9)

What greater riches could one have than the kingdom of heaven?

"Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted." (Matthew 5:4)

Note that this blessing, like all the others, is not limited, not qualified. The real mourners shall be comforted. What mourners? All mourners, for there is no discrimination. All mourning shall have an end. To every mourner it seems as though his grief would always continue. The future looks dark and forbidding; that is why he mourns.

It is not the present sorrow or loss that causes us to mourn, but the loss which we expect to sustain in the future. This is shown by the fact that if the loss or grief, no matter how great, were only for a moment, no one would mourn. It is the dreary future, the utter absence of anticipation, that makes men mourn. Now we have the assurance that: "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning." (Psalm 30:5)

That is a blessing. We are assured that the cause of all sorrow will soon cease, and of course the sorrow itself; then we can at once "Be joyful in hope." (Romans 12:12)

The time is soon corning when: "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." (Revelation 21:4)

The message of God to His people is one of comfort: "Comfort, comfort, my people, says your God. Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned." (Isaiah 40:1-2)

Blessed comfort! and it is ours now. Of course there is no comfort for those who will not believe the message of comfort. But believe the promise of the Lord, and, walking in the fear of the Lord you will enjoy "the comfort of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 9:31)

"Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth." (Matthew 5:5)

Another unconditional assurance. That is, there are no qualifications or limitations. All the meek, not merely a few of them, shall inherit the earth, and never have inherited this earth; but they shall.

Take two prominent examples: Moses and Christ. Both were patterns of meekness. "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." (Numbers 12:3)

How much of the earth did Moses possess? Not a particle. Because of his meekness he gave up the prospect of the throne of Egypt, and was a wanderer all the rest of his life. Nothing did he possess at his death. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls." (Matthew 11:29)

Christ had not a place to lay His head. "And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has not where to lay his head." (Luke 9:58)

So it is always with the meek. The possessions of this present world are for those who push their claims, and assert their rights, yea, and deprive others of their rights. The meek and unobtrusive are pushed to the wall and trampled underfoot in the scramble for the possession of this earth? When, then, will it be that the meek shall inherit the earth?

Let it be settled that they shall inherit the earth. They do not now; they never have; but they shall. Shall we say that the world is growing better, or that by and by it will begin to grow better, until a perfect generation comes, and that from that time on the promise will be fulfilled? Even if there were any ground for such a hope, the Saviour's promise would not thereby be fulfilled, for all the meek of past ages would be left out; and it is not merely some of the meek, but "the meek,"--all of them,--who are to inherit the earth.

Then there is but one answer, and that is that it will be after the resurrection. When the righteous shall have been raised from the dead, and all the wicked destroyed from the earth, then shall the meek inherit the earth, "For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, you shall diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." (Psalm 37:9-11)

It is the earth, that the meek are to inherit. The earth was given to man in the beginning (Genesis 1:26-28), and: "Whatsoever God does, it shall be for ever." (Ecclesiastes 3:14)

He made the earth to be inhabited: "For thus says the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; He has established it, He created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited: I am the Lord; and there is none else." (Isaiah 45:18)

But it is to be inhabited only by the good. This purpose will be accomplished; therefore: "We, according to His promise, look for new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness." (2 Peter 3:13)

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." (Matthew 5:6)

God gave the children of Israel bread, in order that they might know that man lives by the Word of God. "All the commandments which I command you this day shall you observe to do, that you may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord swore unto your fathers. And you shall remember all the way which the Lord your God led you these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you, and to prove you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments, or no. And He humbled you, and suffered you to hunger, and fed you with manna, which you knew not, neither did your fathers know; that He might make you know that man does not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord does man live." (Deuteronomy 8:1-3)

Food and drink are therefore designed to bring us salvation. Not simply do they illustrate salvation, but if we accept them as gifts of God, that is, as means by which God conveys His own life to us, we shall get righteousness by eating and drinking for it is by that means that we get life, and the Christian has but one life, namely, a righteous life, Christ is the bread of life: "I am the bread of life." (John 6:35)

And with Him is the fountain of life: "For with You is the fountain of life." (Psalm 36:9)

The Israelites ate and drank of Him in the wilderness, although many of them did not realize it, and so did not get the life of righteousness. "Moreover, brethren, I would not that you should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ." (1 Corinthians 10:1-4) They did not eat by faith, and: "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." (Romans 14:23)

Read the whole of the 6th chapter of John, and also Exodus 17:1-6 in connection with 1 Corinthians 10:4. This is a great subject, and can be only hinted at in the space at our disposal this time.

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:10)

The larger portion of the Christian world are doing their best to destroy this beatitude. They are trying to get things so adjusted that there cannot be any persecution. The task that so-called "Christian statesmanship" has set itself is to take it as easy as possible to do right, and as difficult as possible to do wrong. This can only he done by accommodating religion to the standard of the world, in which case evil is put for good, and good for evil; and in that there is no blessing, but a curse. "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (Isaiah 5:20) "All they that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution," (2 Timothy 3:12) because "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse. ... In the last days perilous times shall come, For they shall be lovers of their own selves, ... incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good." (2 Timothy 3:13,1-3)

Even Christian ministers seem to take it for granted that a man cannot be expected to follow his convictions, and rest on Sunday, if by so doing he will be likely to lose his situation. So they plead piteously for Sunday laws that shall compel all employers to give their men Sundays, so that they can follow their religious convictions without suffering any inconvenience or loss. Why can they not see that in so doing they are advertising their religion as not that of Christ?

But when we come to the Sabbath of the Lord, the seventh day of the week, the day before the first day of the week, "the Sabbath according to the commandment," (Luke 24:56) then at once we hear men say, "Oh, I couldn't think of keeping it, for I should lose my situation; I could not make a living; it is so very unpopular and inconvenient."

Well, our lesson says that men who suffer for righteousness sake, that is, for the sake of the commandments of God, are blessed. God is abundantly able to keep His servants alive; surely He is as able to preserve the lives of men who keep His commandments as He is to keep those in life who disobey Him. But even if men should die for the sake of the truth of God, there is a blessing on them. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." (Revelation 14:13)

If they are persecuted to death, then they have a double blessing. It is better to be dead with God's blessing, than alive under His curse.

In China and India men cannot be Christians without suffering persecutions such as are unknown elsewhere. They must suffer the loss of all things. The very men who wish to make Christianity so easy in this country that it will cost no effort to profess to be a Christian, will encourage missionaries to work in those heathen lands, and urge men to accept Christ in the face of the most bitter persecution. That is to say, they wish the type of Christianity in Great Britain to be lower than in China or India. But any Christianity that is less than the best, is not the religion of Jesus Christ.

No man is warranted in seeking persecution, for that would he self-assertion; but when persecution comes for simple obedience to God's commandments, then: "Rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven." (Matthew 5:12)

The God of all comfort, comforts all who are in any tribulation, in order that they may comfort others. "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounded by Christ." (2 Corinthians 1:5)

Therefore, says the Apostle Paul, "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong." (2 Corinthians 12:10)--Present Truth, January 13, 1898--Notes on the

International Sunday-School Lessons--Timeline: IV-15 (Sermon on the Mount)--Matthew 5:1-12.

Chapter 123

Comforting the Mourners

"Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted." (Matthew 5:4)

There are two questions that one naturally wishes to have answered when reading this text, namely, "What mourners shall be comforted?" and, "When shall they be comforted?"

Note the fact that the promise is unlimited. Christ said that He was sent "to comfort all that mourn." (Isaiah 61:2)

God is no respecter of persons; He does not single out special cases to be the recipients of His grace. This promise is for every mourner.

The first and most natural thought suggested by the word "mourn" is of sorrow caused by affliction and bereavement. That the Lord comforts such mourners, is shown by His whole earthly life, and especially manifest in the case of the widow of Nain, and at the grave of Lazarus. He has comfort for every manner of grief.

But death is a result of sin. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." (Romans 5:12) "The sting of death is sin." (1 Corinthians 15:56)

If it were not for sin, there would be no mourning. Therefore the Lord specially comforts those who mourn for their sins.

One thing, however, is necessary, and that is that the mourners should know this promise. It is self-evident that in order to be comforted one must know where comfort is to be obtained. The mourner must believe this promise of the Lord, and become acquainted with Him through it. There is absolutely no limit to the promise, and no other qualification than that the mourner should believe and know the Lord. Whoever accepts the word of the Lord in good faith shall be comforted, no matter for what he mourns.

When shall they be comforted? Let the Scriptures answer: "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds by Christ." (2 Corinthians 1:3-5)

Whoever is afflicted for any cause whatever, may know if he will that he is afflicted with Christ. "In all their afflictions He was afflicted." (Isaiah 63:9)

Even though the affliction be directly because of sin, we may have the same assurance for we are told, "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted,and, For the transgression of my people was He stricken." (Isaiah 53:7-8)

That thought alone that Christ bears with us the burden of grief or temptation, is enough to make it light. Because it draws our minds away from ourselves.

But Christ cannot be divided. The one who has Christ has Him for all that there is in Him. Therefore if our faith grasps Him in His sufferings,--that is, if we remember that: "He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows," (Isaiah 53:4) so that we bear them only in Him,-then it is most certain that we shall have at the same time all the comfort there is in Him. As "the joy that was set before Him" enabled Him to endure the cross, and despise the shame, so the joy that there is in Him enables us to rejoice in tribulation. "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:2)--Present Truth, March 28, 1895--Original title: Front Page--Timeline: IV-15 (Sermon on the Mount)--Matthew 5:4.

Chapter 124

Hungering and Thirsting

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness." (Matthew 5:6)

But surely there would be no blessing in it if it were simply to hunger and thirst. We do not like to be hungry, and be unable to get anything to eat. It is intolerable torture to be thirsty, and to go hour after hour finding no water.

The Saviour says, that they that hunger and thirst after righteousness are blessed, "for they shall be filled." (Matthew 5:6)

The blessing is that He has such an abundance that He satisfies the hungry at once. "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of your house; and You shall make them drink of the river of your pleasure." (Psalm 36:8)

Hungry and thirsty, yet satisfied with good things, and full of delights. The Lord says, "Eat that which is good; and let your soul delight itself in fatness." (Isaiah 55:2)--Present Truth, February 8, 1894--Timeline: IV-15 (Sermon on the Mount)--Matthew 5:6.

Chapter 125

Light and Works

The Saviour said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 5:16)

Most people unconsciously reverse the order, assuming that it reads, "Do so many good works before men, that they may see your light and glorify [--whom?--] man."

But the light is to shine so that men may see the good works. What is the light? Jesus said, "I am the Light of the world; he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8:12) because His life is the light. "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men." (John 1:4)

Now when the light of Christ's life shines in a man, it will make it manifest that his deeds "are wrought in God." (John 3:21)

So both the light and the works are from God, and that is the reason why He will be glorified when they are seen.--Present Truth, March 22, 1894--Timeline: IV-15 (Sermon on the Mount)--Matthew 5:16.

Chapter 126

Preaching by Example

The best way to show that we have no sympathy with any evil course is to do differently.

It is not necessary for a man of strict integrity to be continually or periodically declaiming against dishonesty, in order to convince people that he has no sympathy with fraud. His life shows that, though he say not a single word.

The man who has no other way of showing his antipathy to sin than by talking against it, is in a sad condition. The church or religious society that is obliged to pass resolutions against gambling, drunkenness, impurity, etc., in order that the world may know where it stands, thereby confesses that it is not really separate from sin.

Being and doing is the most efficient preaching. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 5:16)--Present Truth, April 18, 1901--Original title: Back Page--Timeline: IV-15 (Sermon on the Mount)--Matthew 5:16.

Chapter 127

Different Kinds of Righteousness

The Bible recognizes two classes of righteousness. In His sermon on the mount, Christ said to His disciples, and to the multitude, "For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:20)

The Problem with the Pharisees

The Pharisees were the best people in the Jewish nation, and it may be said, in the world. That is, so far as outward acts were concerned. The name Pharisee signifies "separated;" and they took this name because they were separated from the common people by their superior goodness. They were full of zeal for the law, yet Jesus said to his hearers, and to us, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of Heaven." (Matthew 5:20)

Some have erroneously concluded from these words that Jesus was finding fault with them for keeping the law so strictly, and that He would have us ignore it. But on the contrary, He says that our righteousness must exceed theirs. That is, it must go as far as theirs, and farther still. Then we must keep as much of the law as they did, and more. How can that be? Matthew 23 explains: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." (Matthew 23:27-28)

The Lord wants righteousness that comes from the heart. He did not object to having the scribes and Pharisees outwardly righteous; he would not have us openly break the law; but He wants outward service, and inward service, too.

Two Kinds of Righteousness

These two degrees of righteousness are really two kinds of righteousness. These two kinds of righteousness are named by Paul: "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." (Philippians 3:8-9)

In these words Paul recognizes his own righteousness as a righteousness entirely distinct from the righteousness which is of God by faith. The former was such righteousness as the scribes and Pharisees had; the latter is the kind which we must have,--a kind far exceeding that of the Pharisees,--if we would enter into the kingdom of Heaven.

On one occasion Jesus said to the Pharisees, "Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." (Matthew 21:31)

How could it be that the publicans and harlots, the scum of the earth, could get to Heaven more readily than those strict Pharisees? One would naturally think, "Surely the publicans and harlots have a great deal more to do to get ready for Heaven, than the Pharisees have."

Luther has explained this matter in the following words: "Wherefore they that seek to be quickened and justified by the law, are much further off from righteousness and life than the publicans, sinners, and harlots. For they cannot trust to their own works, seeing they be such that they cannot hope to obtain grace and forgiveness thereby. For if righteousness done according to the law do not justify, how can sins justify, which are committed contrary to the law? Therefore in this case they are in far better case than the justiciaries; for they have no affiance in their own works; which greatly hinders true faith in Christ, if it do not utterly take it away. Contrariwise, the justiciaries, which abstain outwardly from sins, and live holily and without blame in the sight of the world, cannot be without the opinion of their own righteousness, with which the true faith in Christ cannot stand. And for this cause they be more miserable than the publicans and harlots, who offer not their good works to God in His displeasure, that for the same He

may recompense them with everlasting life, as the justiciaries do, for they have none to offer; but desire that their sins may be pardoned for Christ's sake."--Luther on Galatians, chap. 5.

Christ's statement in Matthew 21:31, is repeated by Paul, in other words, in: "What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness." (Romans 9:30-31)

Then in answer to the question, "Wherefore?" he continues: "Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law." (Romans 9:32) "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." (Romans 10:3)

Now we have the whole thing before us. The Jews followed the law, and so far as anybody could see, they kept it strictly. Then they trusted to their own works, and did not submit to the righteousness of God.

But the Gentiles, and the publicans and harlots, had no good works to trust in, and therefore they willingly accepted the righteousness which is of God by faith. Thus the publicans and harlots receive the blessing of God more readily than the Pharisees.

Man's Own Righteousness is Sin

But why is it that the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees could not count for something? and why could they not be counted as nearer the kingdom of God than those who were openly vicious? For the reason given: "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." (Romans 14:23)

How can this be? Just this way: Simple outward righteousness is as much righteousness as any man can attain by himself; but this is so far below the righteousness that God requires that it is indeed sin. It isn't real righteousness at all. Thus Isaiah says: "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." (Isaiah 64:6)

Anyone who has any just conception of God, must acknowledge the truth of this. Whose righteousness can bear any comparison to the righteousness of God? Compared with the spotlessness of His character, the righteousness of the best of men (that is, their own natural or acquired righteousness), must be acknowledged to be but filthy rags.

Then what will be the condition of the man who looks at his own good works with complacency, and who thinks to atone for his shortcomings by his own good deeds? He is simply trying to cover one filthy, ragged garment by putting on some more filthy rags. Instead of making himself better, he is in a worse plight. To like import Paul says: "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident; for, The just shall live by faith." (Galatians 3:10-11)

That is, a curse is pronounced upon all who do not keep the whole law. But, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)

And moreover, no man is able of himself to keep the law, no matter how hard he may try. "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that you cannot do the things that you would." (Galatians 5:17)

Therefore, all who trust in their own works, are necessarily under the curse of the law.

How foolish then for one sinner to compare himself with another; for one to think that he has not so great a work to do to be saved, as some other one has, because he has not lived so wicked a life as that other one has! Both have been wicked, although perhaps not to the same degree; and therefore both need the cleansing blood of Christ. They cannot be saved without Christ, "For there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

There is nothing but the blood of Jesus that can wash away sin. Therefore sinners, both great and small, must all do the same thing; they must go to Christ for cleansing. There is just as much for one to do as for another. And since the love of God in Christ is

infinite, it is just as easy for Him to cleanse the vilest sinner as the most scrupulous Pharisee.

Living by Faith

And when the sinner has been justified by faith, what then? Then "The just shall live by faith." (Romans 1:17) "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith." (1 John 5:4) "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes." (Romans 10:4)

Then the one who has the most faith, will live the most upright life. Of course, for human righteousness is of no more worth after a man is justified than it was before. Says Christ, "Without me you can do nothing." (John 15:5) "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God has dealt to every man the measure of faith." (Romans 12:3)

How highly ought a man to think of himself? Just as much as upright Job did after he had seen the righteousness of God. Said he, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." (Job 42:6)

Then how much have we to do, to prepare to meet Christ in peace? We have to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, and to exercise much faith,--the real faith that works by love. Then will Christ be made unto us, "wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption." (1 Corinthians 1:30) "And this is His name whereby He shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness." (Jeremiah 23:6)--Signs of the Times, February 24, 1888--Timeline: IV-15 (Sermon on the Mount)--Matthew 5:20.

Chapter 128

Going to Law

"If any man will sue you at the law, and take away your coat, let him have your cloak also." (Matthew 5:40)

If all the professed followers of Christ had followed that counsel, they would have been better off. There is sound sense in it.

Many men have gone to law, and spent ten pounds, to recover one. Sometimes a person wins his case, and gets justice; but even then his expenses more than amount to what it would have cost him to settle the case without law.

To be sure one cannot gratify his desire for revenge in this way, but Christians do not have such a desire. There is sound business sense, as well as Gospel, in the injunction, "Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are in the way with him." (Matthew 5:25)--Present Truth, April 26, 1894--Timeline: IV-15 (Sermon on the Mount)--Matthew 5:25, 40.

Chapter 129

What Would Jesus Do Today?

The only way we may know what Christ would do if He were on earth in the flesh in the 19th century, is by studying what He did when He was on earth in the flesh in the first century. "I say unto you, That you resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also." (Matthew 5:39)

These are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore are to be followed by Christians. The fact that it is not easy or natural to do so, does not affect the case a particle. Christ himself, in His own actions, has given us all the comment upon the above text that is necessary. "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting." (Isaiah 50:6) "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps; Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed himself to Him that judges righteously." (1 Peter 2:21,23)

But the word of God reaches to the thoughts and intents of the heart, as well as to the actions; so that the commandment, "Resist not evil," (Matthew 5:39) means not only that we are not to strike back, but that we are not to wish to do so, nor to indulge in harsh, bitter thoughts. "Love thinks no evil," (1 Corinthians 13:5) or "takes not account of evil." Christ was oppressed and afflicted, and was led as a lamb to the slaughter; yet He opened not His mouth, except to say, "Father, forgive them." (Luke 23:34)

That was the illustration of His own precepts. The words may be learned by anybody; the example can be followed only by those in whom the Spirit of Christ dwells.--Present Truth, April 19, 1894--Original title: Front Page--Timeline: IV-15 (Sermon on the Mount)--Matthew 5:39.

Chapter 130

Attaining Moral Perfection

A spanish duke, it is reported, has committed suicide because he was not able to attain moral perfection. This is an example of human nature doing the best it can.

There is not a man on earth that has not just as good cause for committing suicide as had this duke, and the only reason why the lives of people who are "trying to do the best they can" do not terminate as his did, is that they care less about moral perfection.

Human nature is fallen, and cannot rise again to its lost plans by any power or virtue of its own. Yet there is a way to attain perfection, for He who said, "Be you therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect," (Matthew 5:48) knew that this was utterly beyond the power of man, and so He gave them His own almighty power for its accomplishments. Note the testimony of Paul, who knew this power: "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do; forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:13-14)

Paul valued moral perfection as highly as any man; yet, though he did not consider himself perfect, he was not in despair over the fact, but full of hope and courage.

And thus it is with those who seek perfection by the Christian method. With Christ living and working in them, they know that the victory is theirs, for He has already conquered every foe.

But without Him, the only recourse is to try to evolve some moral power out of human nature, where there is no power--to bring a clean thing out of the unclean--and afflict the erring body with torturing penalties such as long fastings, pilgrimages, and the various forms of penance, or take the shorter road to the same result which was taken by the duke. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." (Job 14:4)

But the language of Paul in this connection is worthy of careful note. He says, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended." (Philippians 3:13)

He had not come to the place where he could pause and survey his own perfection. He did not stop to measure up his attainments and see how far he had advanced, but simply kept pressing forward with eyes fixed upon "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:14)

He looked steadily upon the glory of God revealed in Jesus, and forgot self entirely. "In whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:4-6) Had he not done so,--had he taken his eyes away from Jesus and looked at himself--he would that moment have fallen back toward the place from which he had started. If he had looked at himself and seen himself to be perfect, he would have seen something which was far from that. Notice the testimony of Job: "If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me; if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse." (Job 9:20)

Looking at self and beholding perfection in self was what started all the trouble in the universe; for that was what Satan did when, as Lucifer, he was an exalted angel in heaven. "How are you fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how are you cut down to the ground, which did weaken the nations! For you have said in your heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet you shall be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit." (Isaiah 14:12-15) "You were perfect in your ways from the day that you were created, till iniquity was found in you. By the multitude of your merchandise they have filled the midst of you with violence, and you have sinned: therefore I will cast you as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty, you have corrupted your wisdom by reason of your brightness: I will cast you to the ground, I will lay you before kings, that they may behold you. You have defiled your sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquities, by the iniquity of your traffic; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of you, it shall devour you, and I will bring you to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold you. All they

that know you among the people shall be astonished at you: you shall be a terror, and never shall you be any more. Attaining Moral Perfection" (Ezekiel 28:15-19)

He saw his beauty and brightness, and because of this his heart was lifted up (verse 17) and he essayed to set up a government of his own and be equal with God. But his beauty and brightness was not his own, but God's. It was simply God in him that gave him his excellence; and when God withdrew from him and left him to himself, there was left simply--the devil.

We are not, therefore, to look to ascertain whether we are morally perfect, or ever to see any moral perfection anywhere else but in Christ. When we are perfect, is when we are crucified with Christ, and He lives in us. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20)

And then the perfection is not ours, but His. But God, in His love to us, gives us all the credit, and treats us as though it were our own.--Present Truth, October 18, 1894--Timeline: IV-15 (Sermon on the Mount)--Matthew 5:48.

Chapter 131

Piety Without Display

"Take heed that you do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise you have no reward of your Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 6:1)

The best manuscripts have "righteousness" instead of "alms," in verse 1, and this seems to be the truer meaning of the text, for righteousness includes all right actions, and no good deed of whatever kind should be done for the purpose of winning the applause of men.

In the verses following, three divisions of righteousness are considered, namely:

- almsgiving,

- prayer, and

- fasting, none of which should be done with the design of attracting attention. A deed, however right itself, loses all the quality of righteousness when it is done simply for display. This is evident from the statement that those who do thus have no reward from God.

Ostentatious piety is not piety and all, but it is simply an exhibition of selfishness. It is a fact that there may be as much of selfishness displayed in the giving of alms as in the withholding of them.

"Therefore when you do your alms, do not sound a trumpet before yourself, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward." (Matthew 6:2)

This does not mean, as a careless reader might suppose, that they shall have a reward, or that a certain kind of reward is in store for them, but that they already have their reward. The new version expresses the exact idea in the words, "They have received their reward."

They gave alms to be seen of men; men sought them, and that constitutes their reward; it is all the reward they wanted.

"But when you do alms, let not your left hand know what your right hand does." (Matthew 6:3)

The command in verse 3 coincides with the exhortation of Paul: "He that gives, let him do it with simplicity." (Romans 12:8)

And again with his statement in: "Every man according as he purposes in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of the necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:7)

The man who gives liberally, with a sincere motive, will not seek for the applause of men. On the contrary, he will rather avoid public notice, because, by measuring himself by the true standard, he will realize that what he does is in reality very insignificant.

Yet insignificant though a deed may be in itself, and hidden from the eye of everybody, it does not escape the eye of God, and the promise is,

"Your Father which sees in secret himself shall reward you openly." (Matthew 6:4)

The same rule applies to praying. True prayer is the desire of the heart made known to God. In it the person appears as a petitioner making known his urgent wants. Such prayer is always heard.

But of those who pray simply an order that others may applaud their piety, or their elegant language, the significant statement is made,

"Verily I say unto you, They have their reward." (Matthew 6:5)

They do not ask with the expectation or with the desire that their petitions shall be granted, and consequently God takes no notice of their prayers. All that they desire from their prayers is to be heard of men, and the fact that men hear them, constitutes the answer to their prayer.

Nevertheless, such prayers are not mere harmless utterances that passed entirely unnoticed by the Lord; they are violations of the third commandment, which says: "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain." (Exodus 20:7)

They constitute the worst kind of profanity, since the petitioners use the name of the Lord to exalt themselves.

"But you, when you pray, enter it into your closet, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father, which is in secret." (Matthew 6:6)

This must be understood as a principle rather than an explicit command for every occasion of prayer. It does not mean that it is wrong to pray in public, but that one should not pray in public for the sake of publicity.

We have in the Bible many instances of public prayer:

- Solomon prayed before the thousands assembled at the dedication of the temple. (2 Chronicles 6:12-13)

- The Levites prayed publicly. (Nehemiah 9:4-38)

- When Paul separated from the Ephesian brethren he prayed with them all. (Acts 20:36)

- He also gave thanks to God in the presence of all the passengers and crew on his notable sea voyage to Rome. (Acts 27:35)

- And Christ himself prayed with His disciples many times, and at the grave of Lazarus He prayed not only in the presence of His disciples, but of a great company of Jews.

- Moreover, in the 14th chapter of 1 Corinthians, we have explicit instructions concerning public prayer.

All of these things show that public prayer is not only not forbidden, but is enjoined as a duty. But even in public prayer, if it is sincere prayer, the spirit of privacy is maintained, for the individual is, as it were, shut in with God, and loses thought, to a certain extent, of those who are present.

One of the most comforting promises in the Bible is given in this connection to those who pray in secret, namely,

"Your Father which sees in secret shall reward you openly." (Matthew 6:6)

This seems to be an unconditional promise; for sincere prayer, asking in the name of Jesus for those things which a person really needs, will always be heard and answered, and it is not to be presumed that one would go by himself to engage in prayer with any other than a sincere motive.

The prayer is made in secret, but the reward is open. Men may know nothing of the agonizing petitions, but they cannot fail to see the grace which is abundantly bestowed in consequence.

It may not be amiss, however, in this connection, to state that prayer is not necessarily secret because the individual prays in a room by himself. We have known people to make a great display of their "secret devotions." They were careful to let people know when they retired for prayer, and very often such announcement was unnecessary, because their voice would be raised to such a pitch that everybody in and about the house must hear. We can see no difference between such prayer and prayer upon the street corner.

Of course there is no wrong attached to the individual if someone chances to overhear his prayer; but he who prays professedly in secret, but with the expectation that others shall notice prayer, comes very far from obeying the injunction of the Saviour, "When you pray you shall not be as the hypocrites." (Matthew 6:5)

"But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking." (Matthew 6:7)

In the seventh verse our Saviour teaches that mere words do not constitute prayer. God is not moved by the eloquence of man, but by his needs, and a man's real need may often be expressed better in few words than in many.

The heathen, we are told, thought that they should be heard for their much of the speaking. Examples of this are found in: "And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made." (1 Kings 18:26) "But when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians." (Acts 19:34)

Some even have carried this matter of vain repetition to such a pitch that they use what is called a prayer-wheel. Writing off the petition, they fasten it to the rim of the wheel, which they cause to revolve very rapidly before their idol, every revolution being a prayer.

The difference between this sort of prayer and many prayers of professed Christians is only in degree. In Catholic catechisms and books of religious instruction, we find vain repetitions actually enjoined. The multiplied repetition of Ave Maria or the Pater Noster is counted as a great virtue, and the one who says the most prayers is supposed to be the most pious.

But such prayer, notwithstanding the fact that the Lord's Prayer itself is repeated, are destitute of any semblance of real prayer. A parrot might be taught to repeat the Lord's Prayer, and he might mutter it over a thousand times a day, and yet there would be no prayer in it. The unreasonableness of such vain repetitions is shown by the statement:

"Be not therefore like unto them: for your Father knows what things you have need of, before you ask Him." (Matthew 6:8)

It is not necessary for us to pray in order that the Lord they know what we need, but that we may bring ourselves into a proper condition to receive the things which we need. The question often arises in the minds of some, "What is the use of praying at all?"

They argue that we cannot change the mind of God, that praying is useless since God knows what we want before we ask, and, further, that the universe is governed by fixed laws, and that therefore praying will not affect matters in the least.

To this last it can be answered that there are no laws which are not subject to God. To say that what we call the laws of nature cannot be changed or suspended if necessary to the answer of prayer, is to say that God is restricted by the things which He rules, which is an absurdity. Moreover, there are instances innumerable in which in direct answer to prayer the laws of nature have been suspended. The raising of the dead is a case in point.

In answer to the first objection, it is enough to say that although God desires only the welfare of His creatures, and He knows what they need without being told, He does not force upon people what they do not want, even though they really need it. And when a person who recognizes his need, and really wants that which will supply it, and feels that he cannot get along without it, the natural impulse is to ask for it, and then it is that God gives His special blessings.

Verses 9-13 contained the model prayer. In introducing it the Saviour said,

"After this manner therefore pray." (Matthew 6:9)

This indicates not that the prayer which follows is to be invariably used, although it is very often fitting to use it, but that it should serve as a model for our petitions. Since it is the petition, framed by divine wisdom, it must necessarily and does cover everything which man needs, both temporal and spiritual.

It is because of this comprehensiveness that the Lord's Prayer may be repeated by all classes of people, both young and old, in all time. It never grows old. It is the only prayer ever written which was worthy of being repeated by others than the one who composed it. This is because it is the only prayer ever composed for man by a divine being.

Praying in which petitions made by men are used, must necessarily be largely mechanical, and therefore destitute of the real essence of prayer, which is the sincere

desire of the individual at that present time. When a man is in extremity he will have no difficulty in forming his own petition, and he would have no use for a petition made by someone else. A prayer-book would have been of very little use to Peter when he was sinking in the Sea of Galilee.

"Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be your name." (Matthew 6:9)

From this prayer we learn that we are to come to God not as to a judge or a governor who is to be appeased, but as to a Father who is all sympathy and love. Many people have entertained a wrong idea from the parable of the unjust judge, recorded in Luke 18:1-7. The unjust judge at first refused to grant the request of the poor widow, yet he finally granted it because of her importunity. The idea too commonly drawn from this is, that if we persevere in prayer God will relent and answer repetitions.

But the parable is not designed to compare God with the unjust judge, but to make a contrast. If the unjust judge who neither feared God nor regarded man, would grant the widow's petition, because of her importunity, then most assuredly God will avenge His own elect who cry earnestly unto Him. This parable and the first two words of the Lord's Prayer are sufficient in themselves to give Christians the utmost confidence when they pray.

Add to this the fact that we have a merciful and faithful High Priest who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and "was tempted in all points like this we are, [and we may] come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in times of need." (Hebrews 4:15-16)

We have seen it stated that the term "Our Father" implies that all men are brethren, because children of the same Father. But this is a mistake. Paul says that we are all "by nature the children of wrath," (Ephesians 2:3) because we are "the children of disobedience." (Ephesians 5:6; Ephesians 2:2)

And as the devil is the author of sin, Christ directly charged the disobedient Jews with whom He was talking, of being the children of the devil: "You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." (John 8:44)

And in Matthew 13:38-42 he expressly states that those who do iniquity "are the children of the wicked one." (Matthew 13:38)

The apostle John also speaks of those who keep the commandments, and of those who transgress them, and says, "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil," (1 John 3:10) thus showing a direct contrast between those who have God for their Father, and those whose father is Satan.

Moreover, we learned in Romans 8:14-17 and Galatians 4:4-7 that people become the children of God by adoption, and that the mark or seal of adoption is the Holy Spirit; but if they were by nature the children of God, they would not need to be adopted. Paul also declares that: "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His." (Romans 8:9)

"Your kingdom come." (Matthew 6:10)

This is nothing less than a prayer for Christ's second coming, for His coming and kingdom are associated together. "I charge you therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom." (2 Timothy 4:1)

When He was on earth, Christ told His disciples, who thought that: "The kingdom of God should immediately appear, that He was like a nobleman who ... went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return," (Luke 19:11-12) thus indicating His return to Heaven to receive His kingdom, and His second coming to gather the subjects of it. In harmony with this we find in Daniel 7:13-14 a prophetic description of Christ appearing before the father and receiving "dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him." (Daniel 7:14)

And Christ himself said that when He should come in His glory with all His holy angels with Him, then would be the time that He should sit upon the throne of His glory, and that He would then say to the righteous, "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (Matthew 25:34)

This kingdom is entirely distinct from the kingdom of grace, upon the throne of which God the Father sits, and before which Christ ministers as priest. That kingdom has already come, and if that were the kingdom referred to, in the Lord's Prayer, it would be out of place to use that petition. But the kingdom referred to is the one of which the faithful followers of God are at present only heirs, waiting for the promised possession.

"Your will be done in earth, as it is it Heaven." (Matthew 6:10)

The will of God is simply the law of God: "I delight to do your will, O my God: yea, your law is within my heart." (Psalm 40:8) "Behold, you are called a Jew, and rest in the law, and make your boast of God, And know His will, and approve the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; And are confident that you yourself are a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which have the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law." (Romans 2:17-20)

Here we learn that those who know the will of God are they who are instructed out of the law. How the will of God is done in Heaven is told in: "Bless the Lord, you His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word." (Psalm 103:20)

When the will of God is done on earth as it is in heaven, it will be when all the works of the devil have been destroyed, and when the new heavens and the new earth have been given, "wherein righteousness shall dwell." (2 Peter 3:13)

Then will be fulfilled the words of the prophet: "Your people also shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land forever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified." (Isaiah 60:21)

Therefore the uttering of this part of the Lord's Prayer, if the petitioner is sincere, indicates a complete submission to the will of God, and an earnest desire to keep every portion of the ten commandments.

"And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." (Matthew 6:12)

In this is implied what is plainly stated in: "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; But if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matthew 6:14-15)

Therefore it is utterly useless for anyone to use this prayer, or to expect God to pardon his sins, unless he freely forgives all who have trespassed against him. Paul says: "Be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you." (Ephesians 4:32)

This is the merest glance at the Lord's Prayer, but it is all that we have the space for. To give it any adequate study, not less than an entire lesson should be spent upon each clause of the prayer.

But perhaps even with this glance some may see a depth of meaning in the prayer which they have never before realized, and may be led to study it more carefully until they can pray it "with the spirit and with the understanding." (1 Corinthians 14:15)--Signs of the Times, August 11, 1887--Notes on the International Lesson, August 28--Timeline: IV-15 (Sermon on the Mount)--Matthew 6:1-15.

Chapter 132

How to Pray

The Bible contains a great deal more on the subject of prayer than is found in the verses constituting this lesson; for to know how to pray is to know how to live the Christian life.

Space does not allow anything like a detailed consideration even of these verses, much less a study of the others bearing on the subject; but we may refer to some of them that the student may read them in connection with the lesson. Read especially:

• Mark 11:24;

• Luke 11:1-13; 18:1-14;

• John 14:13-14;

• Romans 8:26-27;

• James 1:5-6; 5:13-18 RV;

• 1 John 5:14-15.

He who makes these scriptures his own, need never lack any good thing.

Public Prayer

"And when you pray, you shall not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But you, when you pray, enter into your closet, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father which is in secret; and your Father which sees in secret shall reward you openly." (Matthew 6:5-6)

Here we are told that we should not pray as do the hypocrites, in public places to be seen of men, but should pray to God in secret. That this is not a prohibition of all prayer in public is evident from the example of our Lord himself:

- The 17th chapter, of John is the prayer of Jesus in the presence of His disciples, just before His arrest.

- In the 11th chapter of John we read His prayer at the grave of Lazarus, in the presence of His disciples and a multitude of the Jews.

- Matthew 11:27-28 and John 12:28 also note public prayers of Christ.

- The 8th chapter of Kings contains the prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the temple, in the presence of thousands.

- Elijah prayed in the presence of hundred and fifty prophets of Baal for "all Israel," including the king; and the Lord answered the prayer in a remarkable manner. (1 Kings 18:17-37)

- Paul prayed with the elders of Ephesus (Acts 20:36), and with the church at Tyre, together with his traveling companions on the sea-shore. (Acts 11:5)

The gist of the exhortation lies in the statement that the hypocrites pray "to be seen of men," and that in the notice and the applause of men, they get all that they pray for. God is in secret, and He "sees in secret."

Now while it is true that men ought literally to go alone, into secluded places to pray, it is not always absolutely necessary that one should be physically alone in order to pray in secret. By the blood of Jesus we have boldness "to enter into the holiest of all" (Hebrews 10:19), even into God's inner sanctuary; and not only may we occasionally enter in, but it is our privilege to: "dwell in the secret place of the Most High, [and to] abide under the shadow of the Almighty." (Psalm 91:1)

He who has this knowledge of God may be alone with the Lord in the presence of thousands.

The true prayer, therefore, is that which the petitioner loses himself in the thought of God, and prays from the heart to Him who sees the heart. Such a prayer, although uttered in the hearing of people, is not directed to them, but nevertheless the hearers may be greatly strengthened by hearing a man talking with God by the aid of the Spirit. Obedience to the exhortation, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory," (Philippians 2:3) would shut off anything like making an exhibition in prayer. Ostentation and display have no place in the worship of God. "God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth." (John 4:24)

Unnecessary Words--Long Prayers

"But when you pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathendo; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not therefore like unto them; for your Father knows what things you have need of before you ask Him." (Matthew 6:7-8)

God is our Father; we are His children. His care for us, His solicitude for our welfare, and His ability to do all that His love conceives, are as much greater than the care and oversight of any earthly parent, as God is greater than man.

It is the duty of a parent to provide for his children. "Provide" means to "see before," to look after beforehand. If parents did not think about food and clothing for their children before their children remind them of their need, the children would starve and freeze. When hunger makes the child conscious of its need of food, it finds that the parent has thought of it long before, and has provided for its wants.

Now it would be folly and affectation for the child to make a long, flowery speech, in asking for food, and to multiply words for the purpose of making the request in as many ways as possible, so as to impress the parent with a sense of its need, when the parent already has the things that he needs ready to give him. Such a course would indeed be most disrespectful to the parent. How much more so, then, to act in the same way toward God, who is the loving Father of all, the universal Provider.

Long prayers find no warrant in the Bible:

- The longest prayer on record is that of Solomon at the dedication of the temple. That was a great occasion, and the prayer was very comprehensive; yet it can be read slowly in six minutes.

- The prayer of Jesus in John 17 may be read with deliberation in four minutes.

- Of the other prayers recorded in the Bible, including the Lord's Prayer, none of them would occupy a whole minute.

Contrast Elijah's prayer with those of the prophets of Baal. They prayed from morning till evening, saying, "O Baal, hear us," and leaped and cut themselves, with of course no result. Elijah quietly addressed the Lord in a prayer less than half a minute long, and fire came down and consumed the sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones of the altar, and the water that was in the trench.

The heathen gods cannot hear; therefore those who trust them, not getting any response when they pray, must needs vociferate and multiply their words; but why should the servants of the living God give the impression by their prayers that He is like the gods of the heathen?

Prayer is not for the purpose of making God acquainted with our needs, not to make Him willing to give, for He knows what we need before we ask Him, and has prepared the gifts for us. We come to Him only in response to His call. Therefore true prayer is simply the manifestation and expression of our willingness to receive the good things that come down from the Father of lights.

God is not like the unjust judge, so that He needs to be nagged into granting our requests, but He assures us that He will do us justice speedily. (Luke 18:1-8) It is because of this readiness on the part of God to hear, that His servants "cry day and night unto Him." "I love the Lord, because He has heard my voice and my supplications. Because He has inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live." (Psalm 116:1-2)

We do indeed read that Jesus on more than one occasion spent the entire night in prayer, but it was by himself, and not in company with others. When men get something of the acquaintance with the Father that He had, they also will delight to hold long

conversations with Him alone, as friend with friend; but for one to pray all night just because the Lord did, without the Spirit that led Him to do it, would be mockery.

Not only is it not necessary to use repetitions in asking for anything, but it is not necessary to multiply words in order to ask for the many, many things that we need. This is shown in the model prayer before us, which includes every possible want of man. We cannot go into a detailed study of the separate petitions in this prayer; if we should attempt to analyze them, we could not exhaust them, for they are infinite. We shall best arrive at an understanding of this prayer by reverently praying it, and by carefully studying the Word.

In short, when we pray it is necessary for us to remember the commandment: "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain." (Exodus 20:7)

Men can take the name of God in vain in other things than profane swearing.

- Any unnecessary repetition of "that glorious and fearful name" (Deuteronomy 28:58) is a taking of it in vain.

- To ask for unnecessary things, is to take it in vain.

- To pray without faith, is also to take the name of God in vain.

Remember that God is, He knows, He cares, and He is almighty, and that He has already given us all things. Then study His will, and in the simple directness of faith make your requests to God with thanksgiving. "In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6-7) "God is in heaven, and you upon earth; therefore let your words be few." (Ecclesiastes 5:2) "The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him." (Habakkuk 2:20) "Be still, and know that I am God." (Psalm 46:10)--Present Truth, January 20, 1898--Notes on the International Sunday-School Lesson, January 30--Timeline: IV-15 (Sermon on the Mount)--Matthew 6:5-15 (6:5-8).

Chapter 133

Secret Prayer

"But you, when you pray, enter into your inner chamber, and having shut your door, pray to your Father which is in secret, and your Father which sees in secret shall recompense you." (Matthew 6:6,RV)

This is one of the most definite and assuring promises of the Word of God. What a comfort it is as one goes to the place of sacred prayer, to know that God hears him, and that his petition is sure to be granted.

When one is by himself, with no one near but the Lord, he cannot pray as he might in public. If he is indeed in secret with the Lord, he will ask for only such things as he knows are right. Face to face with God, it is impossible to pray merely for the sake of multiplying words.

The soul makes humble confession to God, and, in spite of its failures in the past, boldly claims mercy and grace to help in time of need, and goes away with the positive assurance that the things asked for are his. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:16) "What things soever you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them." (Mark 11:24)--Present Truth, December 5, 1895--Timeline: IV-15 (Sermon on the Mount)--Matthew 6:6.

Chapter 134

The Lord's Prayer (1887)

The Sabbath-school lesson for November 26, being on the Lord's Prayer, we know not what better we can do for the Sabbath-school scholars and the general readers than to reprint the following, which we wrote as a comment on the International lessons, when the Lord's Prayer was the subject.

The Model Prayer

Verses 9-13 of Matthew contain the model prayer. In introducing it the Saviour said,

"After this manner therefore pray." (Matthew 6:9)

This indicates not that the prayer which follows is to be invariably used, although it is very often fitting to use it, but that it should serve as a model for our petitions. Since it is the model petition, framed by divine wisdom, it must necessarily, and does, cover everything which man needs, both temporal and spiritual.

It is because of this comprehensiveness that the Lord's Prayer may be repeated by all of people, both young and old, in all time. It never grows old. It is the only prayer ever written which was worthy of being repeated by others than the one who composed it. This is because it is the only prayer ever composed for man by a divine being.

Prayer in which petitions made by men are used, must necessarily be largely mechanical, and therefore destitute of the real essence of prayer, which is the sincere desire of the individual at the present time. When a man is in extremity he will have no difficulty in forming his own petition, and he would have no use for a petition made by someone else. A prayerbook would have been of very little use to Peter when he was sinking in the Sea of Galilee.

Our Father

"Our Father." (Matthew 6:9)

From this prayer we learn that we are to come to God not as to a judge or a governor who is to be appeased, but as to a father who is all sympathy and love.

Many people have entertained a wrong idea from the parable of the unjust judge, recorded in Luke 18:1-7. The unjust judge at first refused to grant the request of the poor widow, yet he finally granted it because of her importunity.

The idea too commonly drawn from this is, that if we persevere in prayer God will relent and answer our petitions; but the parable is not designed to compare God with the unjust judge, but to make a contrast. If the unjust judge who neither feared God nor regarded man, would grant the widow's petition, because of her importunity, then most surely God will avenge His own elect who cry earnestly unto Him.

This parable and the first two words of the Lord's Prayer are sufficient in themselves to give Christians the most perfect confidence when they pray. Add to this the fact that we have a merciful and faithful High Priest who is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and was tempted in all points like as we are. ... Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:15,16)

We have seen it stated that the term "Our Father" implies that all men are brethren, because children of the same Father. But this is a mistake. All men are not children of the same father. Paul says that we are all "by nature the children of wrath," (Ephesians 2:3) because we are "the children of disobedience." (Ephesians 2:2)

And as the devil is the author of sin, Christ directly charged the disobedient Jews with whom He was talking, with being the children of the devil. "You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." (John 8:44)

And in Matthew 13:38-42 He expressly states that those who do iniquity "are the children of the wicked one."

The apostle John also speaks of those who keep the commandments, and of those who transgress them, and says, "By this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil," (1 John 3:10) thus showing a direct contrast between those who have God for their Father, and those whose father is Satan. Moreover, we learn in Romans 8:14-17 and Galatians 4:4-7 that people become the children of God by adoption, and that the mark or seal of adoption is the Holy Spirit.

But if they were by nature the children of God, they would not need to be adopted. Paul also declares that: "If any man have not the Spirit Christ, he is none of His." (Romans 8:9)

Your Kingdom Come

"Your kingdom come." (Matthew 6:10)

This is nothing less than a prayer for Christ's second coming, for His coming and kingdom are associated together. "I charge you therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom." (2 Timothy 4:1)

When He was on earth, Christ told His disciples, who thought that His kingdom should immediately appear, that He was like: "A certain nobleman [who] went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return," (Luke 19:12) thus indicating His return to Heaven to receive His kingdom, and His second coming to gather the subjects of it. In harmony with this we find in Daniel 7:13-14 a prophetic description of Christ appearing before the Father, and receiving: "Dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him." (Daniel 7:14)

And Christ himself said that when He should come in His glory with all His holy angels with Him, then would be the time that He should sit on the throne of His glory, and that He would then say to the righteous, "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (Matthew 25:34)

This kingdom is entirely distinct from the kingdom of grace, upon the throne of which God the Father sits, and before which Christ ministers as priest. That kingdom has already come, and if that were the kingdom referred to in the Lord's Prayer, it would

be out of place to use that petition. But the kingdom referred to there is the one of which the faithful followers of God are at present only heirs, waiting for the promised possession.

Your Will Be Done

"Your will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:10)

The will of God is simply the law of God, see Psalm 40:8 and Romans 2:17-20, where we learn that those who know the will of God are they who are instructed out of the law. How the will of God is done in Heaven is told in: "Bless the Lord, you His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearken unto the voice of His word." (Psalm 103:20)

When the will of God is done on earth as it is in heaven will be when all the works of the devil had been destroyed, and when the new heavens and the new earth have been given, wherein righteousness shall dwell. Then will be fulfilled the words of the prophet: "Your people also shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified." (Isaiah 60:21)

Therefore the uttering of this part of the Lord's Prayer, if the petitioner is sincere, indicates a complete submission to the will of God, and an earnest desire to keep every portion of the ten commandments.

Forgive Us Our Debts

"And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." (Matthew 6:12)

In this is implied what is plainly stated in: "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; But if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matthew 6:14-15)

Therefore it is utterly useless for anyone to use this prayer, or to expect God to pardon his sins, unless he freely forgives all who have trespassed against Him. Paul says: "Be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you." (Ephesians 4:32)

This is the merest glance at the Lord's Prayer, but it is all that we have space for. To give it any adequate study, not less than an entire lesson should be spent upon each clause of the prayer.

But perhaps even with this glance some may see a depth of meaning in the prayer which they have never before realized, and may be led to study it more carefully until they can pray it "with the spirit and with the understanding." (1 Corinthians 14:15)--Signs of the Times, November 17, 1887--Timeline: IV-15 (Sermon on the Mount)--Matthew 6:9-13.

Chapter 135

The Lord's Prayer (1887-1888)

Introduction

When Christ was on earth He prayed often, sometimes spending whole nights in prayer. Of course none of these prayers are recorded.

We have, however, the record of several prayers which He offered in public, prominent among which are the prayer at the grave of Lazarus, and the one for His disciples, just before His betrayal and crucifixion.

But neither of these is referred to by the term, "the Lord's prayer." That prayer is the brief petition which our Saviour gave as a model for all prayers. And a model it is indeed. It comprehends everything that it is possible for man to desire from God. There are no circumstances or conditions in life that are not covered by this petition.

Yet this must be understood as applying to followers of Christ, and not to unconverted persons, even though they be convicted of sin. This will appear in the course of our comments upon the prayer.

There is no other form of words ever devised which can be used as a prayer over and over again for years, and still retain its freshness. This is simply because this one was given by One who knew man's needs.

But our Saviour did not design that His disciples should simply repeat the words which He gave them. This is evident from the introduction: "After this manner therefore pray." (Matthew 6:9)

It was designed as we have said, as a comprehensive model. Let us consider it well, that we may henceforth pray with more of the Spirit and the understanding.--Signs of the Times, February 24, 1887--Original title: The Lord's Prayer--Timeline: IV-15 (Sermon on the Mount)--Matthew 6:9.

Our Father

"Our Father." (Matthew 6:9)

What tenderness is expressed in those words! What infinite condescension it reveals on the part of God to allow poor, frail mortals to address Him thus. His greatness is unsearchable and His ways past finding out. Before Him, "The nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance; behold, He takes up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before Him are as nothing; and they are counted to Him less than nothing, and vanity." (Isaiah 40:15-17) "[He walks] upon the wings of the wind." (Psalm 104:3) "[He] has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet." (Nahum 1:3)

And yet this awful God has the tenderness of a parent, and His ear is open to the supplications of those who whisper, even in faintest accents, "Our Father;" for we are told that: "Like as a father pities His children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him." (Psalm 103:13)

Although God is the "high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy," (Isaiah 57:15)

He has assured us that He dwells with him that is "of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." (Isaiah 57:15)

Thus the first words of the Lord's prayer bring us into the most intimate relation with the great Creator.

Even in the first word alone there is a great truth conveyed. It shows the relation of those who can call God Father. They are brethren, having common hopes and needs. Even in his secret devotions, the Christian is not to make his petitions wholly personal. He is not to be shut up to his own needs, but is to remember that he is only one of a great family, whose welfare ought to be with him scarcely second to his own. Paul wrote to the Romans: "For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the

gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers." (Romans 1:9)

It is possible for a person to be selfish even in his petitions for overcoming grace; but it will be found in that case, as in all others, that selfishness defeats itself. Every Christian will bear witness to the fact that the richest blessings have come to him when, even though almost overwhelmed with a sense of his own need, he has coupled his petition for pardon and strength, with a request for a blessing upon others besides himself. And so, even in the closet, we are to say, "Our Father."

It is not everybody, however, who can say, "Our Father." We hear much of the "Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man," but the Bible says nothing about such a thing. All men are not sons of God. Paul reminds the Ephesians of the time before they were converted, saying, "That at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." (Ephesians 2:12)

In the first verses he shows still more plainly that men are not by nature the children of God. He says: "And you has He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience; Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." (Ephesians 2:1-3)

Again the apostle warns the Ephesian brethren against the sins to which they had formerly been addicted, saying, "For because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the children of disobedience." (Ephesians 5:6) "For which things' sake the wrath of God comes on the children of disobedience." (Colossians 3:6)

But the plainest statement of all, that men are not by nature the children of God, was given by our Saviour himself. To the wicked Jews who said, "We have one Father, even God,He said: If God were your Father, you would love me; for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but He sent me. ... You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do." (John 8:41-42,44)

Putting these texts together, we learn that all who know not God are the children of wrath; they are the children, or recipients, of wrath, because they are children of disobedience because they are the children of the devil. Now a person cannot at the same time be a child of God and a child of Satan. Nor is it necessary that one should be as hardened as were the Jews to whom Christ spoke, in order that they may be called children of Satan. "Whosoever commits sin is the servant of sin." (John 8:34)

If a person is a child of disobedience and of darkness, he is not a child of God. "All have sinned." (Romans 3:23)

And therefore none are by nature children of God. How do people become children of God? If they are not natural children, it must be by adoption. So Paul says: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but you have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba [Father], Father. The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." (Romans 8:14-17)

In like manner he writes to the Galatians: "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore you are no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." (Galatians 4:4-7)

In the above text it will be noticed that the Spirit is the pledge of our adoption. It is called the Spirit of adoption, because only those who have it are sons of God. Indeed, its reception constitutes us sons of God. If we are children, then we are heirs of God; and so Paul says that the Spirit is: "The earnest [or pledge] of our inheritance." (Ephesians 1:14)

If we are heirs of God, we are joint heirs with Christ. All that Christ has or is to have, we shall have also. He is the Son of God by birth; the only begotten Son of God. Angels are the sons of God by creation. "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" (Job 38:7) Adam was a son of God in the same way,

only a little lower than the angels. If he had not sinned against God, his descendants would like him have been sons of God. But he transferred his allegiance to Satan, and so no man from Adam down can be a son of God except by adoption. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3)

From this brief study of the Scripture it is clearly evident that since the Lord's prayer begins, "Our Father," it cannot be used by one who is not a child of God. For those who are in a state of nature, and thus children of wrath, there is another prayer. It is, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." (Luke 18:13)

They cannot address the Creator as Father, but only as God, the Judge who, however, is able to save as well as to destroy. If they have once been adopted into the family of God, and have lost their heirship through sin, the same prayer is applicable. With David, under like circumstances, they may cry: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to your lovingkindness; according unto the multitude of your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. ... Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. ... Restore unto me the joy of your salvation; and uphold me with your free Spirit." (Psalm 51:1,9,12)

But only those with whose spirits the Spirit of God bears witness that they are children of God, can with confidence repeat the tender words, "Our Father."

Yet not a long time must the sinner lie a suppliant at the throne of God, unable to utter those words. God is longing for the world to become reconciled to Him. When the prodigal son, who had forfeited his right to a place in his father's house, said, "I will arise, and go unto my father," (Luke 15:18) not as a son but as a servant seeking mercy, his father met him while he was yet a long way off. He met him not as a master, but as a father. The humble prodigal did not have time to call himself a servant before he was embraced as a son.

And so, although no one in a state of nature can properly repeat the Lord's prayer, at the first sincere petition for mercy, which the repentant sinner puts up to God, the Spirit of God is sent forth into his heart, and he becomes a son, and can confidently and joyfully say, "Father, Father."--Signs of the Times, February 24, 1887--Matthew 6:9.

In Heaven

"Who is in Heaven." (Matthew 6:9)

The fact that God is in Heaven is often used to indicate His power and majesty. The expression occurring in the model prayer indicates that whoever prays should recognize the greatness of the Being whom He addresses. "He that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." (Hebrews 11:6)

We quote a few texts to show the comprehensiveness of the expression, "who is in Heaven." "The Lord has prepared His throne in the Heavens; and His kingdom rules over all." (Psalm 103:19) "But our God is in the Heavens; He has done whatsoever He has pleased." (Psalm 115:3)

These texts show the power of God. The same thing is found in: "O Lord God of our fathers, are you not God in Heaven? and do you not rule over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in your hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand you?" (2 Chronicles 20:6)

Whenever it is designed to indicate the power and majesty of God, His dwelling-place in Heaven is mentioned. "The Lord is in His holy temple, the Lord's throne is in Heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids try, the children of men." (Psalm 11:4)

Here God's dwelling-place in Heaven is mentioned to show His omniscience. "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? says the Lord. Do not I fill Heaven and earth? says the Lord." (Jeremiah 23:24)

Here the omnipresence of God is indicated, as also in: "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the Heaven and Heaven of heavens cannot contain You; how much less this house that I have built." (1 Kings 8:27)

And also: "Thus says the Lord, The Heaven is my throne, and the earthis my footstool; where is the house that you build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?" (Isaiah 66:1) "Be not rash with your mouth and let not your heart be hasty to utter

anything before God; for God is in Heaven, and you upon earth; therefore let your words be few." (Ecclesiastes 5:2)

Here the fact that God is in Heaven is given as a reason for sobriety and carefulness of speech. Thus we find that the expression in the Lord's Prayer, "Who is in Heaven," stands for a recognition of the power, the majesty, the omnipotence, and the omniscience of God. All these things should be borne in mind when we approach the throne of grace. This thought will tend to produce reverence and awe.

Multiplication of words and "vain repetitions," for which Christ condemned the heathen, arise from the fact that the petitioner thinks more of himself than he does of the one whom he is addressing. The heathen gods were so contemptible that the heathen worshiper could not help thinking more of himself than of his god; for heathen worship, in its inception, was self-worship. (See Romans 1:21-23)

But the God whom we worship sits upon the circle of the heavens, and he who has a just sense of His greatness will come with reverence into His presence, and will confine his words to just the things which he needs.

Hallowed Be Your Name

"Hallowed be your name." (Matthew 6:9)

This follows as a natural consequence of that which precedes. The one who remembers the words, "There is none like unto the God of Jerusalem, who rides upon the heavens in your help, and in His excellency on the sky," (Deuteronomy 33:26) will of necessity: "Fear that glorious and fearful name, The Lord Your God." (Deuteronomy 28:58)--Signs of the Times, March 3, 1887--Matthew 6:9.

Your Kingdom Come

"Your kingdom come." (Matthew 6:10)

In this brief petition is contained one of the most comprehensive requests ever made by mortal man. Thousands have repeated the simple phrase thoughtlessly, and

thousands who have pronounced the words with all the reverence possible for them, have had very limited ideas of what they were asking for. Someone has well written:

"Your kingdom come;" thus day by day
We lift our hands to God, and pray;
But who has ever duly weighed
The meaning of those words he said?
--Unknown, circa 1840.

Let us try to weigh the meaning of the words, that we may utter them more intelligently. It is certain that if we know the full meaning of the petition, we shall not lightly make use of it.

A Future Kingdom

First, we will notice that the Lord's prayer shows the kingdom to be still future. That prayer is for all Christians; it is a model for us, just as much as it was for the personal followers of Christ. We are to pray for the kingdom of God to come; but that would be out of place if the kingdom were already set up.

That it was not set up in the days of Christ's first advent, is shown by the question which His disciples asked as they stood upon the Mount of Olives, just before he was taken out of their sight. Said they, "Lord, will you at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6)

Christ did not say, "It has already been restored," but: "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father has put in His own power." (Acts 1:7)

That is, it is not for the disciples to know when the kingdom will come; but they are to pray for it; if they knew that the time for the kingdom were fixed, it would be useless to pray for it. That God has not made known the time of the coming kingdom, is shown by the statement that he has put it "in His own power." He is not under obligations to set up the kingdom at any specified time, for He has not appointed any; it is all within His own power.

Many people have the idea that: "The kingdom of Christ and of God, is a spiritual kingdom, that it is simply the reign of the Spirit in the hearts of believers. It is true that the gospel plan is termed a kingdom, as in: "Who has delivered us from the power of darkness, and has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son." (Colossians 1:13) "I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ." (Revelation 1:9)

But that kingdom,--the kingdom of grace,--began as soon as man fell, as soon as he had need of: "The grace of God which brings salvation." (Titus 2:11)

But the kingdom referred to in the Lord's prayer is, as we have seen, still future; consequently that kingdom cannot be the gospel. Moreover, the apostle James says: "Hearken, my beloved brethren, Has not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He has promised to them that love Him?" (James 2:5)

Here he speaks of a kingdom that is promised to those who love the Lord,--a kingdom of which they are heirs through faith. It is this kingdom for whose coming we are to pray.

What the Kingdom Is

When Adam was created, he was made king of the earth, as is shown by these words: "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." (Genesis 1:27-28)

This dominion was forfeited by the fall, and the world passed into the hands of the one who had conquered Adam--Satan,--who is now "god of this world." (2 Corinthians 4:4)

Not that God has no control over the earth; for even when He gave the dominion to Adam, He did not relinquish any part of His own universal dominion; but Satan took as much of the dominion as was given to Adam. He is not able, however, to go beyond the bounds which God sets for him: "And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he has

is in your power; only upon himself put not forth your hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord." (Job 1:12) "And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in your hand; but save his life." (Job 2:6)

When David was king over Israel, God promised him that: "Your throne shall be established forever." (2 Samuel 7:16)

This promise was often repeated, and God said, "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven." (Psalm 89:34-37)

Yet notwithstanding this promise, it was not long before the whole kingdom of Israel was overthrown, and the people were taken into captivity; and although many of the people were afterward allowed to return to their own land, the kingdom was never restored. The kings who afterward reigned in Jerusalem were simply the creatures of the Roman power, which controlled Judea and all the rest of the civilized world.

But David himself, it seems, never expected that his throne should be established forever with earthly monarchs upon it. He understood that Christ was the one referred to, who should rule over the kingdom. So Peter, after quoting David's words in Psalm 16:8-10, said: "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, He would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in hell [the grave], neither His flesh did see corruption." (Acts 2:29-31)

Christ, then, is the one who is to "restore again the kingdom to Israel." (Acts 1:6)

It is to be a literal kingdom for He is to sit upon the throne of David. When the angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she should be the mother of Jesus, he said: "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David, And He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end." (Luke 1:32-33)

The coming kingdom must, therefore be as literal a kingdom as was that of David. The kingdom is, however, to be different, in that it will be perfect and sinless. Said the prophet, addressing Christ by inspiration: "And you, O tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto you shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem." (Micah 4:8)

And the Lord himself, in His promise to David, said: "Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more." (2 Samuel 7:10)

These two texts teach us that the dominion of Christ is to be the same as that given to Adam: "The first dominion," (Micah 4:8) that it will be the earth in its Eden beauty and freedom from the oppression of sin. And so we read the words of Peter, who, after speaking of the fire which shall melt the earth, and shall destroy sin and sinners out of it, says, "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness." (2 Peter 3:13)

This promise is recorded in: "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an oldman that has not filled his days: for the child shall die a hundred years old; but the sinner being a hundred years old shall be accursed. And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and my elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, says the Lord." (Isaiah 65:17-25)

Now read the parallel passage in: "Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that sows seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, says the Lord thy God." (Amos 9:13-15)

Then read: "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, says the Lord that does this." (Amos 9:11-12)

You can see that this new heavens and new earth is in the time when the Lord has restored the kingdom to Israel. So we learn that when we pray, "Your kingdom come," we are simply praying for God to set up His own reign of righteousness in the earth made new.

Setting Up of the Kingdom

But let not the subject be dismissed with this simple statement of the truth. Around the fulfillment of this promise cluster the grandest and most tremendously important events. That kingdom is ushered in by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, as Paul indicates in his charge to Timothy: "I charge you 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." (2 Timothy 4:1-2)

This kingdom Christ receives before He returns to earth; for He himself compared himself and kingdom to a certain nobleman that "went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return." (Luke 19:12)

See the account of His receiving this kingdom, in: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should

serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." (Daniel 7:13-14)

So it is, that when Christ comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, He will be sitting upon the throne of His glory, and to the righteous He will say: "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (Matthew 25:34)

This again shows that the kingdom which the saints are to inherit is the dominion of the earth. In this kingdom righteousness, and that alone shall dwell. "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness." (2 Peter 3:13)

The prophet says of that time: "Your people also shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified." (Isaiah 60:21)

Read the verses preceding this one, and then read the 21st chapter of Revelation, the last verse of which says: "And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defiles, neither whatsoever works abomination, or makes a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." (Revelation 21:27)

This state of righteousness will not be brought about by the conversion of all men, for we read that as the end approaches, "Iniquity shall abound," (Matthew 25:12) and that: "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse." (2 Timothy 3:13)

And that in the days when the Son of man shall be revealed, it shall be as it was in the days of Noah and of Lot: "But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." (Matthew 24:37-39) "And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; But the same day that Lot went

out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed." (Luke 17:26-30)

So when God gives to Christ the heathen for this inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth, for a possession, the first thing He does is to rule them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. "Ask of me, and I shall give You the heathen for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." (Psalm 2:8-9)

Says the prophet: "Behold, the day of the Lord comes, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it." (Isaiah 13:9)

And we also read that when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels, it will be "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power; When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." (2 Thessalonians 1:8-10)

Thus we learn that to pray, "Your kingdom come," is to pray for the coming of the Lord to destroy the wicked, and to cleanse the earth of everything that defiles, and to give immortality to His people. God is no respecter of persons. Whosoever shall not be found written in the book of life shall be cast into the lake of fire: "And whoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." (Revelation 20:15)

It will avail nothing that men have said, "Lord, Lord,"-that they have prayed earnestly, even praying for the kingdom of God to come, if in that day any defilement is found in them, they will be cast into the lake of fire.

Who is there, then, that realizing what the kingdom of God is, who alone can inherit it, and what will be the fate of those who are unfit,--can pray, "Your kingdom come," and still cherish sin in his heart?

How carefully and unblamably we must live if we are able to unite, in saying, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." (Revelation 22:20)--Signs of the Times, March 10, 1887--Matthew 6:10.

Your Will Be Done

"Your will be done." (Matthew 6:10)

It is probable that this part of the Lord's prayer is the least understood of any. The sentence, "Your will be done," is thought by most people to be applicable only in cases of sickness or other trial, to indicate that the sufferer is willing to endure patiently.

But this is but a very limited view of the expression. As a matter of fact there is no more comprehensive sentence in the Bible, or that can be uttered by man, than the simple words, "Your will be done." It all depends on what the will of the Lord is, which point we must investigate.

The 2nd chapter of Romans has reference especially to the Jews, to show that they, as well as the Gentiles, are sinners, and the apostle speaks to them directly, in these words: "Behold, you are called a Jew, and rest in the law, and make your boast of God, And know His will, and approve the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law." (Romans 2:17-18)

How does Paul say the Jew knew the will of God? Because he was instructed out of the law. The obvious conclusion, then, is that the will of God may be known only by a study of the law, which makes necessary the further conclusion that the law of God is his will.

This conclusion is verified most plainly by the words which the psalmist utters prophetically in behalf of Christ: "Then said I, Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do your will, O my God; yea, your law is within my heart." (Psalm 40:7-8)

It is first stated that Christ delighted to do the will of the Father; and then to make this statement emphatic, it is added, "yea, your law is within my heart." (Psalm 40:8)

"Out of the heart are the issues of life." (Proverbs 4:23) "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he." (Proverbs 23:7)

That is, a man's actions correspond to that which is in his heart; he does just what is in his heart. Therefore if the law of God being in a man's heart, leads him to delight to do the will of God, it follows that the law of God is the will of God.

In Revelation 22:14 we read that they who keep the commandments shall have right to the tree of life, and enter in through the gates into the city; and in Matthew 7:21 we read that only those who do the will of God, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven. Here again we see the identity of the will of God and the commandments.

If there is any doubt in anyone's mind as to what law it is that is the will of God, it may be settled by reading Romans 2:21-22 in connection with verses 17-20, the first two of which have been quoted. The ten commandments are the will of God.

Therefore when we pray, "Your will be done," we in reality pray that the commandments of God may be kept by us and by all others who dwell on the earth. We pray that they may be kept even as they are kept in Heaven, where: "[The angels] do His commandment, hearkening unto the voice of His word." (Psalm 103:20)

It follows, therefore, that whoever utters the Lord's prayer or a prayer modeled after it, and does not in his heart "consent unto the law that it is good," (Romans 7:16) and honestly desires to conform to all its requirements, is guilty of mockery before God. Such a one cannot hope to have his petition regarded; and so we may understand the words of the psalmist: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." (Psalm 66:18)

And of Solomon: "He that turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination." (Proverbs 28:9)

When will this petition be granted? When shall the will of God be done in earth as it is now done in Heaven? The preceding clause, upon which we commented in our last article, answers this question. It is when the kingdom of God is established upon the earth; for in the new heavens and the new earth, righteousness alone shall dwell. "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth,

wherein dwells righteousness." (2 Peter 3:13) "Your people also shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land forever." (Isaiah 60:21)

The law of God, His holy will, is righteousness: "My tongue shall speak of your word: for all your commandments are righteousness." (Psalm 119:172)

And the keeping of it constitutes the righteousness of God's people: "And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as He has commanded us." (Deuteronomy 6:25)

The Lord's prayer, therefore teaches us to long for the coming and kingdom of our Lord, when the law of God shall be in the hearts of all men, even as it was in the heart of the Son of God when he was on earth.

But the coming of the Lord, and the establishment of His kingdom, will not bring about this state of things. When Christ comes, the only change which is wrought in men is the change from mortality to immortality. He does not change men's characters from sinfulness to righteousness, for just before he comes the decree goes forth: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still." (Revelation 22:11)

Men will be ushered into eternity with just the same characters that they have when probation closes. Those who inhabit the new earth will all be righteous, simply because the transgressors will have been rooted out of it: "But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it." (Proverbs 2:22)

And the perfect will be permitted to remain in it, just because they are perfect in the midst of unrighteousness, even as Noah was.

This being the case, it follows that to utter the Lord's prayer with honesty of heart, is to pray that God will work in us that which is good; it indicates a willingness to submit ourselves in all things to the will of God, that we may become like Him. Certainly no one who knows what the will of God is, and who knows how it will come to pass that the will of God shall be done on earth as it is in Heaven, could utter that prayer and not really desire to have that law written in his heart.

Although God's ways are as much higher than our ways as the heavens are higher than the earth, we have the assurance that every petition offered in humility and sincerity will be answered, and as we may attain to this high standard. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:9) "They that hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled." (Matthew 5:6) "For He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5:21)--Signs of the Times, March 24, 1887--Matthew 6:10.

Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

"Give us this day our daily bread." (Matthew 6:11)

Nothing less than divine wisdom could have framed this petition, so simple and so reasonable is it.

Human greed would ask for enough today to supply all possible wants for the future; but if that were granted, the person could use no more of it today than he would use if he had only enough for today's needs.

Not only so, but human greed would overreach itself. Thus, if the man should today receive enough for all time, he would have no occasion to ask for anything tomorrow. He would trust in his possession instead of God, and would soon forget God.

Thus cutting himself off from the only power that can bestow and preserve, he would soon lose what he has, and then have nothing either for today or tomorrow. Riches make to themselves wings and fly away.

But the man who every day asks for provision sufficient for that day, with the assurance that he will receive it, is far better off. He has enough for today, and that is all he could use anyway. And then he does not wear himself out in the vain effort to take care of property that he has stored up for the future. His future supply is in the hands of God, who thus becomes his banker.

Surely the man who has all he needs, just when he needs it, while someone else takes care of that which he does not actually need, is far better off than the man who has only what he needs today, but who is burdened with the care of a lot of stuff that he may never need.

This petition teaches contentment. The conclusions in the preceding paragraph are in harmony with the teaching of the apostle Paul. Said he: "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." (1 Timothy 6:6-10)

Here the apostle brings out an additional danger from not trusting God for our daily bread. It is that the man having more than he needs for today, is tempted to use more than he needs. Thus his thoughts become centered entirely on self and the gratification of his own desires and lusts, which increase and multiply with the gratification, until he is finally drowned in perdition. The apostle continues: "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy." (1 Timothy 6:17)

This is in harmony with the petition which the Lord has taught us. We are not taught that to have riches is sin, for the Lord gives some men power to get wealth, but that the sin comes in setting one's heart upon them. The possession of riches is a great danger for Christ says: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" (Mark 10:23)

This is because it is next to impossible for one who has riches to keep from setting his heart upon them, and so neglecting to trust in the living God, and forgetting that it is God who gives us all things richly to enjoy. This is taught by the parable in Luke 12: "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully." (Luke 12:16)

Here we see that it was not the man's superior skill that brought him his wealth, but the providence of God in giving "rain and fruitful seasons." And the man thought: "What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This

will I do. I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits, and my goods, And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years, take your ease, eat, drink and be merry." (Luke 12:17-19)

If he had listened to the Lord, he might have known what to do with his goods. Says the inspired word: "Charge them that are rich ... That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." (1 Timothy 6:17,18-19)

Instead of this, the man trusted in his riches, and had nothing. "But God said unto him, You fool, this night your soul shall be required of you; then whose shall those things be which you have provided?" (Luke 12:20)

Why is the man called a fool? Because the fool, according to the Bible, is one who says "in his heart, There is no God." (Psalm 14:1)

This man acted as though there were no God, because he assumed that he must take care of himself, and left God out of the account altogether. He may have been a professor of religion, but he was practically an atheist.

There are thousands of such men in the world today. But no matter how much they exalt themselves (for the man who by his actions assumes that his prosperity depends upon himself alone, virtually puts himself in the place of God), they will in the end be put in fear, and be made to know that they are but men. "So is he that lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." (Luke 12:21)

We have already read from Paul the injunction to rich men to lay up store for themselves "a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." (1 Timothy 6:19)

In the Sermon on the Mount Christ said: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust corrupts, and where thieves break through and steal; But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrupts, and where thieves do not break through nor steal; For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Matthew 6:19-21)

Neither of these texts implies that the kingdom of God can be bought with money. But they both teach that no man can reach Heaven unless he has his treasure there. It is not that his wealth buys him a place in the kingdom of God, but that his thoughts are of God and Heaven, and thus he prepares for Heaven. In all his ways he acknowledges God, and thus God directs his paths.

At the present time the principle contained in the petition, "Give us this day our daily bread," needs to be taught; because the tendency of the last days is all against it. We read: "Go to now, you rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. You have heaped treasure together for the last days." (James 5:1-3)

This does not apply to the millionaires alone, but to all who are heaping treasure. That is, to all who allow their treasures to "heap" up or accumulate.

Some time ago we saw a gold piece that was discolored by rust. We asked what caused it, and learned that it had been paid out by a woman who, having a little more money than she needed, had buried the surplus in the ground. She was not a rich woman, but we could not help thinking of the words of James. But the principle of heaping up treasure was there, which showed distrust of God. And what made it worse was that the woman professed to believe in the soon coming of the Lord.

Whether we are poor or rich, let us "beware of covetousness; for a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses." (Luke 12:15)

And let us not fear to trust the Lord, knowing that if God clothes the grass and the lilies of the field in beauty, and provides for the sustenance of the birds of the air, He will much more care for those whom He has bought with the blood of His own dear Son. The sacrifice of Christ is the pledge of God's care for us. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32)

Forgive Us Our Debts

Signs of the Times, May 5, 1887--Matthew 6:12.

"Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." (Matthew 6:12)

This may be called the crowning petition in this wonderful prayer.

In the beginning of these comments we said that this prayer is only for those who have given themselves to Christ,-who can truly say "Our Father." This proves that still more plainly. We do not mean that it is for none but those who are perfect, but that it is for those who have surrendered themselves to the Lord that he may work in them "both to will and to do of His good pleasure." (Philippians 2:13)

To be able always to pray understandingly and from the heart, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," is something that can be done by but comparatively few who profess to be Christians. The one who can do it is in possession of the greatest of all Christian graces--charity; for: "Charity suffers long, and is kind, ... is not easily provoked, thinks no evil." (1 Corinthians 13:4-5)

And this is the way we would be to have the Lord deal with us.

No Self-Justification

A great many people think that they are of a forgiving disposition when they are not. When they have done wrong, and someone takes revenge on them, they think that they are deserving of considerable credit if they can take it patiently; but they think that they are perfectly justifiable in harboring harsh thoughts, at least, if they are injured without cause. This is indicated by the common saying, "If I had done anything to deserve this treatment, I would not say anything; but I have not done anything, and I won't stand it."

That is as far from the forgiveness that our Saviour taught, as the east is from the west. "For what glory is it, if, when you be buffeted for your faults, you shall take it patiently? But if, when you do well, and suffer for it, you take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." (1 Peter 2:20)

It has been truly said that to forgive is divine. Certainly it is not human. Human nature knows nothing of forgiveness. Human nature stands upon its dignity, and says, "I'll have my rights; nobody shall trample on me with impunity."

But the divine Son of God, who did no sin, and in whose mouth was found no guile, "When he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to Him that judges righteously." (1 Peter 2:23)

You who say, "All I ask is simple justice; I demand only my rights," how would you fare if you should go immediately after such an assertion and repeat the Lord's prayer, and the Lord should take you at your word? Who could stand if the Lord should mark iniquity?

Suppose the Lord should give you simple justice--just what you deserve, and nothing more--what would be the result? Not only would you be deprived of eternal life, but your present life would not be continued for another moment; for there is not one of us who deserves a single blessing from the hand of God; "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not." (Lamentations 3:22)

There is in us no good thing; we have all gone out of the way, and are unprofitable; now when our rights have been invaded, and we cherish resentment, we cannot utter the Lord's prayer without asking the Lord not to forgive us. "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no, not one." (Romans 3:10-12) What a terrible thing it is not to have a forgiving spirit.

Nor can we avoid the consequence above indicated, by refusing to use our Saviour's prayer. Whether we ask or not, we shall be forgiven just as we forgive. Says the Saviour: "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; But if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matthew 6:14-15)

God's Forgiveness is the Standard

We have said that forgiveness is not natural to the human heart. Only to the extent that one is partaker of the divine nature, can he exercise true forgiveness. God's forgiveness is the standard for us. Says Paul: "And be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you." (Ephesians 4:32)

No one can know how to forgive, unless he knows how God forgives; and nobody can fully understand how God forgives, until he has felt in his own soul the fullness of divine pardon. It will be worth our while to note a few texts which show how God forgives, so that we may know what spirit we should have. Let us read a few texts: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) "But God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 8:5) "For Christ also has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." (1 Peter 3:18) "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ... We love Him, because He first loved us." (1 John 4:9-10,19)

We have heard it claimed that we are not required to forgive an offender unless he asks for forgiveness; that until he repents and begs for pardon, we are warranted in holding him off. But the above texts convey a different idea. We are to forgive as God forgives.

Now suppose that God had made no movement towards the salvation of rebellious men until they humbled themselves before Him; there never would have been any salvation for men. It is only because of His love for us while we were rebels, that we are enabled to come to Him. He was under no obligation to mankind; the obligation was all on the other side; yet He took the initiative.

God loved the world. He harbored no malice or enmity in His heart, because He had been insulted, and His laws trampled upon, but was filled with love and pity for poor, erring mortals. It grieved Him to think that man would pursue a course that would

inevitably end in his ruin, and He made the way easy for him to return to his allegiance, and begged him to come and be forgiven.

The same spirit should actuate us. No matter how much we may have been misused, we are not warranted in entertaining the slightest feeling of enmity toward the offender. On the contrary, we should have such love for him that our only feeling would be that of sorrow that he should pursue a course so detrimental to himself. The thought of the personal injury we have sustained should be lost sight of in the thought of the greater injury which the offender's course will bring upon himself. It is not natural for us to do this; we can do it only when we are partakers of the divine nature.

It may be said that God does not actually forgive men until they repent. This is true; but He desires that they shall receive His pardon, and therefore, so far as He is concerned, He has pardoned them. All that is lacking is for them to accept the pardon which He offers them; if they will not, He is clear, and the responsibility of their ruin rests upon themselves.

God could not actually pardon an unrepentant sinner, for the reason that when He pardons it means far more than when we forgive. If a man has maliciously injured us, and we forgive him, it makes no difference with his guilt; but when God forgives the sinner, his guilt is by that pardon taken away; and it is evident that God cannot take away the guilt of a man who has no desire nor intention to abstain from his sins, but who is determined to retain his guilty practices.

Forgive and Forget

This brings us to another feature of forgiveness. It is very common for people to say that they can forgive but they cannot forget. That is not true forgiveness. The man who does not forget the injury, will brood over it until the bitter feelings will come up again with more than their original force; the harsh feelings are not put away, but only smothered for a time.

The man who does not forget an injury done him, has never really forgiven the offender; he has not allowed love for the erring one to eclipse all thought of the injury done to himself, and without this there can be no forgiveness such as God exercises toward us.

Divine pardon is justification; God pardons the believer in Christ, by imputing His righteousness "for the remission of sins that are past." (Romans 3:25)

The pardoned one is as though he had never sinned; where there was nothing but guilt before, God beholds nothing but righteousness--righteousness put there through His own wonderful love. Then if we forgive as God forgives, we must regard the repentant offender as though he had done nothing against us. We must forget that he ever injured us. We must treat him and regard him as though he had done us nothing but good instead of nothing but evil.

The man who forgives in this manner is a true disciple of Christ, because no one can do this unless he has experienced, and does at the time experience, the blessing of divine forgiveness. It is not enough that we have once been forgiven; we must have a vivid sense of the love of God toward us now, if we would not forgive as we ought.

Under these circumstances the most difficult thing in the world to do, becomes the easiest. Because when we realize how sinful we are, and how much God has forgiven us, it seems a small matter in comparison to forgive the petty wrong done us by a fellow-man. When we contemplate the magnitude of our sin against God, all the wrongs that all men may have done to us, sink into insignificance.

We think that the servant who had received a free gift of ten thousand talents from his lord was mean and ungrateful because he would not give his fellow-servant one hundred pence. If he had any sense of what had been done for him, he would have told his fellow-servant to keep the paltry sum, and would have thought no more about it.

So if we have any just sense of God's love to us, we cannot fail to exhibit corresponding love to our fellows.--Signs of the Times, March 31, 1887--Matthew 6:11.

Lead Us Not into Temptation

"And lead us not into temptation." (Matthew 6:13)

This petition cannot well be considered apart from that which immediately follows it: "But deliver us from evil." (Matthew 6:13)

Both together form a fitting climax to this wonderful prayer, for they indicate, if used understandingly, the soul's desire for purity of heart.

There are two senses in which the word tempted is used in the Bible. The apostle says: "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations." (James 1:2)

Again he says: "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." (James 1:14)

Now it is evident that the apostle would not exhort men to count it a joyful thing to be drawn away of their own lust, and enticed into sin; therefore the temptation of the second verse is different from that of the fourteenth.

The temptation of the second verse is that which is successfully met, and which leaves the individual stronger than ever. It is the trying of faith.

"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." (Ephesians 6:16)

Here we learn that faith is the shield by which the darts of the wicked may be quenched. The office of a shield is to protect the person.

If a missile is received upon the shield, the person at whom it was aimed receives no injury; he does not feel it. The temptations, then, which work patience, and which strengthen, are those which meet with no response in our own hearts, but which are instantly repelled.

The other temptations are those which are entertained in the heart. The sin presents itself, and the mind goes out towards it, and longs for it. It may be that the overt act is never committed, but since "The thought of foolishness is sin," (Proverbs 24:9) the one who only in imagination does the sinful act is in the sight of God accounted guilty. Such temptations as those are natural to every human being, "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts." (Mark 7:21)

The petition "lead us not into temptation," must be understood as meaning, "suffer us not to fall into temptation;" and it must also be understood as referring to the second class of temptations-those which proceed from within. The reason is:

1. That we are not to ask freedom from trials, but rather to count them a blessing, and

2. That God cannot and does not lead people into sin.

The prayer, then, is: "Suffer us not to fall into foolish and hurtful lust, but deliver us (keep us back) from evil."

This cannot mean that God will not allow a man to act out the evil that is in him, for that would be impossible; if evil is in the heart, it must show itself.

We are expressly told that at one time God left a man to do what his heart prompted him to do. The man was Hezekiah. After he had been healed, the Babylonian ambassadors came to congratulate, and he showed them all the treasures of his kingdom: "At that time Berodach-baladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present unto Hezekiah: for he had heard that Hezekiah had been sick. And Hezekiah hearkened unto them, and showed them all the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armor, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah showed them not." (2 Kings 20:12-13)

This action was prompted by pride: "In those days Hezekiah was sick to the death, and prayed unto the Lord: and He spoke unto him, and He gave him a sign. But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem." (2 Chronicles 32:24-25)

The historian, speaking of this, says: "Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart." (2 Chronicles 32:31)

We must therefore conclude that the petition "lead us not into temptation" does not mean that God is to interpose His mighty power to miraculously preserve us from the wickedness that is in our own hearts.

There can be, then, but one conclusion, and that is that the prayer implies a renunciation and hatred of sin, and a desire to have the heart cleansed from it, and to be strengthened again allowing it to pass the shield of faith, and gain access to the heart. This is the only way that temptations can be instantly repelled, since, as we have read, evil thoughts are natural to the human heart.

It was to effect this that Christ came into the earth. It is not enough that we be freed from the guilt of sin-from past transgressions-but we must be freed from the love of sin. Paul says that: "[Christ] gave himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." (Galatians 1:1)

This "present evil world" does not mean the physical creation, but: "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." (1 John 2:16)

Again we read that: "[He] gave himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Titus 2:14)

This is what God wants to do for us; it is what we are to ask Him to do for us, for He will not do it against our will. What is there to hinder His doing it? Nothing, if we offer the prayer in all sincerity, "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

We cannot cleanse ourselves from the defilement of sin, however much we may desire to be freed from it: "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" (Proverbs 20:9)

But if we do earnestly desire to be kept from sin, God will work in us: "For it is God which works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." (Philippians 2:13) "Now the God of peace ... Make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." (Hebrews 13:20,21)

But while this is in one sense a passive state, in that it is an entire yielding of self to God, it is by no means a state of inactivity. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." (James 4:7) "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." (Luke 13:24)

There is to be a constant watchfulness against the insidious assaults of the enemy. A reaching out after God implies a drawing away from sin.

This part of the Lord's prayer cannot be uttered from the heart, except of him who with the psalmist can say, "I hate vain thoughts, but your law do I love." (Psalm 119:113)

And this cannot be done until the individual realizes that fellowship with God is the only thing to be desired-that the loving-kindness of God is better than life.

Every man in the world will have just what he wants. If he loves the pleasures of sin, he will be left to its lusting enjoyment; but if his heart and his soul cry out after God, the promise is that he shall be filled.--Signs of the Times, May 19, 1887--Matthew 6:13.

The Doxology

"For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen." (Matthew 6:13)

This close of the Lord's prayer, which is called the "doxology," from two Greek words meaning an ascription of praise or honor, has been omitted in the Revised Version of the New Testament. It is therefore necessary, before commenting upon it, to give the reasons for commenting upon it at all.

The reason which the Revision Committee gave for rejecting it, is that it does not appear in the most ancient versions. Dr. Roberts gives, however, after stating the objection to it, this testimony in its favor:

"There is indeed, one mighty argument in its favor. It is found in most of the ancient versions, such as the Ethiopic, the Armenian, the Gothic, and, above all, the Syriac. And could we be sure that the doxology existed from the first in such an ancient

version as the Peshit Syriac, its genuineness would perhaps no longer be disputed."--Companion to the Revised Version.

And the whole argument, pro and con, is thus briefly put in the Speaker's Commentary:

"The doxology is omitted by the majority of modern editors (Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, Alford, Wordsworth), who regard it as an interpolation derived from the use of the prayer in the early liturgies of the church, with an ascription of praise added. The principal argument against it rests on its absence from four of the oldest uncial (A B D Z) and five cursive MSS., from the Latin and Coptic versions, and from the citations of the Latin Fathers.

On the other hand, it is found, with occasional variations, in the nine uncials and at least 150 cursives, and in the Syriac, Sahdic, Ethiopic, Gothic, and Armenian versions, and is supported by preponderating evidence from the Greek Fathers."

It seems, therefore, that the evidence against the genuineness is at the best but negative. This would be sufficient, if the ideas expressed by it were not in harmony with the truth as revealed in the Scriptures. But that the doxology does express perfectly scriptural ideas, is evident from the following sample texts.

On "yours is the kingdom," read: "For the kingdom is the Lord's; and He is the Governor among the nations." (Psalm 22:28)

On "the power," read: "God has spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongs unto God." (Psalm 62:11)

For "the glory," and all the rest, forever and ever, read: "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever." (Revelation 5:13)

Now since the kingdom, and the power, and the glory are the Lord's, it would certainly be proper to ascribe them to Him in our prayers, even though it were proved

beyond all controversy that the doxology was not originally given with the Lord's prayer.

Let us therefore see what lessons we may learn, and what aids to devotion we may find, in the closing words of that petition as it stands in the common version, and as it naturally comes from the lips of thousands of reverent worshipers.

For Yours is the Kingdom

This statement, if remembered, tends to beget confidence as well as reverence and awe. "The Lord has prepared His throne in the Heavens; and His kingdom rules over all." (Psalm 103:19) "For the Lord most high is terrible; He is a great king, says the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen." (Malachi 1:14)

Now while the greatness of God as king may strike terror to the hearts of the wicked, it is a source of joy to the Christian, for he knows that his confidence is not in a vain thing. He knows that God is love, and therefore he loves to think that He is great, for that means great love. So while "The sinners in Zion are afraid," (Isaiah 33:14) the upright in heart may say with all confidence: "For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; He will save us." (Isaiah 33:22)

And the Power

In the thought that "power belongs unto God," there is the same comfort that there is in the thought that the kingdom is the Lord's. For immediately following the verse in which the psalmist says so emphatically that "power belongs unto God," we read, "Also unto you, O Lord, belongs mercy." (Psalm 62:12)

Power without mercy is terrible; mercy without power is despicable; but power and mercy combined form a character worthy of love and respect. And when that power and that mercy are infinite, then the One in whom they are found is worthy of all worship.

The creation of the world stands as the great evidence of God's power. Says the prophet Jeremiah: "But the Lord is the true God, He is the living God, and an everlasting king; at His wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide His indignation. Thus shall you say unto them, the gods that have not made the

heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens. He has made the earth by His power, He has established the world by His wisdom, and has stretched out the heavens by His discretion." (Jeremiah 10:10-12)

Again the same prophet says: "He has made the earth by His power, He has established the world by His wisdom, and has stretched out the heaven by His understanding. When He utters His voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens; and He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; He makes lightnings with rain, and brings forth the wind out of His treasures." (Jeremiah 51:15-16)

Again the prophet repeats the statement, and couples with it, or rather draws from it, a comforting thought. He says: "Ah Lord God! behold, You have made the heaven and the earth by your great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for You; You show lovingkindness unto thousands, and recompense the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them: the Great, the Mighty God, the Lord of hosts, is His name, Great in counsel, and mighty in work; for your eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men; to give everyone according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." (Jeremiah 32:17-19)

Although this also speaks of God's power to execute judgment upon the wicked, it nevertheless contains comfort to the righteous; for as strong as God is to execute judgments, so strong is He to protect His people. And so Moses, in "the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel," said: "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rides upon the heaven in your help, and in His excellency on the sky. The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms; and He shall thrust out the enemy from before you; and shall say, Destroy them." (Deuteronomy 33:26-27)

As the Christian comes to God with his humble petition for strength, what could give him greater assurance than this thought? When he knows that all the power of God is pledged to the support of His children, will he not come with the greater boldness, the more he realizes the power of God? When he reads that: "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him, (2 Chronicles 16:9) is it not a comfort to know that God is omnipotent? When he says, "Hallowed be your name," and remembers that it is a

glorious and fearful name, what an encouragement to be assured that: "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runs into it, and is safe." (Proverbs 18:10)

Once more we read of the power of God, as described by the prophet Isaiah. Says the prophet: "Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance; behold, He takes up the isles as a very little thing. ... All nations before Him are as nothing; and they are counted to Him less than nothing, and vanity." (Isaiah 40:15,17)

Again he says of God, that: "It is He that sits upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretches out the heavens as a curtain, and spreads them out as a tent to dwell in. ... To whom then will you liken me, or shall I be equal? says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who has created these things, that brings out their host by number; He calls them all by names by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power; not one fails." (Isaiah 40:22,25-26)

But why are we interested in learning of this great power of God? Read on: "Have you not known? have you not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, faints not, neither is weary? there is no searching of His understanding. He gives power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." (Isaiah 40:22,28-31)

God's power, then, is for the benefit of His children. He clothes them with His own power. The fullness of His power may become theirs in the strife against evil, if they but earnestly desire it. This will be brought out more fully further on.

The power of God as manifested in the healing of disease can be noticed only in the most general way:

• The dead have been raised;

• The lame made to walk; o The blind to see;

• The dumb to speak, and

• The deaf to hear.

• Withered limbs have been made whole in a moment of time.

• Men full of leprosy have had their flesh become like that of a child.

Now why are all these exhibitions of the power of God placed on record? For the purpose of begetting confidence in God.

When the child of God offers the Lord's prayer or its equivalent, he is not to utter the words, "For yours is ... the power," as a matter of form, but is to come with an intelligent sense of the power of God. That knowledge, coupled with his knowledge of God's willingness to help, is the assurance that his petition, if it is a proper one, will be granted.

The expression, then, "For yours is ... the power," is virtually a statement of the petitioner's confidence in God. Says Paul: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes." (Romans 1:16)

Not only is the gospel the power by which God saves those who believe, but it is the manifestation of all the power of God for the salvation of those who will accept it. "[Christ is] the power of God, and the wisdom of God." (1 Corinthians 1:24)

He represents all the power in the universe, because: "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." (Colossians 2:9)

And it was: "By Him that all things were created, that are in Heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers." (Colossians 1:16)

Therefore when God in His great, love for the world gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life, He gave all that Heaven had to bestow. And this is further indicated in the words of Paul: "He that

spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32)

The greater includes the less. Since God has already given us His Son, which is a greater gift than all things else combined, how is it possible for us to ask or expect too much from Him? Christ, who is our Advocate with the Father, says: "All power is given unto me in Heaven and in earth." (Matthew 28:18)

And He is with His people always, even unto the end. Surely, then, it is not without reason that we are taught to acknowledge in our prayers the power of God. What confidence such knowledge begets!

Beneath His watchful eye
His saints securely dwell;
That hand which bears all nature up,
Shall guard His children well.
--Philip Doddridge, Hymn: How Gentle God's Commands, 1755.

And the Glory

This is a most fitting climax for a prayer. It is utterly impossible that human language should describe the glory of God. Let one read the 1st and 10th chapters of Ezekiel, and he will see the inability of human language to give any just conception of God's glory. Perhaps the best idea, the one conveying the most meaning to our minds, is given in: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork." (Psalm 19:1) "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is your name in all the earth! who has set your glory above the heavens." (Psalm 8:1)

The second statement naturally follows from the first. Since God created the heavens, His own glory must be greater than the glory of the heavens. Therefore when we see the sun shining in its strength, we have only a faint conception of the glory of God.

This point was well illustrated once by a Jew who was asked by a heathen to exhibit his God. The Jew replied that his God could not be seen. When the heathen expressed the opinion that if the Jew had a God he ought to be able to show Him, the

Jew bade him look at the sun. The sun was at that time in its midday splendor, and the heathen said, "I cannot look at it; it blinds my eyes."

The Jew replied, "Well, if you are unable to look upon one of God's creatures, how can you expect to be able to look upon God himself?"

This was a just and wise answer. God, as Creator of the heavens and the earth, has set His glory above the heavens.

Whenever the priests went into the most holy place of the earthly tabernacle, where the glory of God was manifested, they were obliged to have a cloud of incense go up before them to shield their eyes from the glory, or else its brightness would have caused their instant death. (See Leviticus 16:2,12,13) But even this precaution was insufficient whenever the Lord manifested more of His glory. Thus we read of the dedication of Solomon's temple: "Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house. And the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord's house." (2 Chronicles 7:1-2)

When the Lord came down to speak His law, "Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly." (Exodus 19:18) "And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel." (Exodus 24:17)

So great was the glory of God that the reflected glory that shone from the face of Moses after he had been for a time in the presence of God, was such that the people could not look upon him. (Exodus 34:29-35)

When Christ comes to judge the world and to save His people, it will be in all the glory of the Father. "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels." (Matthew 16:27)

Of that glory we read as follows: "God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise. And His brightness was as the light; He had horns coming out of His hand; and there

was the hiding of His power. Before Him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at His feet. He stood, and measured the earth; He beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow; His ways are everlasting." (Habakkuk 3:3-6)

But why say more as to the glory of God? Human language cannot do it justice; the highest flights of the imagination must fall far short of the reality. And what is there of strength or comfort in the contemplation of it? A few texts will answer. "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God." (Ephesians 3:14-19)

A finer passage cannot be found in any book in the world. It would seem as though Inspiration itself could not use human language to furnish a more magnificent climax.

Paul prays for the same thing that we ought to pray for, namely, that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith, and that so we may be filled with all the fullness of God; and this is nothing less than that we should be able to resist all evil, and to keep it out of our hearts.

But how can we do this, seeing we are weak? Why, God will strengthen us with might by His Spirit. But how much might will He give us by His Spirit? "According to the riches of His glory." (Ephesians 3:16)

And so when the Christian approaches the throne of grace, that he may find grace to help in time of need, he may remember that all power and glory belong to God; and the thought that his draft upon the supply of strengthening grace will be honored to an amount equal to the inconceivable glory of God, must necessarily tend to make him come with boldness.

The same thought is emphasized in a most wonderful manner by the prophet Jeremiah in his prayer to God for the backslidden Jews. He says: "We acknowledge, O

Lord, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers; for we have sinned against You. Do not abhor us, for your name's sake, do not disgrace the throne of your glory; remember, break not your covenant with us." (Jeremiah 15:20-21)

Surely the prophet must have been filled with the Spirit when he uttered that prayer, else he would not have dared say to the Lord, "Do not disgrace the throne of your glory." What may we learn from it? Simply this:

God's throne is a throne of grace; it is also a throne of glory, and He has promised to give grace "according to the riches of His glory." Therefore if He should fail to impart this full measure of grace to those to whom it is promised, His glorious throne would cease to be a throne of glory; it would be disgraced. What confidence we may have when we remember that God's honor and glory are pledged to the support of those who trust Him. What excuse can we have for not overcoming? "For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." (Psalm 84:11)

"The Lord will give grace and glory." Grace now, and glory hereafter. Yet the measure of grace which He will give is according to the riches of His glory, so that, believing in and loving Christ, whom we have not seen, we may "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." (1 Peter 1:8)

And so, with Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith, being children of God, "To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved," (Ephesians 1:6) the trying of our faith will certainly "be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1:7)

The words, "Yours is the glory," which we utter in the Lord's prayer, are freighted with a glorious hope for the Christian. Even now are we the sons of God, though it is not yet made manifest what we shall be; "But we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." (1 John 3:2) "The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." (Romans 8:16-17)

Glorified together with Jesus Christ! Read the description of the glory of Christ, as Isaiah saw it: "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. And He said, Go, and tell this people, Hear indeed, but understand not; and see indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed." (Isaiah 6:1-10) "He has blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Isaiah, when he saw His glory, and spoke of Him." (John 12:40-41)

Now try to realize that the children of God are to be glorified together with Him. That means that these faces will shine as does Christ's, for: "[He shall] change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto himself." (Philippians 3:21)

Yes; it means that the glory of Christ, from which even seraphim hide their faces, shall be shared by His now-despised followers; for the holy prophet has said that: "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever." (Daniel 12:3)

And Christ himself said that when He shall come, "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." (Matthew 13:43)

The Christian may feel wearied with the battle, and crushed by anguish either of body or spirit, or both. Then he can recall Paul's words: "For I reckon that the sufferings

of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." (Romans 8:18)

Paul had experienced far more than the ordinary lot of human sorrow. He had been in labors abundant, even in weakness and trembling. He had been in prison many times. Five times he had received from the Jews the full number of stripes that the law would allow; three times he had been beaten with rods; and once he was stoned and left for dead. He had been shipwrecked, had been in perils of robbers, and worst of all, "in perils among false brethren." (2 Corinthians 11:26)

But he had been permitted to see something of the glory which God has in reserve for those who love Him and he gave it as his deliberate opinion that all the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.

Take all the sufferings of this life, and place them in one scale, and place in the other the glory that God has for His children, and the glory would so outweigh the sufferings that no comparison could be made between them. The sufferings could be expressed only by zero. And so the apostle says: "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen." (2 Corinthians 4:17-18)

Of all this we should be reminded when we repeat the Lord's prayer, or, indeed, when we pray at all; for that is the true model for all prayers.

So the prayer which begins with "Our Father in Heaven," and passes through all the wants of our fallen humanity, closes with a joyful anticipation of the time when the kingdoms of this world shall have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ; when He shall take to himself His great power and shall reign; and when those who love and serve Him shall shine forth as the sun in the everlasting kingdom of glory.

And as our hearts contemplate the glorious time when we shall receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls, there is in the joy that we feel a foretaste of the glory that shall be revealed in us, and we exclaim with the prophet, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." (Revelation 22:20)--Signs of the Times, August 10 & 17, 1888--Matthew 6:13.

Chapter 136

The Lord's Prayer - Collection (189x)

Your Kingdom Come

There is no thought which is given greater prominence in the word of God than that expressed in the above sentence. All through the pages of both the Old and New Testaments, it stands out prominently as a leading thought in the minds of prophets and the apostles.

Paul in Titus 2:13, calls it "the blessed hope." It was that to which the church in all ages looked forward, as the brightest prospect which their faith revealed, and the realization of their fondest hopes.

In the heart of every true Christian this thought, this hope, will be uppermost. We are taught to give it this prominence by the Lord himself. The very first petition of the "Lord's prayer" is: "Your kingdom come." (Matthew 6:10)

And this prayer is one for all Christ's followers. In the sermon on the mount, also, the first utterance is one concerning the coming kingdom: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:3)

Other sentences which follow allude to the same thing. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." (Matthew 5:5)

This inheritance cannot be until the coming of the kingdom, by which the wicked shall be destroyed, and the earth made ready for its future inheritors. "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power." (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9) "For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, you shall diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." (Psalm 37:10-11) "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." (Matthew 5:4)

The time of comfort of the saints is when: "The tabernacle of God is with men, ... And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying." (Revelation 21:3,4) "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." (Matthew 5:8)

They shall see Him at the coming of His kingdom. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:10)

The blessings which come to the poor in spirit, the meek, the pure in heart, and other possessors of heavenly graces, are many in this life; but they are not to be compared with those that will be realized at the coming of the kingdom of God.

The very first prophecy that was ever uttered by inspiration, so far as we have any record, is a prophecy of the coming of Christ in His kingdom. We find the record in: "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold the Lord comes, with ten thousands of His saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." (Jude 14-15)

Note the very last prophecy of the Bible is also a prophecy of the same event. "He which testifies these words says, Surely I come quickly." (Revelation 22:20)

The sacred writer adds, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." (Revelation 22:20)

This is the prayer of every Christian heart, the goal toward which he strives, the event for which he labors. Let others make their pilgrimages to Mecca, or to the shrine of "our lady," or to Rome; the Christian's pilgrimage is to Mount Zion. And the one inspiring thought that leads him on over the rough and narrow passage is: "That blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." (Titus 2:13)

Would you be of the mind of Enoch, and of John, and of Paul, and of Christ? If so you will say with them, "Your kingdom come." (Matthew 6:10)

For that you will hope, that you will pray, for that you will work. And in the hour of trial you will find comfort in the thought, "Your eyes shall see the King in His beauty; they shall behold the land that is very far off." (Isaiah 33:17)

Your Kingdom Come

Your kingdom come! thus day by day,
We lift our hands to God and pray;
But who has ever duly weighed
The meaning of the words he said?

Your kingdom come! O day of joy,
When praise shall every tongue employ;
When hate and strife and war shall cease,
And man with man shall be at peace!

Jesus shall reign on Zion's hill,
And all the earth with glory fill;
His word shall paradise restore
And sin and death afflict no more.

Then bears and wolves, no longer wild,
Obey the leading of a child;
The lions with the oxen eat,
And dust shall be the serpent's meat.

God's holy will shall then be done
By all who live beneath the sun;
For saints shall then as angels be,
All changed to immortality.
--Unknown, ~1840

--Present Truth, November 16, 1893--Timeline: IV-15 (Sermon on the Mount)--Matthew 6:10.

Your Kingdom Come

We are taught to pray, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:10)

The only part of this earth in which we are directly responsible that the will of the Lord shall be done is in our own hearts. Therefore it is impossible to pray this prayer unless the heart is surrendered to the Lord for the working of His own will.

As It Is in Heaven

One Scripture which shows how the will God is done in heaven is "Bless the Lord, you His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word." (Psalm 103:20)

The attitude of the angels is that of waiting and listening to catch the first word of the Father's command, then hastening to do His will. There is no hesitancy; for they go and return "as the appearance of a flash of lightning." (Ezekiel 1:14)

So in Earth

The believer's attitude is to be the same:

- The heart yielded in willing obedience to the Master;
- The clamor of self silenced;
- Ears open to hear the first whisper of the Divine voice; o Then with feet swift to run in the way of righteousness.

That strength that excels is for us also; for we are to "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." (Ephesians 6:10)

With "His glorious power" working in the heart "mightily", there can be no doubtful hesitating over the question of how the work can be done. "Whereunto I also labor, striving according to His working, which works in me mightily." (Colossians

1:29) As the Word is received the strength comes, and we may hasten joyfully forth to do His commandments.--Present Truth, September 5, 1895--Matthew 6:10.

Daily Bread: Faith and Work

A father prays, "Give us this day our daily bread," (Matthew 6:11) and God gives the daily bread. But the faith of the father leads him to use the strength and wisdom and all the means provided by God to enable him to earn his livelihood. And all the time he lives by faith. "The prayer of faith shall save the sick." (James 5:15)

This is the promise. But faith in this case no more neglects to make use of all the wisdom and means that Providence affords than in the matter of the daily bread.

The use of all the wisdom that may be available in supplying proper conditions for the body in illness is no more a denial of faith than is the use in faith of all the wisdom and means provided for earning a livelihood to supply the needs of the body in health.--Present Truth, November 4, 1897--Original title: The Prayer of Faith--Matthew 6:11.

Forgive Us Our Debts

"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." (Matthew 6:12)

One million eight hundred and seventy-five thousand pounds is a large sum,--and yet that is the amount owed by the servant who was called upon for his accounting in our Lord's parable in the latter part of the 18th chapter of Matthew.

Suspicion must attach to such an enormous arrearage. Either there was dishonesty in his transactions or at least extreme negligence and unfaithfulness. The discrepancy in his accounts was so great that not even the sale of all his property, and of himself and family into slavery, could suffice to return to his master anything more than a small moiety [Moiety: a part or portion, especially a lesser share.] of the great sum he owed.

Yet when, at last, in hopeless contrition, he pleaded in anguish at the feet of his master, he was forgiven. The immense debt he owed was freely and entirely forgiven him. The account was balanced. It was hopeless that it could ever be expected that he could repay it, indeed that was impossible. He was not asked to repay it. He went out a

free man, relieved of any necessity of ever paying his debt, and still in possession of the property which he had acquired and retained--went out a free man to wife and children at home which he had forfeited and but for the gracious mercy of his master had lost beyond the possibility of recovery.

Yet notwithstanding this, almost immediately, apparently, as he went out from the presence of his master, he met with his fellow-servant who owed him but little more than three pounds, and, treating him with personal violence, refused to listen to his appeals for merciful extension of time in which to pay his debt, and cast him into the debtor's prison to remain there until payment should be made.

This was in strong contrast to the treatment which he had received from the Lord. And how insignificant was the sum which is fellow-servant owed him, compared with the amount in which he was indebted--nearly two millions of pounds as against a little more than three pounds!

No wonder his fellow-servants were sorry and came and told what he had done. No doubt they concurred in the justice of the punishment which then fell upon him.

So, unquestionably, at the last day will all agree as to the justice of the penalties which will be meted out when the last words of this parable shall be fulfilled: "So likewise shall my Father do also unto you, if you from your hearts forgive not everyone his brother their trespasses." (Matthew 18:35)

Will that not be just? Who can say it will not, when they remember the words of the daily prayer: "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." (Matthew 6:12)--Present Truth, July 23, 1896--Matthew 6:12.

Yours is the Kingdom

"Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen." (Matthew 6:13)

This is an everlasting truth, for the Lord himself has spoken it; yet to how many who daily utter the words are they little more than a form of speech.

As a matter of fact, it is a confession, which, if made with the spirit and with the understanding, brings the soul into the closest and most perfect relation to God.

The kingdom belongs to God. How exhaustive is it? "The Lord has prepared His throne in the heavens, and His kingdom rules over all." (Psalm 103:19) "The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him." (Habakkuk 2:20) "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." (Psalm 24:1) "The Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever He will." (Daniel 4:17) "For God is the King of all the earth; sing praises with understanding. God reigns over the heathen; God sits upon the throne of His holiness." (Psalm 47:7-8)

Wherever in the universe created beings can look up and see a canopy of space above them, there is God's kingdom. "O Lord, You have searched me, and known me. You know my downsitting and my uprising, You understand my thought afar off. You compass my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, You know it altogether. You have beset me behind and before, and laid your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Where shall I go from your spirit? or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend up into heaven, You are there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall your hand lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hides not from You; but the night shines as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to You." (Psalm 139:1-12)

People in general do not recognize God as universal King, but that makes no difference with the fact. A portion of God's dominion is in rebellion against Him; but that does not destroy the fact that the kingdom is His by right. Many people worship gods of their own making, but that does not destroy the fact that there is but one God.

In the beginning God gave the dominion of this earth to man, but He did not thereby renounce His right to it. "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." (Genesis 1:27) God is the King of kings, and it pleased Him to rule this portion of this dominion through man, whom He had made in His image. Man was to be simply the agent through whom God would

manifest His power on earth. The fact that man has refused to be the instrument of God's will, does not in the least impair God's original and eternal right to the kingdom.

But our confession to God comes closer home. When the unbelieving Pharisees demanded that Jesus should tell when the kingdom of God should come, He replied: "The kingdom of God comes not with observation; Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for behold, the kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:20-21)

There is a story of a king who visited a school and questioned the pupils. Taking up a paper weight, he asked them to what kingdom it belonged. They replied, "To the mineral kingdom."

Then pointing to a plant, he asked the same question, and they said, "To the vegetable kingdom."

Then he asked, "To what kingdom do I belong?"

The children were afraid to say that he belonged to the animal kingdom, and, as they hesitated, one said, "To God's kingdom."

That was a truth, for every created thing in the universe belongs to God's kingdom, and there is but one law for all, namely, God's law. Someone will say, "But God does not rule in wicked men's hearts."

Quite true, because His rule is love, which they reject; but the fact remains that every human heart is God's rightful kingdom. His right is demonstrated by the fact that: "He gives to all life, and breath, and all things, ... For in Him we live, and move, and have our being." (Acts 17:25,28)

It was with His life alone that we live, for we have none of our own; and since the life belongs to Him, He alone has the right to direct it.

That which may be known of God, that is, "His eternal power and Godhead" is manifest in men, even in the heathen, as well as in all the things that God has made: "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God has showed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly

seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." (Romans 1:19-20)

But men, unlike the trees of the field, "hold down the truth in unrighteousness," (Romans 1:18) choosing rather to be their own masters than to allow God to rule. But, "The way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walks to direct his steps." (Jeremiah 10:23)

Man has no more power in himself than the grass of the field has, and therefore when he attempts to rule the kingdom himself, he makes a sad failure.

Who alone has the right to rule? He to whom the kingdom belongs. So when we say to the Lord, "Yours is the kingdom," we acknowledge that He alone has the right to rule, not only in our hearts, but in all the earth. But if we truly acknowledge the fact, we yield the kingdom fully to His control. Just here is where many make a fatal mistake. They say, "The kingdom is the Lord's, but people in general will not acknowledge it, therefore we must compel them to submit to Him."

Such a course as that is virtually a denial of the fact that the kingdom is the Lord's. To say the least, God is as able to use force as we are, and if He wished people to be forced to submit to Him, He would do it. The fact that He does not compel people to serve Him, is sufficient evidence that He does not wish man to seek to do so. His law is love, and therefore force is in direct opposition to His kingdom.

All that we are called upon to do, no matter who we may be, is to acknowledge God's right to the kingdom. Whoever acknowledges that the kingdom--that is, all mankind, including himself--belongs to God, will very naturally refrain from attempting to rule any part of it. He to whom the kingdom belongs has the sole right to rule, and if we are sincere in our acknowledgment of God's right, we will not meddle with His affairs. We will leave Him to deal with other people as He sees best.

By acknowledging His right to rule all the kingdom, we ourselves disclaim the right to rule any portion of it, even to our own lives. The only part of the kingdom, however, that we can yield up to God, is ourselves. When we have done this, then we may tell others how good His rule is, and persuade them also to yield to His dominion.

There is strength in the heartfelt confession, "Yours is the kingdom," for God is able to protect His own. The battle is not ours, but His to whom we belong--"the King of glory." "Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle." (Psalm 24:8) "Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's." (2 Chronicles 20:15)

In His hand is power and might, so that none is able to withstand Him. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." (Ephesians 6:10)

His thoughts toward us are thoughts of peace, and He desires nothing so much as our welfare both here and in eternity. "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." (Jeremiah 29:11)

What a blessed thing to know that: "The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King; He will save us." (Isaiah 33:22)--Present Truth, August 20, 1896--Matthew 6:13.

The Power and the Glory

"Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen." (Matthew 6:13)

The kingdom is the Lord's, and it includes the whole universe. Nothing is outside His jurisdiction. Every creature in the heavens and on earth rightfully belongs to His dominion.

The Power

But a king without power is king only in name. God is really King, and therefore to Him belongs power. "God has spoken once; twice have I heard this: that power belongs unto God." (Psalm 62:11)

We must not fall into the error of limiting God, by thinking that power is divided, and that He has merely a share of it, even though it be the largest share. "Yours is the kingdom and the power." (Matthew 6:13) "His kingdom rules over all." (Psalm 103:19)

And wherever His kingdom is, His power is supreme. God alone has power. God is the Almighty One. That is to say, He has all might. Therefore no other being possesses any might in himself.

Because God possesses all the power in the universe, Christ, the only begotten Son could say, "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth." (Matthew 28:18) "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." (Acts 17:28)

Every motion that is made, every thought, every word, requires the exercise of power; but the power is not inherent in the man who moves, but in God. "There is no power but of God." (Romans 12:1)

The power which men have to fight and blaspheme God, and to commit all sorts of wickedness, is but God's power perverted, just as the performance of righteous acts, and the utterance of praise, is God's power given free course.

Light-minded persons may see in this occasion for charging God foolishly; but others will see in it His superabounding grace and His everlasting love. While some think that God's seeming non-interference is an evidence of weakness, or of complicity with crime, the well-instructed will "account that the long-suffering of our God is salvation." (2 Peter 3:15)

If God were not sure of His "everlasting strength," He could not the sit still and see men defy Him to His face, and even use His own power in opposition to Him. He has the patience of conscious omnipotence. Knowing that He really has power, He cannot, like puny man, be tempted to make an exhibition of it simply to demonstrate to scoffers that He possesses it.

God desires that men should be saved, and in the Gospel He manifests His power to save them. All God's power, and every revelation of it, is for the purpose of leading men to trust Him for their soul's salvation.

The fact that men misunderstand God, even willfully, and pervert the power which He reveals in them for their salvation, does not discourage Him or throw Him into a

passion. Still He graciously manifests His power in them, in hope that at last they will allow Him to use it to His own glory in their salvation.

God's power is the power of love, and love does not use force; therefore He patiently waits, until He is positively and definitely rejected.

What wonderful joy comes with the recognition that all power is God's! "For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is a gift of God." (Ephesians 2:10)

Our salvation depends on Him, and He has the power. His kingdom is in our hearts, but His enemy has been allowed to come in and raise the standard of rebellion. Nevertheless, as soon as we definitely choose the Lord for our King and our Lawgiver, He will save us by His mighty power. "For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; He will save us." (Isaiah 33:22)

He has power to drive out every enemy. What comfort to rest confidingly in the almighty power of our God.

The Glory

His is the glory. Not only ought it to be, but it is. The last message before the coming of the Lord, calls loudly upon men to: "Fear God, and give glory to Him, [as the One who] made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." (Revelation 14:7)

We are to give glory to Him, because it belongs to Him. His is the glory, because His is the power. Whoever takes glory to himself for anything that he possesses or has done, thereby robs God. "Thus says the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; But he that glories let him glory in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth." (Jeremiah 9:23-24)

Wisdom, power, and riches, all come from the Lord; therefore, "He that glories, let him glory in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 1:31)

Take a single example, in the line of wisdom. On the day of Pentecost, and in any times thereafter, God gave His servants power on the instant to talk foreign languages. Unlettered Galilean fishermen suddenly began to speak intelligently in languages that before were but meaningless jargon to them. It was manifestly a gift of God, and one instinctively shudders at the thought of one with such a gift boasting of his possession, as though the glory of it were due to him. Very well; but: "The Lord gives wisdom; out of His mouth comes knowledge and understanding." (Proverbs 2:6)

If a man by study has acquired several languages, he has done it only by the power which God gave him, and therefore his knowledge is the gift of God just as truly as was the knowledge of the apostles.

Whoever not simply openly, but in his inmost thoughts, continually gives God the glory, will be kept "To the praise of the glory of His grace." (Ephesians 1:6) "In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." (Proverbs 3:6)

Men foolishly think that it is beneath their dignity, and a limitation of their freedom, to acknowledge that God alone has power, and that all glory belongs to Him; but how much better it is to acknowledge the truth, and thus be: "Strengthened with all might according to His glorious power," (Colossians 1:11) than to deny Him, and thus be left to our own disgraceful impotence. "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and topresent 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)--Present Truth, September 10, 1896--Matthew 6:13.

The Amen

"Amen." (Matthew 6:13)

There is probably no other word of importance in the language, that is used with less thought as to its meaning than the word "Amen."

It is used in prayer by all Christian people, no matter what their nation or language, and it is worthy of note that it is used only in Christian worship; yet to most it probably means little if anything more than a sign to indicate that prayer is ended.

True, there is so much knowledge of its meaning, that it is often used as an expression of assent to what is prayed or spoken by others, yet in the main people use it as the close of a prayer much as though they would say, "Now I have finished."

The word itself is simply the Hebrew root signifying "to be firm or established." It conveys the idea of stability and certainty. As a noun, we find it signifying "foundation," and in one form of the verb it signifies "to believe," as in the statements, "[Abraham] believed in the Lord, and He counted it to him for righteousness;" (Genesis 15:6) and, "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation; he that believes shall not make haste." (Isaiah 28:16)

The words "believe" and "believes" are from the Hebrew word amen, which, in the form here used signifies to build upon, thus holding the root idea. To believe in God is to build upon Him as a sure foundation. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 3:11)

In Him are all the promises of God: "For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." (2 Corinthians 1:20)

Therefore whoever accepts and follows His words is said to build on the rock: "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of mine, and does them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock." (Matthew 7:24-25)

Everything depends on Christ, for: "[He] upholds all things by the word of His power." (Hebrews 1:3) "For in Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through Him, and unto Him; And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist." (Colossians 1:16-17,RV)

Read now: "These things says the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God." (Revelation 3:14)

Christ is the Amen, the sure foundation, because He is all creation's source and supporter. When we pray in faith-and the prayer of faith is the only real prayer--we pray in the name of Christ; for the promise is that when we ask anything in His name we shall receive it.

If we do not ask in the name of Jesus, we have no promise of receiving anything; because to ask in His name is simply to ask for only such things as God has promised in Christ. It is to ask according to the will of God, and not according to our own fancies.

When we pray in such a manner, then we may be as sure of receiving the things we ask for as we are that God lives. Then we have a right to the word amen. The man who doubts when he prays, who is not sure that he is asking according to the will of God, and who doesn't know whether or not he will receive the things that he has prayed for, has no right to close his petition with the word Amen. His prayer is simply an experiment, and for him to say "Amen," is to take the name of the Lord in vain, for "Amen" is one of the Lord's titles.

He who uses the word amen understandably, closes his prayer in a tone of triumphant confidence. He has already the thing asked for. "For yours is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever. Amen." (Matthew 6:13)

The Lord as universal King possesses all things, He has all power and it is His glory to do deeds of kindness, and therefore we are sure of our requests as we are that Christ is the eternal Foundation. Amen: "so it shall be," is what we say, because Christ, the Amen, is the one in whom all things are. As long as the sun and moon endure, so long we know that His word of promise is sure.

The Christian is the only one who has this confidence. The heathen cannot know the word, for they are: "without Christ ... having no hope, and without God in the world." (Ephesians 2:12)

Truly, "Their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges." (Deuteronomy 32:31)--Present Truth, October 1, 1896--Matthew 6:13.

Chapter 137

The Lord's Prayer - Collection (190x)

Our Father, in Heaven

"Our Father, who is in Heaven." (Matthew 6:9)

Who is He? "He is the living God, and an everlasting King." (Jeremiah 10:10)

He is more than a king; He is the King of kings. He is King only of kings; there is no lower rank in His kingdom. Then what does it mean when we call Him our Father? It means that we claim our birthright as kings. All who receive Christ receive power, the right, to become sons of God. "[He] loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, And has made us kings and priests unto God." (Revelation 1:5-6)

Being sons of God, not subjects merely, we must be kings. Do you see what rights and privileges this confers upon you? It places you "above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion." (Ephesians 1:21)

And you can begin at once and demonstrate this marvelous authority given you, by controlling yourself. God has given to each one the right and the power to be master, first of himself, then of everything in the universe that would stand in the way of this perfect control over yourself.

All creation is the inheritance and the servant of the man who knows that he is king solely by virtue of his being a son of the Almighty God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth.--Present Truth, June 26, 1902--Timeline: IV-15 (Sermon on the Mount)--Matthew 6:9.

Our Father

Jesus taught His followers to pray, "Our Father who is in heaven." Much has been said on the term "Our Father," as indicating our common brotherhood with our fellowmen; but that which it should above all impress on our minds is the fact that both Jesus and we have one Father.

"Our Father" is "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Corinthians 11:31) When, therefore, we from the heart, in childlike trustfulness, look up to God and say: "Our Father, who is in heaven. ... Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses." (Matthew 6:9,11-12)

We should remember that the fulfillment of our request is as certain to follow as if made by Jesus Christ in person. We have the same right in the Father's house and at His table that Jesus has, and the same right to share in the inheritance.

If we are children of God, then we are heirs, "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ." (Romans 8:17)--Medical Missionary, September 1905--Original title: The Lord's Prayer--Matthew 6:9-12.

Our Father

"And it came to pass, that, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of his disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." (Luke 11:1)

The same request is as pertinent now as it was then, "For we know not how to pray as we ought [and therefore] the Spirit also helps our infirmities," (Romans 8:26) not only by making intercession for us, but also by creating desires in our hearts, and putting right words into our mouths.

Men who have never had any verbal instruction, instinctively give expression to their wants to God, especially if they are in deep trouble, because the Spirit teaches all; but the most complete instruction that the Spirit has ever given concerning prayer is found in the model prayer which Jesus by the Spirit gave to His disciples.

While we are not confined to the exact form of words which Jesus uttered in response to the request of the disciples, we need to study them much; for they are so comprehensive that they cover the needs of every person in the world, in all conceivable circumstances; and no prayer is complete that does not in effect contain the petitions expressed in the Lord's prayer.

First of all we have:

Our Father

"And He said unto them, When you pray, say, Our Father." (Luke 11:2)

No heathen worshiper could ever address these words to a god of wood or stone. Only he can use them who recognizes a God so great that all created beings are His offspring, and whose relationship as Father is so close and constant that "in Him we live, and move, and have our being."

It is to a Father, not a king nor a judge, that we approach in prayer. Even though we know that we are coming to a "throne of grace," the only thing that does or can draw us, and cause us to "come boldly," is the all-absorbing thought that our Father sits upon it.

Afterward, when a sense of His tenderness as a Father has led us to confide in Him, and to pour out our hearts before Him, we exultingly proclaim Him king, because that is our assurance that to Him belongs power to do for us all that His love designs for us.

When we with understanding hearts say "our Father," we feel the confidence and rest and comfort of the "everlasting arms" that are underneath us, clasping us to His bosom.

But there is nothing selfish in true prayer. God is "our" Father. There are crises in our lives, as when Jesus was in the garden, when the urgency of the case, and our extreme danger or need, shut out the consciousness of everything except our individual self and God. Then we can say only "my Father."

But on all ordinary occasions we are to remember that we are only one of many, all of whom have equal rights to claim

God as their Father. The one "God over all" "Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen."

(Romans 9:5), is the "Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all." (Ephesians 4:6)

This thought is the basis of all real missionary effort; for any work done for heathen, either at home or abroad, is effective only as it is prompted by the loving consciousness that they are our brothers.

When "the only begotten Son" (John 1:18) "[came] to seek and to save that which was lost," (Luke 19:10) it was with these words to the Father: "I will declare your name unto my brethren." (Hebrews 2:12; Psalm 22:22)

All who are "partakers of flesh and blood," (Hebrews 2:14) are acknowledged by Christ as His brothers. Instead of feeling that His unsullied goodness gives Him superior claims on the Father's love, He gladly makes known that the Father loves us even as He loves Him.

If at any time we feel that the wickedness of any fallen men makes them inferior to us, we put ourselves above the Lord, and really separate ourselves from God's family, in that we cannot then unreservedly say "our Father."

There is in the first two words of the Lord's prayer a world of instruction and of admonition. If we always followed this teaching of the Spirit in our prayers, every prayer would be a consecration to missionary work.

In all this there is no denial of the fact that the great majority of the world do not know God as their Father, and do not acknowledge Him as such; and that by our acceptance of this truth we are drawn nearer to Him. But those who are nearest to Him, instead of boasting of it, or feeling that there is a great gulf between them and those who have not an acquaintance with God, are, like Christ, most conscious that the prodigal sons are their brethren.

Who is in Heaven

"Our Father who is in heaven." (Luke 11:2) "Our God is in the heavens; He has done whatsoever He has pleased." (Psalm 119:3)

The fact that our Father is in heaven is the assurance that He has all power, and can do whatsoever He will. "Blessed be You, Lord God of Israel, our Father, for ever and ever. Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is yours." (1 Chronicles 29:10-11)

Note that the Scriptures will not let us lose sight of the fact that this mighty God in the heavens, who inhabits eternity, is our Father; and thus far in our prayer, although we know that He is King, that view of God is swallowed up in the one that He is our Father.

The thought that our Father is in heaven is not designed, however, to cause us to feel that He is far from any one of us. "[He who dwells] in the high and holy place [dwells] with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit." (Isaiah 57:15) "[He is] not far from everyone of us." (Acts 17:27)

Because: "In Him we live, and move, and are." (Acts 17:28) "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? says the Lord. Do not I fill the heaven and earth? says the Lord." (Jeremiah 23:24)

So whether we ascend into heaven, or lie in the depths of the earth, or fly on the wings of the morning to the uttermost parts of the sea, even there the Father's hand leads us, and His right hand holds us. "If I ascend up into heaven, You are there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall your hand lead me, and your right hand shall hold me." (Psalm 139:8-10)

In life, in death, in dark and light,
All are in God's care;
Sound the black abyss, pierce the deep of night,
And He is there!
--John Greenleaf Whittier, Poem: My Soul and I, 1847.

This thought is enough for us to meditate upon, and to mold our prayers for a month, when we can learn more of how to pray.--Medical Missionary, November 1905--Luke 11:1-2.

The Holy Name

"Hallowed be your name." (Luke 11:2)

An essential element in all true prayer is recognition of the goodness and the greatness of God. The more we know of God, the more understandingly and confidently we can pray to Him. "Without faith it is impossible to please Him for he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." (Hebrews 11:6)

Satan is always ready to try to discourage people with the very truths of Scripture that were written for our comfort; and too often he succeeds. So he tries to frighten us away from God by the thought of His holiness. The sinful one says: "I dare not come to the Lord: He is so holy, and I am so vile, that He could not have anything to do with me."

We must learn that just because God is absolute goodness, He receives sinners. Only the wicked turn from the wicked, and point the finger of scorn at them. The good are pitiful and merciful. So the name of the Lord is: "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, and forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." (Exodus 34:6-7)

When the psalmist, in his extremity and desolation, called on the Lord, he said: "But You are holy, O You that inhabits the praises of Israel." (Psalm 22:5)

God's holiness is the only hope of fallen humanity. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower." (Proverbs 18:10)

After the ascension of Jesus, the disciples went everywhere preaching always in "the Name." When the lame man at the gate of the temple had risen at Peter's command: "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk," (Acts 3:6) Peter preached Jesus to the wondering multitude, saying: "His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong." (Acts 3:16)

The next day he said to the council: "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, even in Him, does this man stand here before you whole." (Acts 4:10)

From this last text we learn that Jesus himself is His name. "Jesus" means Saviour, and that is what Jesus of Nazareth is. So God's name is His own character, His own being; and His name is in Christ, in whose name we pray.

Therefore in coming to God and presenting petitions "in the name of Jesus," it is as though Christ came to the Father in person, making that request. God cannot reject any such request made in sincerity, for to do so would be to dishonor His own name.

Even among men the name stands for the person. If a business man breaks his word, or fails to meet his obligations, then his name is no longer of any value. The prophet Jeremiah applied this principle to the Lord when, having acknowledged his sin and the sins of the people, he boldly said: "Do not abhor us, for your name's sake, do not disgrace the throne of your glory; remember, break not your covenant with us." (Jeremiah 14:21)

This is in reality what we all say to the Lord when we say in our prayers, "Hallowed be your name." It is an appeal to the Lord to remember His name and His covenant: "Forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin," (Exodus 34:7) and not to disgrace His name, but to honor it by doing all that it stands for. But this reminder to the Lord is not on His account, but on our own, for it serves to remind us that: "He cannot deny himself." (2 Timothy 2:13)

Thus we are taught by the Lord Jesus that in true prayer there can be no shadow whatever of doubt. We are not to pray, and then to wonder whether or not God has listened to our petition, or will answer it. At the very beginning of every prayer we are to express our perfect confidence that God will certainly give us all that we ask for in the name of Jesus, and "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." (Ephesians 3:20)

The least doubt in prayer is to deny God, and to place Him, in our own minds, on a level with the gods of the heathen; for it is a denial that "He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." (Hebrews 11:6)

His name is holy, and must remain so, and therefore we come with the boldness of absolute trust, making our requests known to God. How natural and easy, therefore, is it to: "Give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness, even before we make our request." (Psalm 30:4; Psalm 97:12)--Medical Missionary, December 1905--Luke 11:2.

Your Will Be Done

"Your will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:10)

This petition is the most difficult of all for human beings to utter from the heart. Indeed, often as it is repeated, it is scarcely ever thought of as really a petition, but rather as a concession to the Lord.

People in general, perhaps without being conscious of it, regard the will of God as something to be submitted to and endured; they talk about being "resigned to the will of God," and think it the highest attainment of piety if they do not exhibit or express impatience under it.

That this is altogether the wrong view of the case, may readily be understood if one but stop to think where the expression, "Your will be done" is found. It is in the prayer that the Lord Jesus has taught us to pray, and ranks as a petition, a request, along with, "Your kingdom come, ... Give us this day our daily bread," (Matthew 6:10,11) and "Forgive us our trespasses." (Matthew 6:12)

It is therefore a thing to be ardently desired, as much as our daily bread or the forgiveness of our sins. It is not something against us, but a thing for our benefit.

It is not the will of God that any should perish; but, on the contrary, "[He] will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." (1 Timothy 2:4) "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." (1 Thessalonians 4:3)

He wills that which is best for us, and therefore when we pray, "Your will be done," we are only asking Him to do the best thing possible for us. That prayer really embraces all things, so that when we have asked for all the things that we can think of in detail, we can add, "Your will be done," which will be equivalent to saying, "And do

everything else for us that You think is necessary for our welfare." "[He is] able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." (Ephesians 3:20)

And that is His will for us. His good will toward us is as boundless as His power; if therefore we ask according to our own will we shall get but little, but if we ask according to His will, we are sure of having all things.--Present Truth, September 4, 1902--Matthew 6:10.

Our Daily Bread

Have you ever thought of the wonderful working of God's power that provides for you your daily bread?

The Lord God made man "from the dust of the ground," in the beginning, and He is still by the same creative power, forming our bodies from the dust of the ground. But if we should take a handful of dust and feed upon it, it would not do us any good, but only harm, for we could not digest nor assimilate it.

The word "assimilate" means, to become like unto. And we must assimilate our food, before it can do us any good. Yet we could never assimilate the dust of the ground; that is, it could never be made into our substance, into flesh and blood, so as to become a part of us.

So God takes the dust and prepares it for us in a beautiful and pleasant way; He changes it so that we can feed upon it and assimilate it, and in thus changing it, He puts lovely colors upon it, sweet and pleasant savors into it, and makes it "pleasant to the sight" as well as "good for food." (Genesis 2:9) The grains, fruits, and nuts are what He has provided for our food. He says, "Behold I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat." (Genesis 1:29)

The plants take up the dust of the ground, which is food for them, and the life of God working in them changes the dust and prepares it for our food. Then that same wondrous life of the Creator working in us takes the substance of the plant, and makes it a part of our flesh and blood. And thus God makes our bodies from the dust of the ground.

Think what wonderful power there is in the words which God spoke of the trees and plants, when He said, "To you it shall be for meat." And how much meaning there is in the daily prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread." (Matthew 6:11)

It means far more than that God should provide us with something to eat. For nothing could be meat or food for us, except by the working of the same mighty power that made us and that made the food, changing it into flesh and blood to build up our bodies.

You eat when you are hungry, and it seems a most natural thing to you that your food should nourish you. But the food must be prepared in your stomach, where it is changed into a kind of milky substance that can be carried in your veins to your heart, from which it is pumped into the lungs, where it is purified and sent down again into the heart. Then it is sent through your arteries into every part of your body, and without your thought or care, the food that the blood carries is formed into your skin, you nails, your bones, your muscles, and the hairs of your head.

Will you not keep these things in mind, not only when you ask your Heavenly Father for your daily bread, but when you take that which He provides and feed upon it?

If you do, your heart will be filled with love for Him whose power is thus working in you every moment, and you will let Him use for His own glory the life and strength that He imparts to you day by day, in giving you your daily bread.--Present Truth, December 13, 1900--Matthew 6:11.

Our Daily Bread

"Give us this day our daily bread." (Matthew 6:11)

We are accustomed to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," and to include in this petition not only the physical bread which nourishes our bodies, but that spiritual food which will supply the needs of our soul, making us strong to do the will of God.

But the blessings of God often come to us in such disguise that we fail to recognize the answer to our prayer. The "bread" that the Lord sends us may take the form of:

• trials to be borne,

• taxing labor to be performed, or

• temptations and difficulties to be overcome.

--Present Truth, March 26, 1903--Matthew 6:11.

Praying for Daily Bread

We depend upon the Lord for life, and the Lord teaches us to pray: "Give us this day our daily bread." (Matthew 6:11)

We are to pray for our daily bread, and to realize that it comes from heaven. We have the record that on certain occasions bread came down ready made, as the manna and the giving of bread in the wilderness. Suppose we say: "We are taught to pray for our daily bread, and therefore we will not use means; we will pray, and expect the Lord to feed us right out of His hand with bread already made. If we expect bread in any other way, it shows lack of faith."

I can understand why people think that it does; it is because they leave God out of all the operations of nature, and so they speak of God and nature as if they were two different things. They seem to think that God does some things, and nature some things; then the idea becomes prevalent that nature does more things than God does: and then at last nature does everything, and God is left without any occupation at all.

But all those miracles, as we have seen, are to show us that God works in the visible creation; not that nature is God, but that what men call nature, or natural laws, is the working of God.

You are all familiar, at least by title, with Drummond's book, Natural Law in the Spiritual World. He simply had the thing turned upside down. Natural law does not work in the spiritual world, but spiritual law works in the natural world; and all the law that is manifest in the natural world is spiritual law. These things show us God.

People think that God does not have anything or at most very little to do with providing us with our daily bread. When they have plowed the field, and taken the grain and cast it into the earth, and then have harvested the grain, and threshed it, and ground it into flour and made it into bread they think that they have done it all. But they have really done very little.

The birds do not plow nor sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns, yet our Heavenly Father feeds them; and we are much better than they; therefore we are to expect that in far greater measure the Lord will feed us.

What shall we do, then? Sit with open mouths and wait for the bread to drop in? Oh, no. The birds are not fed that way, except when they are too young to fly, too feeble to walk; and then it is only by their own parents. But as soon as they get old enough to move for themselves, they have to do just what their parents did,-fly about and gather what the Lord has scattered for them.

Now that is all that man does. Man does not do anything more toward getting a living than the birds do. He gathers--reaps what the Lord has strewn. The grain is strewn about, and man gathers it and eats it; but God does all the providing of it; and man is just as directly fed from heaven, from the hand of God, as the birds are. "What You give them, they gather." (Psalm 104:28)

And that is all we can do. God has given us food as the means of perpetuating our life, in order that we may see and trust Him. If the life of all men were continued and renewed day by day without any of these means, without our eating bread and drinking water, men would say that they were self existent. They would think: "We are not dependent upon anybody for life; we are our own masters, and life is inherent in us."

And there would be no means by which you could convince them it is not so. There would be no means of showing them God's rightful claim upon their obedience. They would say: "I do not owe Him anything. I do not receive anything from Him. This life proceeds from myself."

Why, people say this to a large extent anyhow; they act as if that were the case, when it is patent to everyone of us that it is not so. How much more so would it be the case if there were no invisible means for the maintenance of our life?

The prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread," uttered in faith, is not at all inconsistent with going out and plowing the fields, and sowing the seed, in reaping the harvest, and threshing the grain, and making it into bread. He that prays that prayer in faith, recognizing that it is God who gives him the power even to do that work, will see himself working together with God. The farmer, whether he knows it or not, is a worker together with God. "Now the just shall live by faith." (Hebrews 10:38)

"We live," we say, "by eating." True; and if we live in the right way, we eat only to live, the pleasure we get out of it being incidental. It is God's will that we should get pleasure out of all the things that are right; but the object of eating is to get life, and thereby to recognize God as the giver of life.

Then the next logical thing, the only consistent thing, is that, recognizing God as the giver of life, we shall acknowledge that He is the only one who has the right to say how that life shall be used. And, stronger yet, that He is the only one that has the right to use the life.

So we shall acknowledge all the time that it is God that works in us both to will and to do, and the man who recognizes this all the time, and who is consistent with what he sees, will have all his ways right. Why? because he won't use the life of the Lord, but he will let the life of the Lord use him. Our bodies are to be instruments of the life of the Lord. The Lord is to use our bodies as He will, and then everything that we do will be right; and thus the just live by faith.

Food as Medicine

What did the Lord give us in the beginning, and what does He still give as the means of healing, restoring us, as our bodies undergo waste; in short, what does God give to man, as his medicine?

Why, the food that we eat; it is man's natural medicine, is it not? The food and the drink, the sunlight and the air,--they are medicine, medicine which God has put in our hands. God has designed that the food that we eat, should be the means of keeping us in life and health.

That being so, it is clear that when by some means or other, through our own fault or through the fault of somebody else, we have failed to allow that life to flow through us unhindered--have dammed up the stream--and there has come stagnation, congestion, disease, we are to be healed by coming to our senses, and recognizing that the life comes alone from God, and accepting His gifts which convey life to us,--coming into harmony with them.

The Lord does not pander to people's laziness, and so He does not do the thing which He has given to man the power to do for himself. He did not roll away the stone from the grave of Lazarus. The people could do that as well as not. Why should they sit there with their hands folded, and allow the Lord to do that He had given them power to do?

Then Lazarus came forth, bound around the head with a napkin. You know as well as I do that the Lord could have brought Lazarus out of the grave with the napkin taken off and laid aside just as well as He could do what He did do. But He did not roll the stone neither did He take the napkin off. He said: "Loose him, and let him go."

They could do that by the power that He gave them: but there was a certain thing that they could not do. There was power above the measure of power they had received, and the Lord exercised that independently.

Jesus raised the ruler's daughter. Then as soon as she had come to life He commanded that they should give her food. Why? In bringing her to life He had exercised the power and the life which was entirely beyond their comprehension or their power to co-operate with.

Then when He had come to the point where they had the means of life which God had put into their hands, He let them go on and use it. He brought the damsel back to life, but in that weakened condition that she was in before she died. Then having brought her to life, and healed the disease, He told them to give her something to eat, so that she could recover her strength.

He could have brought her to health, and made her perfectly strong, so that she would not have had any need for food--not for a while, at least--just as He could keep us

alive without eating at all; but when He had brought her to that point, then it was a simple thing: Give her something to eat, and she will get her strength again.

All these things show that God works through means. In the greatest miracle, that of raising the dead, the Holy Spirit is the means by which the life is bestowed. The Lord has given life, and shown it everywhere. Now we are to see it, and find out the ways in which the Lord's life manifests itself, and come into harmony with its workings, and we shall live,--and that is living by faith. And it is thus only that the Christian should live.--Medical Missionary, December 1903--Original title: Healing through Faith, part 2--Matthew 6:11.

The Debt Forgiven

When the Saviour taught His disciples how to pray, He put into their mouths the words, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." (Matthew 6:12)

It is clear from this that God does not hold anything against man. If He did, Christ would not have taught us to make such a request. It is this truth, too seldom apprehended, which makes the message of the Gospel: "Tidings of great joy to all people." (Luke 2:10)

If only it were believed, it would lift every cloud that overhangs this life, and cause the hearts of men to sing for joy.

Every sin is committed against God. The Lamb of God bears the sin of the world. David confessed, "Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done, this evil in your sight." (Psalm 51:4)

Men realize that they are sinful in His sight, and that there is enmity in their own hearts. They judge God by themselves, and count Him "a hard man." It seems to them that God has nothing but stern condemnation for them, and they avoid His Word, because they fear its reproof.

But God is love, He feels the gap which men make between themselves and Him, and His one desire is to draw all to himself. When Adam sinned, he sought to hide from God, though he needed Divine help more than ever. God looked at his need, and sought

out the trembling sinner, not to embitter his life with reproaches, but to bring the comforting promise of a Saviour who should recover what Adam had lost, and restore all things.

Ever since that time, sinful men have thought to hide from God, as though He were pursuing them in His wrath, but it was His goodness and mercy that followed them every day of their lives. Still God sends His messengers into all the world, not to condemn, but to speak the glad tidings to every creature.

And what is the message that the ambassadors bear? Theirs is a ministry, not of reproach, but of reconciliation. They declare that God was in Christ, reconciling sinners to himself, "not imputing their trespasses unto them," (2 Corinthians 5:19) and through them He beseeches all to be reconciled to Him: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God." (2 Corinthians 5:20)

Since every sin is against God, if He does not impute sin, no one else can. "Not imputing their trespasses unto them." (2 Corinthians 5:19)

Truly this is a message meet to be sounded in the ears of every sinful, discouraged creature. All have wished at same time in their lives that the miserable record of the past might be blotted out, as though it had never been, and they could start afresh. This is the very thing that the Gospel brings to men.

The old debt is freely forgiven. They are clear with God, and can come to Him with confidence, for all that stood between them and Him is taken out of the way. He has destroyed the enmity, and asks simply that men will acknowledge that He does indeed love them, and be reconciled to Him.

If, after this, men die in their sins, it is their own fault entirely. God does not impute sin to them, but they choose to impute it to themselves by deciding to still bear it when God has set them free. It is not the sins of their lives that condemn men, but the fact that, with the chance of getting rid of the sins, they prefer to retain them. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light." (John 3:19)

God challenges all men to declare one thing which He might have done for His people that He has not done for them: "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" (Isaiah 5:4)

He gives every advantage that the weakest can ask for.

- He declares the past to be disposed of, imputing nothing to men.

- In place of the sin which He takes away, He bestows His own righteousness, and imparts His own power, for the Gospel is the power of God.

- He takes away all the old things, and makes all things new, creating a clean heart.

- His angels are commissioned to minister to the heirs of salvation, and His Spirit is given without measure.

- He does for all exceeding abundantly above all that they can ask or think.

"How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" (Hebrews 2:3)--Present Truth, June 15, 1899--Matthew 6:12.

Yours is the Kingdom

"For yours is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever. Amen." (Matthew 6:13)

These are some of the words that our Saviour taught us to say every day. We know that the Lord's Prayer is to be offered daily, because in it we have the petition, "Give us this day our daily bread." (Matthew 6:11)

We need bread every day, and we are to ask for it as we need it; so day by day we are to acknowledge to God in heaven that the kingdom belongs to Him.

What will be the effect of this prayer when prayed in faith that is well-instructed? First of all it will bring forcibly before our minds what and where God's kingdom is. We

pray to our Father in heaven, and are reminded that: "The Lord prepared His throne in the heavens, and His kingdom rules over all." (Psalm 103:19) "Our God is in the heavens; for He has done whatsoever He has pleased." (Psalm 115:3)

He has all power, and nothing is too great for Him to perform in and for His kingdom. If there is rebellion, He can subdue it. If reforms are needed, He can carry them out. But we must not forget that great as is the kingdom of God, the Saviour has said, "The kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:21)

This surely means that those who know and acknowledge the truth shall have "largeness of heart," (1 Kings 4:29) breadth of understanding. Our hearts are to be large enough to take in the world; for we read that: "He has set the world in their heart." (Ecclesiastes 3:11)

This means obedience; for "largeness of heart" means wisdom: "And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all nations round about. And he spoke three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five. And he spoke of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springs out of the wall: he spoke also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes." (1 Kings 4:29-33)

And: "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." (Job 28:28)

Daily to say to God, "Yours is the kingdom," knowing that the kingdom of God is right within us, is to agree to keep His commandments; for we read again: "I will run the way of your commandments, when You shall enlarge my heart." (Psalm 119:32)

This acknowledgment contains our assurance of righteousness. When we long for holiness of life, and are inclined to despond because of the natural perverseness of our hearts, that causes evil to be present with us even when we would do good, we have but to remember, continually remember, and acknowledge with the whole heart, that we are God's kingdom, and that He can do whatsoever He pleases in us. Nothing is too hard for

Him. Our weakness only gives Him the opportunity more effectually to exhibit His power. He can work in us to His fulfill all the good pleasure of His will. "The Lord is in His holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven." (Psalm 11:4)

But we are His temple, and His throne is in us. So our acknowledgment, "Yours is the kingdom" ought to be a request to the Lord to take to himself His great power and to reign supreme in His kingdom, doing what He will with His own. When we utter the prayer understandingly, we virtually say to Him, "I give the reins of government over to You; cast down and out every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of You, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. Drive out everything that offends. I cannot cleanse the temple--the task is too great for me--so I give it over into your hands, and shall depend on You to see that it is wholly cleansed."

And with this word comes the comforting assurance that He has never failed any who trusted in Him; for: "He is faithful that promised." (Hebrews 10:23)

So as His is the power, to Him shall be the glory, for we shall be "to the praise of His glory" as we trust in Him. "That we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ." (Ephesians 1:12)--Present Truth, November 6, 1902--Matthew 6:13.

The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory

"For yours is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever. Amen." (Matthew 6:13)

This what the Lord Jesus has taught us to say to our Father in heaven, who, because He is in heaven, rules over all, doing whatsoever He will. "The Lord has prepared His throne in the heavens; and His kingdom rules over all." (Psalm 103:19) "But our God is in the heavens: He has done whatsoever He has pleased." (Psalm 115:3)

But the same Lord Jesus tells us: "The kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:21)

Therefore since "the power and the glory" belong to the kingdom, it is evident that all the power and the glory of God will be manifested and revealed in everyone in whom God is allowed to reign supreme. When other lords that have had dominion over

us, are cast out, and God's kingdom fills us, then the power and the glory that pertain to His kingdom, must also fill us.

What a high and holy calling this is! In Christ, "Of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace." (John 1:16) "Thanks be unto God for at His unspeakable gift!" (2 Corinthians 9:15)

May the grace of God, and the gift by grace, abound more and more in our hearts.--Present Truth, October 23, 1902--Matthew 6:13.

Chapter 138

Beautiful Apparel

The Lord said that Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of the lilies of the field. "And why take thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all His glory was not arrayed like one of these." (Matthew 6:28-29)

The reason was that the Lord arrayed the lilies, while Solomon arrayed himself. The contrast is between God's way of doing, and man's way. Man, not the lily of the field, is the crowning work of God's creation; but while the lilies have remained what God has made them, taking their life just as He gives it to them and putting on just that grace and beauty which He bestows, man has sought out many inventions." (Ecclesiastes 7:29)

He has tried in many things to improve upon God's way, but the result has not been an improvement in the sight of God.

The Creator did not design man to be meanly arrayed, while bestowing such beauty of adornment upon the inferior things of His handiwork. He does not wish man to be ignobly arrayed, even in his fallen and degenerate state. The Saviour said, "If God so clothed the grass of the field, which today is and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you?" (Matthew 6:30)

And can there be any better apparel any more beautiful and appropriate garments, than those which He makes for us himself? We make a great mistake when we refuse to let God clothe us with the garments which suit His taste.

And we make that mistake, as the Word tells us, by taking anxious thought about the matter, as though it were one of the main purposes of existence, and studying to be arrayed according to our human taste and fancy without consulting Him. He who apparels the lilies and clothes all nature in her beautiful dress is a wiser and more skillful Artist than any that ever held sway over the fashions of the world.

If we make outward adornment our care and study, we shall prevent the true adornment which the Creator desires us to have. There is the adornment of: "A meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." (1 Peter 3:4)

There is the "fine linen, clean and white, [which is] the righteousness of the saints." (Revelation 19:8) "The Lord will give grace and glory." (Psalm 84:11)

He who clothes the lilies and the sun will give grace and glory to man, even in fuller measure than before the fall. He will share His own beauty and glory with us, if we will "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." (Matthew 6:33)

His righteousness is the most beautiful garment ever beheld. He has put the prayer in our hearts, "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us." (Psalm 90:17)

And His answer is, "Arise, shine; for your light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you." (Isaiah 60:1)--Present Truth, July 11, 1895--Timeline: IV-15 (Sermon on the Mount)--Matthew 6:28-29.

Chapter 139

Our Father's Care

"No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Be not anxious for your life, what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, what you shall put on." (Matthew 6:24-25,RV)

The first part of this passage, concerning the two masters, is self-evident. No man can serve two masters, especially when they are directly opposed to each other, as God and mammon.

Mammon was the Chaldean God supposed to preside over wealth and the acquisition of property. So here it stands for property of any kind, not necessarily great riches, but whatever one acquires of this world's goods.

But what is the force of the "therefore"? Why "Therefore...be not anxious"? Because such anxiety would show us to be servants of mammon, and not servants of God. We serve that for which we live. If our whole anxiety is for food, drink, and clothing, this is an indication that we live for those things, that we serve them, instead of making those things our servants.

But if there were nothing more to life than merely a struggle to get that with which to keep life going, life would not be worth living. But the life is more than meat, and the body more than raiment.

A Lesson from the Birds

"Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow the not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly." (Matthew 6:26)

Father feeds them. Are you not much better than they?

In what respect is man better than the birds? Why, he is of more value than they. "But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: you are of

more value than many sparrows. ... Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them: how much more are you better than the fowls?" (Luke 12:7,24)

It is not that man is better able to make a living than the birds are, for that idea would destroy the Saviour's lesson, which is one of trust in the Lord, and not in ourselves. No; but God who feeds the birds will much more feed us, who are of much greater value than they.

How are the birds fed by the Lord? Do they sit on a limb or in their nest, waiting for Him to drop the food into their mouths? Not by any means. "These wait all upon You, that You may give them their meat in due season. That You give them they gather; You open your hand, they are filled with good." (Psalm 104:27-28)

They do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; but they pick up what God provides for them, and at every season of the year they find something provided.

Can man do more? Does man provide his own food, or "make his own living," as it is sometimes called? In other words, can man create? No; he cannot add an inch to his stature, or an ounce to his weight. Everything comes to him from without--from above.

In reality he does no more than the birds do; he simply picks up what God strews over the whole earth. Why not acknowledge God's hand in the gifts received, instead of claiming that we ourselves do all? for he who is worried and anxious gives God no place in the work.

The Clothing of the Lily

"And why take thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." (Matthew 6:28-29)

What was the difference between Solomon's clothing, gorgeous as it was, and the lilies? Here is something for us to study. We know that Solomon was clothed with garments, out of material taken from plants and animals. Spinning and weaving were necessary. Was it so in the beginning? No; Adam and Eve, as long as they remained

faithful to God, were clothed with light, even as God is. God is clothed with light, as with a garment: "Who cover yourself with light as with a garment." (Psalm 104:2)

And man also when first created was covered with light. "For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and have crowned him with glory and honor." (Psalm 8:5)

But all have sinned, and so have lost the glory of God: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)

And as one consequence, they must have clothing made for them by hand. Let God himself provide this, even as He did for our first parents. "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them." (Genesis 3:21)

But what is the clothing of the lily? It is its color, or the various colors, green, white, yellow, red, that it has "for glory and for beauty." (Exodus 28:2)

Yes, but what composes or forms these colors? Nothing else but light. So the lily has its original clothing of light, which man has lost, and which all Solomon's wealth and wisdom cannot equal. This clothing comes direct from God, without the intervention of human hands.

Now God is "bringing many sons unto glory." (Hebrews 2:10)

The "robe of righteousness" and the "garments of salvation" with which He clothes those who trust Him are the glory of the Lord with which they shall shine forth in the kingdom of their Father. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels." (Isaiah 61:10) "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." (Matthew 13:43)

Well, cannot He who does that which is greatest be trusted to do that which is least? If we believe that God, and His power alone, can give us eternal life and "all things that pertain until life and godliness," (2 Peter 1:3) can we not trust Him to provide the things that pertain to this earthly life? And if we cannot trust Him for this least, do we really have any faith in His promise of eternal life?

Heathenism Professedly Christian

"Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matthew 6:31-33,RV)

"Gentiles" are heathen. The people of God are Israelites, and not Gentiles or heathen, although they are taken out from among the heathen.

The characteristic of heathenism is trust in that which can be seen, instead of in the unseen. That is why they even make images. But it is not necessary that one make graven or molten images, in order to be a heathen. The heathen are wholly absorbed with the things of this life, for they suppose that they themselves must provide for their own wants, even as they make their own gods. Not recognizing the God, "who no man has seen, neither can see," (1 Timothy 6:16) who alone creates and upholds all things, they trust in themselves, and then, finding their own strength (or that which they flatter themselves that they have) inadequate, they actually began to worry.

Suppose now that a professed Christian worries over the future, which is in God's own power? what then? Why, he is simply showing his unbelief in God's power. In other words, he is showing that he is heathen.

But worse this, by professing to be a worshiper of the only true God, and still manifesting the anxiety of the heathen, he is leading men who do not know God to think that He is just like gods of the heathen, and not a loving Father, solicitous for the welfare of His children.

But, worse than all, suppose, as is often the case, that this anxiety becomes greatest when it is a matter of keeping God's commandments? Here is a plain duty, but the man says, "If I do it, how can I get a living?"

Ah, how often that question is asked. There is no question about its being commanded by the Lord, the commandment is too plain to admit of any doubt; the only thought is, "I cannot make a living and keep His commandments."

Yet the man using such language often calls himself a Christian. What sort of a witness is he for God? a false witness. By acting as do the heathen, he is declaring that the God whom he professes to serve is just the same as the heathen gods,--that He is not able to care for those who serve Him. What a pity that men will thus bear false witness against God.

Only One Thing Needful

"Seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matthew 6:33)

If a man cannot trust the Lord for his daily bread, is it possible for him to make others believe that he trusts God for eternal salvation? Certainly not! What trust can a man have in God for eternity, if he cannot trust Him for a day?

He who is worrying over what he shall eat and what he shall drink, and what he shall wear, and who worries especially when it comes to the question of keeping God's commandments, and who finally concludes that he dare not follow God's commandments in certain thing, for instance in Sabbath-keeping, lest he should not make a living, thereby proclaims that in his opinion this life is worth more than the life to come. As a matter of fact, without the life to come, this life is worth nothing. "What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Matthew 16:26)

"The kingdom of God and His righteousness" includes everything. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and that which is to come." (1 Timothy 4:8)

In fact, this life is given us for nothing else than a preparation for the life to come; therefore the surest way to get the most of this life, is diligently to seek the life to come, through faith in the Lord. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us

all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32)--Present Truth, January 27, 1898--Timeline: IV-15 (Sermon on the Mount)--Matthew 6:24-30.

Chapter 140

What the Righteousness of God Is

"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matthew 6:33)

The righteousness of God, says Jesus, is the one thing to be sought in this life. Food and clothing are minor matters in comparison with it. God will supply them, as a matter of course, so that anxious care and worriment need not be depended on them; but to secure God's kingdom and His righteousness should be the only object of life. "Christ Jesus, ... is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." (1 Corinthians 1:30)

Here we are told that Christ is made unto us righteousness as well as wisdom; and since "Christ [is] the wisdom of God," (1 Corinthians 1:24) and "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily," (Colossians 2:9) it is evident that the righteousness which He is made to us is the righteousness of God. Let us see what this righteousness is.

In Psalm 119 the Psalmist thus addresses the Lord: "My tongue shall speak of your Word; for all your commandments are righteousness." (Psalm 119:172)

The commandments are righteousness, not simply in the abstract, but they are the righteousness of God. For proof read the following: "Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath; for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner; but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished. Hearken unto me, you that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear not the reproach of men, neither be you afraid of their revilings." (Isaiah 51:6-7)

What do we learn from this? That they who know the righteousness of God are those in whose heart is His law, and therefore that the law of God is the righteousness of God.

This may be proved again, as follows: "All unrighteousness is sin." (1 John 5:17) "Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law." (1 John 3:4)

Sin is the transgression of the law, and it is also unrighteousness; therefore sin and unrighteousness are identical. But if unrighteousness is transgression of the law, righteousness must be obedience to the law. Or, to put the proposition into mathematical form: Unrighteousness = sin. (1 John 5:17); Transgression of the law = sin. (1 John 3:4)

Therefore, as two things that are equal to the same thing are equal to each other, we have: Unrighteousness = transgression of the law.

This is a negative equation. The same thing, stated in positive terms, would be: Righteousness = obedience to the law.

Now what law is it obedience to, which is righteousness, and disobedience to, which is sin? It is that law which says, "You shall not covet." (Romans 7:7)

For the Apostle Paul tells us that this law convinced him of sin: "I had not known sin, but by the law." (Romans 7:7)

The law of ten commandments, then, is the measure of the righteousness of God. Since it is the law of God and is righteousness, it must be the righteousness of God. There is, indeed no other righteousness.

Since the law is the righteousness of God--a transcript of His character--it is easy to see that to "Fear God and keep His commandments ... is the whole duty of man." (Ecclesiastes 12:13)

Let no one think that his duty will be circumscribed if confined to the ten commandments, for they are "exceeding broad." (Psalm 119:96) "The law is spiritual," (Romans 7:14) and comprehends a great deal more than can be discerned by an ordinary reader. "The natural man receives 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 Corinthians 2:14)

The exceeding breadth of the law of God can be realized only by those who prayerfully meditate upon it.

This righteousness can be "fulfilled in us" only by the power of the indwelling Christ. "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." (Romans 8:4) By faith Christ dwells in the heart: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." (Ephesians 3:17)

And thus faith establishes the law in the life: "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law." (Romans 3:31)

This righteousness is the first thing to be sought for. It is the one object of Christ's work to bring men to the obedience of faith. His name is called Jesus Saviour, for: "He shall save His people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21)

When men traduce the law of God, therefore, and, refuse to acknowledge it as the standard of righteousness, they cast reproach upon the character of God, and frustrate the Gospel of Christ.--Present Truth, June 24, 1897--Timeline: IV-15 (Sermon on the Mount)--Matthew 6:33.

Chapter 141

Judge Not

"Judge not, and you shall not be judged; condemn not, and you shall not be condemned; forgive, and you shall be forgiven." (Luke 6:37)

The one whose disposition is such by grace that he never judges and never condemns, will of necessity not come into judgment and condemnation.

Such a one has passed from death into life, because it is only by becoming a new creature, that men can refrain from pronouncing judgment on others.--Present Truth, April 26, 1894--Original title: Front Page--Timeline: IV-15 (Sermon on the Mount)--Luke 6:37.

Chapter 142

Beam and Mote

One of the strongest lessons that could possibly be given against criticizing, fault-finding, and trying to regulate the conduct of others, is found in these words of Christ: "Why do you behold the mote that is in your brother's eye, but perceive not the beam that is in your own eye? ... Either how can you say to your brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in your eye, when you yourself behold not the beam that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of your own eye, and then shall you see clearly to pull out the mote that is in your brother's eye." (Luke 6:4,42)

But how can a man be sure that his own eye is so clear that he is justified in attempting a surgical operation on his brother's eye? The man in whose eye the beam is, and who sees, or thinks he sees, a mote in his brother's eye, is totally unconscious of the beam in his own eye. He thinks that the fault is all with his brother.

So the fact that one is not conscious of a fault in himself, is not therefore any reason why he should think that he has not the fault, and that he can serve as a regulator for his brethren.

Is it then impossible for one man to point out another's fault to him, and to assist him in removing it? Yes; and here is the rule for doing it: "If a man be overtaken in a fault, you which are spiritual restore such a one in the Spirit of meekness; considering yourself, lest you also be tempted." (Galatians 6:1)

The one who sees wrong in another must be actuated first of all by the desire to help and restore his brother, and not by any spirit of fault-finding. Then he must be sure that he himself is spiritual. This throws his gaze back upon himself, rather than on his brother; but specially does it direct his gaze to Christ. And then having found the Spirit of God as his own, he may go in the Spirit to his brother, but still considering his own fallibility and infirmities.

No man can be a faithful preacher of the word to others, who does not preach to himself in every sermon that he preaches. No man can be a successful rescuer of lost

souls, who does not recognize his own sinfulness. When a man is most conscious of his own failings, is the time when, if he trusts the Lord, he can best help others.

No man can deal as he ought with any sinner, who does not see himself in that other's sin, no matter what the sin may be. If he has not committed the same act in detail, he must know that he has the same nature, and that he has done that which is at least as bad, if not worse, when the different circumstances are taken into account.

Such a one will not condemn, but will restore. He will not chill and repel the erring one, but will win him. The reason why Christ is so perfect a Saviour as He is, is because while perfectly sinless himself, He comes to us as though He were one of us,--as though He had committed all the sins that we have,--perfectly identified with our nature, so that we are not afraid of Him.

He is the only one upon whom we should look in our efforts for others. Let Him be the only model.--Present Truth, May 3, 1894--Timeline: IV-15 (Sermon on the Mount)--Luke 6:41-42.

Chapter 143

Do You Want to Know the Truth?

"Seek, and you shall find." (Matthew 7:7)

The person who wants to know the truth, and seeks to know it, will find it. The way to look for it is to search for it as the man in the parable searched for the treasure that was hid in the field. He really wanted to find it, and was willing to give up all that he possessed for it.

The attitude of the one who is inquiring about truth makes all the difference between getting it and losing it.

"If any man will do His will, he shall know the doctrine." (John 7:17)

If a man does not want to do the will of God, he can easily deceive himself by shutting his eyes to the light. He who sets his heart to learn the will of God in any matter, at whatever cost to self, will get the light.

The complaint is sometimes made that there are so many conflicting theories that one does not know what to believe. We have no business to believe anything but the word of God. Anyone who wants to know God's will, will find it in the word. Multitudes of souls are being deceived, for the time has come when the devil has come down, "having great wrath, because he knows that he has but a short time." (Revelation 12:12)

His deceptions are so subtle, that if possible he would deceive the very elect. The only safe attitude is to be truly seeking to know the Lord's will. When the Lord speaks, the genuine seeker knows that what He says is truth, because His name is: "Faithful and True." (Revelation 19:11)

The seeking will be to learn what He says, not to find out if He means what He says. Just here is the danger. One who is seeking to be convinced that the Lord does not mean just what He says, is very sure to be successful, at the peril of his soul.

When men are convinced of a truth, and are looking for some way to avoid yielding obedience to it, they have a powerful ally at hand to help them. We are told that as the enemy nears the time when his work will be cut short by the coming of the Lord, he will work "With all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." (2 Thessalonians 2:10)

It is the love of the truth, for truth's sake, that we must have. Then it will make no difference whether it is popular and pleasant to the natural heart or not. We shall search for it and find it and obey it; for Jesus Christ is the Truth and the Life. Receiving the love of the truth is receiving the love of Christ.

Rejecting a truth, or seeking for some way to evade it, is rejecting the Lord, its Author, because of the cross. Those who love the Lord, glory in the cross. "They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward." (Jeremiah 50:5)

They shall know the way of the Lord, and delight in it.--Present Truth, May 24, 1894--Timeline: IV-15 (Sermon on the Mount)--Matthew 7:7.

Chapter 144

Asking and Receiving (1895)

The Lord says, "Ask, and it shall be given unto you." (Matthew 7:7)

Already the Lord has given men everything; for: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

And: "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32)

Christ is heaven's greatest gift; and the giving of Him is proof that "all things" have been freely given. Therefore we do not need to importune God to bestow upon us good gifts, but only to express our belief that He has given them, and our gratitude to Him that it is so. This is the prayer of faith.

The fact that people often ask God for things which they do not get, is no evidence that God has not given us liberally as His word has said. God gives men only good things, and He alone knows the needs of the soul. While we pray, "The Spirit also helps our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. [The Spirit] makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God." (Romans 8:26-27)

Prayer must not be offered according to the will of man, without reference to God's will; and then whatever God sends in answer must be taken as being in harmony with His will, even though it may seem at first quite otherwise. "All things work together for good to them that love God." (Romans 8:28)

In this way we can believe that we receive the things we ask, as we are told to do, although we may not recognize them in the shapes God's hand has given them for our good. "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them." (Mark 11:24)

The devil tries to get people to stop at the mere asking for needed blessings. But an essential step in the process of realization consists in grasping them. And this must be done by faith. Faith is that by which we lay hold upon the object sought.

If we ask and then wait for God to make it apparent to our natural senses that we have the blessing, before believing that it is ours, we are very likely to lose it altogether. This is one of Satan's most successful cheats. Faith says, "Believe that you receive them." (Mark 11:24)

And if we will do so, we can be as thankful to God as though they had appeared in the form we would have given them ourselves.

It must not be forgotten that the attitude of the receiver toward God must be one of praise. God can work marvellously for the person who will give Him the glory.

But He cannot work for the one who would take the glory to himself.--Present Truth, April 4, 1895--Timeline: IV-15 (Sermon on the Mount)--Matthew 7:7.

Chapter 145

Knocking

The Saviour says, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For everyone that asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened." (Matthew 7:7-8)

This is said to show how surely prayers to the Lord are answered. Yet many people fail to receive any answers to their prayers. Why is it?

Very often it is because they do not stay to see the door opened, but, like the mischievous boy in the street, run away as soon as they have knocked. People are in too great a hurry to be off. The instruction is: "Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord." (Psalm 27:14)

And David said: "O Lord, in the morning shall You hear my voice; in the morning will I order my prayer unto You, and will keep watch." (Psalm 5:3,RV)--Present Truth, August 30, 1894--Timeline: IV-15 (Sermon on the Mount)--Matthew 7:7-8.

Chapter 146

Asking and Receiving (1896)

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; For everyone that asks receives; and he that seeks finds." (Matthew 7:7-8)

If we seek, with this assurance, it is worthwhile to know what to seek, what it is that is worth the finding. The same One who gives the assurance that we shall find, tells us what to seek: "Seek the Lord while He may be found." (Isaiah 55:6) "Seek the Lord, and His strength; seek His face evermore." (Psalm 105:4)

Here is something that is certainly worth finding. If we find the Lord, we find His strength. He is the Almighty, therefore whoever finds Him becomes "strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness." (Colossians 1:11,RV)

In His presence is fullness of joy. Not only so, but: "In Him all things consist." (Colossians 1:17)

And therefore he who finds the Lord has with Him all things. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32)

But is the Lord, with all this treasure, hard to find? Nay, quite the contrary; "he that seeks, finds," because: "He is not far from everyone of us." (Acts 17:27)

More than this, He is seeking us: "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10)

Since He is seeking us, what can possibly hinder us from finding Him, if we also seek Him? Each seeking the other, we are sure to come together.

The statement that the Lord came to seek the lost, points to the fact that man was once with Him, but wandered away. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way." (Isaiah 53:6)

When people sin, they imagine that God is angry with them, and that He has turned away from them. Not so; it is they who turn away and hide from Him, while He seeks them. Adam and Eve, after their sin, "hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden." (Genesis 3:8)

But the Lord did not hide from them; on the contrary, He sought them, and when they responded to His call, they found each other.

Therefore, since it is we who "hid as it were our faces from Him," (Isaiah 53:3) and He is all the time seeking us, it is evident that all we have to do to seek and find Him is to turn round and look up. How easy the way, and how blessed the result! Let each one, then make these words his own: "When You said, Seek my face, my heart said unto You, Your face, Lord, will I seek," (Psalm 27:8) assured that the finding will be sure, speedy, and glorious.--Present Truth, December 3, 1896--Timeline: IV-15 (Sermon on the Mount)--Matthew 7:7-8.

Chapter 147

Precepts and Promises

Precepts and promises are both very plain, and yet, like every word of the Lord, they contain much that we have never yet learned. The promises alone will be enough for our present study.

The promise is, "Ask, and it shall be given unto you." (Matthew 7:7)

Yet many say, "I have asked, again and again, and nothing has been given me; if this promise is true, why do I not receive?"

You have answered your own question, When you say, "If this promise is true," or, "If this means what it says," you show that you do not believe. And how can you call upon Him in whom you have not believed? He who does not ask in faith, does not really ask at all.

You would not go to a haberdasher's and ask for diamonds. Why not? Because you do not believe that diamonds are to be found there. Even if you should say the words, "Please show me some diamonds," anybody would know that you were but joking, and did not mean what you said, so that you do not really ask for them.

Even so it is with many so-called prayers to the Lord. People say over certain words, often without any thought of what they mean; and if they do give a thought to the meaning, they do not really expect actually to get the thing that they ask for: and then they complain that God does not answer prayer. Yes, He does; but they have never prayed. They have not asked for anything.

It, is useless to try to deceive God, God can hear sounds that are muffled to the ear of mortals. He hears the thought of the heart. Empty words, not prompted by the heart, are but inarticulate sounds; it is what the heart desires, that the Lord hears. Wherever there is a sincere desire for any good thing, be assured that God understands it, and gratifies it, even though not a word be uttered. "The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing." (Psalm 34:10)

"Any good thing." Ah, there is the secret of many a failure in prayer. God is good, and deals only in good things. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights." (James 1:17)

He has never promised anything but good; but we have not always desired the good. We desired to feel well, to be free from smitings of conscience, while continuing to do that which is not good. So we did not really ask for the things which God keeps in stock. He supplies every good thing, and we ought to be glad that He does not offer anything else. "This is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us; And if we know that He hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him." (1 John 5:14-15)

And how comprehensive is His will! He wills that we should be saved, and that we should have everything that pertains to life. If we know that God hears us when we pray, we know that we have the things that we asked for. And we know that He hears us when we ask according to His will, that is, ask from the heart for the good things that He has to bestow.

Than do we not have to wait a long time for the answer to our prayers? Certainly not. What is the promise of the Lord? "Everyone that asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened." (Matthew 7:8)

Do you take notice that the receiving is in the same tense as the asking? He that asks--a present act--receives also a present act. The receiving is coincident with the asking. As soon as we ask, we receive. That is the promise of Him who cannot lie.

But here comes an honest man, who says he has asked for things that he did not immediately receive; he was sincere in the asking, too. What shall we say in such a case? We shall say, "Let God be true, but every man a liar." (Romans 3:4)

Yet we do not need to accuse this man of lying in this matter. We may, however, ask him a question, "Was the thing for which you asked something that you needed immediately?" "Oh, no; I did not need it at the time; but I thought I should like to have it beforehand, so that there would be no doubt about getting it in time."

Ah, yes; quite so; you did not feel certain about the promise of God, to give you grace in every time of need, and so you thought that you would experiment a little. And you called that faith!

Now begin over again, and begin right. Be content with what you need for today, and do not try to pile up blessings ahead. Ask for such things as you have need of. Do not go to trying experiments with the Lord. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." (Matthew 6:34)

And therefore the good with which to meet the evil can well wait until the day comes.

God is better than man. Some may think that this is an unnecessary statement; but the fact is that many people do not believe it. There are many people who call themselves Christians, who think that they are a great deal better than the Lord is; for they would deem it an insult to be thought capable of acting as they expect God to act. They would interrupt a man if he began to make an apology to them, and would say, "Never mind that; say no more about it; it is all right, the same as though the thing had never happened."

Yet they do not believe that God forgives their sins, which they have confessed again and again. But God says that the case is reversed.

A parent studies how to find out some new thing with which to please his children; he delights in the gratification that it gives them. He loves to see their faces light up, as they undo the new treasure which their father's love has devised for them.

Very good; but God is our Father, and His love for us is as much greater than the love of any earthly father for his child, as God is greater than any man. Take the delight which a father feels in giving good things to his children, and multiply that by the number which expresses the difference between God and the man, and you have the readiness with which God gives the best things to His children. It is infinity. "Therefore all things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets." (Matthew 7:12)

There are many men of the world, men who call themselves infidels, who nevertheless have no fault to find with this rule, which is called "the golden rule." They decry all talk about God; they do not believe in faith, and in answers to prayer; but they say that they believe in the religion of the golden rule. That is good enough for them.

It ought to be good enough for them; for it is the sum of the entire Bible. It is the law and the prophets. No one can keep the golden rule, who does not keep all the commandments of God, and who does not believe all that the prophets have written.

Moreover let it be remembered that the golden rule hinges on faith in God's readiness to answer prayer. God is infinitely more willing to give us good things than we are to provide for our children, therefore we should do unto others as we would have them do to us.

All we have to give is what the Lord has already given to us, but He gives abundantly, therefore we ought to be willing to give freely. We cannot do anything good to any person except as God acts in us. But God is near, for all things that we call upon Him for, and our reaching out to do good to others is the only evidence that we appreciate good things, and wish God to deal them to us. "For what nation is there so great, who has God so near unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon Him for?" (Deuteronomy 4:7)

This brings us to the thought with which we may well close, that real prayer is receiving. He who does not receive, does not pray. That is just what the text teaches: "Everyone that asks receives." (Matthew 7:8)

Praying is not begging, it is not trying to move God to do something, to which it is possible He may be disinclined; least of all is it an attempt to have God act contrary to His law, or to nature.

No; it is simply the coming to God, with hearts open, saying in our inmost being that we are now ready to take the things which He has so long held out to us. It is the saying to God that we are willing that He should act in us according to His unchangeable law, according to unperverted nature.

Giving is the law of God's life; therefore everyone who is willing to receive of God, must of necessity have the good things desired. "[He] gives us richly all things to enjoy." (1 Timothy 6:17)

Let us enjoy them.--Present Truth, March 29, 1900--Timeline: IV-15 (Sermon on the Mount)--Matthew 7:7-12.

Chapter 148

Business Principles

While the selfish saying, "Honesty is the best policy," ought never to be countenanced as the utterance of a really honest man, it is nevertheless true that the Saviour's rule, "All things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you even so to them," (Matthew 7:12) expresses the only principle on which any business can be successfully carried on in the long run.

The following story from the Youth's Companion illustrates this, and shows also that a reputation for honest work and fair dealing is the best advertisement that any man can have. The man, however, who would have his work praise and recommend him, must do good works from the love of it, without thought of the reward; for "policy" always overreaches itself. "You have a peculiar fire insurance agent in this town, remarked a newcomer one day to an old resident. I had about made up my mind to change my insurance from the L. M. Mutual Company to some other concern; I had a suspicion that it might not be absolutely sound. So, having seen the advertisement of a number of companies on the window of a Mr. Patlin, your agent, I went in there. He seemed to represent almost all the important companies about here except the one I thought of pulling out of. It seemed strange, but he advised me strongly to let the insurance stay where it was, even persuading me that the L. M. Mutual was perfectly sound. He said he could do no better by me, and perhaps not so well. So of course he lost so much business. Well, said the old man, I'm not only not surprised, but I should not have known what to make of it if you had had any other experience with Mr. Patlin. He always advises everybody else to do what he himself would do in the same circumstances. It never makes the least difference to him whether what he says is going to increase or decrease his own business. That is the way with all that family; his brothers are just so, in other lines of trade. But how do they get along? the young man queried. Does this agent make a success by letting business go by that is all ready to drop into his lap? No businessman in town has more to show as the result of his methods, replied the other; and yet I suppose some of the self-proclaimed 'hustlers' would think Mr. Patlin a little slow. What they lose sight of is the long haul. He has been here a good while; he intends to be here a good while longer. People, for some reason, get back to his office, even if he does drive them off occasionally."

The young man didn't carry the argument any further, but he went away with something new to think about.--Present Truth, May 22, 1902--Timeline: IV-15 (Sermon on the Mount)--Matthew 7:12.

Chapter 149

Solemn Warnings

"Enter in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads unto life, and few there be that find it." (Matthew 7:13-14)

The way to enter into life, according to our Saviour's own words on another occasion, is to: "Keep the commandments," (Matthew 19:17)--in other words, to do right,--to: "Cease to do evil," (Isaiah 1:16) "[and] learn to do well." (Isaiah 1:17)

Now the reason why the road to destruction is so broad, is because a person may get there by doing anything not in harmony with the ten commandments. There are thousands of ways in which a person may do wrong; there is only one way of doing right.

The way to life is both a strait and straight. Right means straight, direct; as Bunyan expresses it, is a way cast up as straight as a line can make it. The broad way is all the world beside this straight and narrow way, which is not of this world.

But before the way to life is entered upon, one must pass through the gate leading to it. What is this gate? Said Christ: "I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." (John 10:9)

The way to life is to keep the commandments; but before a start can be made in this way, the sinner must be delivered from the body of death, which can be done only by Jesus Christ. "For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwells no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I

delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." (Romans 7:14-25)

All a man's efforts to walk in the narrow way without Christ are vain and useless. But the first thing that God does for the sinner when he accepts Christ, is to forgive his sins; therefore pardon for past sins, through our Lord Jesus Christ, is the way into the Christian life.

When we have entered the door, however, our connection with Christ does not cease, if we walk the narrow way. Says Christ again: "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6)

How can it be that the keeping of the commandment is the way to life, and that at the same time Christ is the way also? Simply thus: Christ himself is "the truth," and the law of God is declared to be the truth: "Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and your law is the truth." (Psalm 119:142)

Christ is the law personified, and he who lives in Christ, and abides in Him, keeps the commandments. And he who does not abide in Christ does not keep the commandments, for Christ says: "Abide in me, and I in you. As a branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in a divine; no more can you, except you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He that abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit; for without me you can do nothing." (John 15:4-5)

The same thought is expressed by Paul in: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. 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. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes." (Romans 10:1-4)

The righteousness of God is the law of God; the Jews had not accepted Christ, and therefore they failed of attaining righteousness, for Christ is the only way by which the

righteousness of the law may be obtained. That Christ is the end or object of the law, in the sense that in Him we are enabled to keep the commandments, is evident from the next verse, which says: "For Moses describes the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which does those things shall live by them." (Romans 10:5)

So Christ is both the door and the way of life. Whosoever at the last day stands without fault before the throne of God, will be only "complete in Him." (Colossians 2:10)

The way is described as a narrow way, and yet it is the only way in which there is any real liberty and freedom of action. Said David: "I will walk at liberty; for I seek your precepts." (Psalm 119:45)

Said Christ to the Jews who were walking in the broad way, and boasting of their freedom: "If you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed; And you shall know the truth [the law of God as revealed in Christ], and the truth shall make you free. ... Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever commits sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abides not in the house for ever; but the Son abides ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed." (John 8:31-32,34-36)

There is no liberty except in the narrow way. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." (2 Corinthians 3:17) "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. You shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree brings forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit." (Matthew 7:15-17)

This warning is especially applicable at this time, for Christ said that one of the characteristics of the last days would be that: "Many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many." (Matthew 24:11)

Peter, also, whose second epistle treats especially of the last days, says: "But there were false prophets also among the people [in old time], even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." (2 Peter 2:1-2)

A prophet is a teacher. Peter's statement that there shall be false teachers in the last days, is the same as Christ's statement that there shall be false prophets. These false teachers will have a wonderful power to counterfeit the truth. Said Christ again: "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." (Matthew 24:24)

This has undoubted reference to the phenomena of Spiritualism, whose mediums are enabled, by their connection with the devil and his angels, to counterfeit the miracles of Christ and His apostles so successfully that no man by his unaided senses can detect the difference. Some will thoughtlessly ask, "Why does the Lord allow His children to be thus deceived?"

He does not. The people of God will not be deceived, and there will be no excuse for anybody's being deceived; for ample warning has been given. Says John: "Every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof you have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world." (1 John 4:3)

This is of itself a sufficient warning against being deceived by the miracles of Spiritualism. All the miracles and the pretended good of Spiritualism are done for the express purpose of detracting from the glory of Christ as the son of God. If any are deceived by them, it is only because: "They received not the love of the truth." (2 Thessalonians 2:10)

In the book of Deuteronomy there is a test by which we may detect the false prophet. Says Lord: "But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if you say in your heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken? When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken, but the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him." (Deuteronomy 18:20-22)

That certainly is evidence enough, for the word of the Lord never fails.

But it will be urged that sometimes the signs and wonders do come to pass, and that in such a case nobody can be blamed for not distinguishing between the truth and the false. The Lord has anticipated this objection, for we read: "If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and gives you a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spoke unto you, saying, Let us go after other gods, which you have not known, and let us serve them; Or that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God proves you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after the Lord your God, and fear Him, and keep His commandments, and obey His voice, and you shall serve Him, and cleave unto Him." (Deuteronomy 13:1-4)

In this we are directed to the word of the Lord as the great counterfeit detector. The whole thing is summed up by the prophet as follows: "And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." (Isaiah 8:19-20)

And this test is not only good in the case of the teacher of Spiritualism, but in the detection of false teachers of the less pronounced type. Whenever a teacher utters a thing that deviates from the plain word of God, he is not to be received. It may be that his error is comparatively slight; but an error is an error, and he who accepts the slightest degree of error, has no warrant against accepting the diabolical teachings of Spiritualism, which is the sum of all errors.

Our only safety, then, is sticking to the word of God. He in whose heart the law of God is, will not slide. "Not everyone that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name? and in your name have cast out devils? and in your name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity." (Matthew 7:21-23)

Men may deceive their fellow-men with a great profession, they may deceive themselves; but they cannot deceive the Lord, who looks upon the heart. The Lord does

not condemn the making of a profession of religion, nor prophesying in His name; what He condemns is the lawless lives of many who do these things.

A man cannot serve God, without having a form of godliness; but no perfection of form will save a man who does not do the will of God. The will of God is law of God: "I delight to do your will, O my God: yea, your law is within my heart. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, you know." (Psalm 40:8-9) "Behold, you are called a Jew, and rest in the law, and make your boast of God, And know His will, and approve the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law." (Romans 2:17-18)

And when Christ says, "Depart from me, you that work iniquity," (Matthew 7:23)--He really says: "Depart from me, you that work unlawful deeds."

Here again we are brought to the fact that Christ is the truth,--the embodiment of the ten commandments,--and that no one can be really in Christ,--a Christian,--who does not keep the commandments. To profess Christianity while living in open violation of the law of God, is the sheerest hypocrisy.

False prophets are declared to be a wolves in sheep's clothing; this hypocritical garb is necessary at first in order that men may be deceived; but sin has so terribly blinding an effect that after error has once been accepted and cherished, the wolves may throw off their mask, and appear in their true character, and still the poor, deluded victims will regard them as friends of the flock.

The sum of the whole matter is to build on a rock. The rock is the truth of God as it is in Christ Jesus, as far distinguished from the slime and mud of worldly things, in which all men grovel by nature.

He who builds on anything outside of the word of God, is like the man who builds his house on the sand of the seashore at low tide, or who builds in the dry bed of a stream which in winter is a torrent. No matter how beautiful a structure he may build for himself, nor how smoothly the foundation may be laid, "There shall be an overflowing shower; and you, O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall rend it. Lo, when the wall is fallen, shall it not be said unto you, Where is the daubing wherewith you have daubed it? Therefore thus says the Lord God; I will even rend it with a stormy

wind in my fury; and there shall be an overflowing shower in my anger, and great hailstones in my fury to consume it. So will I break down the wall that you have daubed with untempered mortar, and bring it down to the ground, so that the foundation thereof shall be discovered, and it shall fall, and you shall be consumed in the midst thereof: and you shall know that I am the Lord. Thus will I accomplish my wrath upon the wall, and upon them that have daubed it with untempered mortar, and will say unto you, The wall is no more, neither they that daubed it." (Ezekiel 13:11-13)

Then, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man." (Ecclesiastes 12:13)

Thus shall we be: "Fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone." (Ephesians 2:19-20)--Signs of the Times, September 1, 1887--Timeline: IV-15 (Sermon on the Mount)--Matthew 7:13-25.

Chapter 150

A Tree and Its Fruit

"Every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes." (Luke 6:43)

That is one of the simplest propositions to be found in the whole Bible; yet there is probably not a text in the Bible that is more misunderstood. Nearly everyone who reads it imagines that it means that he must inspect everybody else and measure every other person's deeds; when it teaches exactly the opposite. Notice: "Every tree is known by his own fruit." (Luke 6:43)

Very well; but who is it that knows the fruit? Is it the tree itself? No; not by any means. Is it another tree that stands in the same row? or any other tree in the garden? Impossible; no tree in the garden is, or can be, the judge of any other tree's fruit. All that any tree can do is to bear fruit; it is not fitted for anything else, and if it should attempt anything else, then it would be of no use at all, except to cut up for firewood. "And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." (Matthew 3:10)

The gardener is the one to judge of the fruit, not only of one tree, but of all.

The trouble with those who read these words of Christ, is that each one thinks of everybody else as a tree, whose fruit is to be proved, and forgets that he himself is also a tree. It is as though each tree in a garden should imagine itself to be the gardener. In that case there would not be much fruit of any kind. The only tree that would be of any value would be the one that was content to be simply a tree, neither trying to bear the fruit of another tree, nor to train another tree to bear its kind of fruit.

Read the connection, and you will see that the whole is a warning against judging another. "Why do you behold the mote that is in your brother's eye, but perceive not the beam that is in your own eye? Either how can you say to your brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in your eye, when you behold not the beam that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of your own eye, and then shall you see clearly to pull out the mote that is in your brother's eye. For a good tree brings not forth

corrupt fruit, neither does a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth that which is evil; for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks." (Luke 6:41-45)

God is the husbandman. It is He who has planted the trees, that by their fruit He might be glorified: "Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be my disciples." (John 15:8)

And it is He who alone can judge of the fruit: "And if you call on the Father, who without respect of persons judges according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." (1 Peter 1:17)

And not in boastfully judging another's work. Let us be content to bear fruit, and leave to God the work of deciding as to its quality. Let not us, who are but plants, imagine that we are the gardener.--Present Truth, July 1, 1897--Original title: Front Page--Timeline: IV-15 (Sermon on the Mount)--Luke 6:43.

Chapter 151

By Their Fruits

In the sermon on the mount, the Saviour said, "You shall know them by their fruits." (Matthew 7:16)

Whom shall we know by their fruits? and what shall we know of them? These are questions that are worth attention.

The common idea is that in these words the Saviour gave a test of character; that He has given us all a rule which we are to go about applying to everybody we meet, and measuring them up, and deciding on their fitness or unfitness for heaven, or at least of their worthiness to be received in the fellowship with people so good as we are.

Then again, they are taken as applying to one's own self, as if each individual were required to be continually taking an inventory of his own good and bad deeds, so as to be able to tell at any moment just how high or how low he stands in the Christian scale.

All this is but another illustration of the common practice of taking an expression out of its connection, and giving to it an arbitrary interpretation; of putting a meaning upon a text, instead of drawing the meaning out. Let us read the text in its connection. "Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. You shall know them by their fruits." (Matthew 7:15-16)

Notice in the first place, that this text says nothing about judging ourselves. Those whom we are to know by their fruits are others besides ourselves.

Bear in mind, also, that this is spoken only of a certain class--"false prophets"--and not of people in general. Neither does it tell us that we are to judge the character even of this class; and we are never warranted in assuming that the Scriptures mean what they do not say.

How are we to act towards these false prophets? Beware of them. Why? Because if we heed them we shall certainly be led astray. What is the work of a prophet? It is to teach, to instruct. The work of a false prophet, therefore, is to teach false doctrines; and

we are commanded to: "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causes to err from the words of knowledge." (Proverbs 19:27)

But how are we to know the false teachers from the true? The text last referred to gives us the clue. "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causes to err from the words of knowledge." "Go from the presence of a foolish man, when you perceive not in him the lips of knowledge." (Proverbs 14:7)

We are to prove the teachers by their teaching. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." (Isaiah 8:20) "He whom God has sent, speaks the words of God." (John 3:34) "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." (1 Peter 4:11)

This is how we are to know the teachers, whether they are of God. Someone will say, "What is the use, then, of having teachers? I thought that teachers were for the purpose of telling us what is true and what is false. If we cannot depend on them, but have to decide for ourselves, why can we not get along without them?"

Teachers are indeed necessary, but they are not to take the place of God to us. Christ is the light of the world, and He himself is the only light to light every man that comes into the world. He says, "If you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed; And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:31-32)

The promise of the new covenant is, "They shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least to the greatest." (Hebrews 8:11)

The reason for this is found in the words of Christ, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes unto me." (John 6:45)

Christ is the truth. "Jesus said unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6)

No man can know truth, except as he knows Christ. And Christ must be revealed in and to us by the Father. "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's

womb, and called me by His grace, To reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." (Galatians 1:15-16) "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Colossians 1:27)

When we know Him indeed, we know the truth. That is, we know truth; we can tell the difference between truth and error. Then we are to go on, "being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." (Colossians 1:10)

We are to "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 3:18)

The word of God, like God himself, is unfathomable. The more we learn of it, the more there is for us to learn. There is, and will be to all eternity, something new for us to learn, even in that with which we already are committed.

The work of the true teacher is to open the words of God to the people. He is to lead them to the words of life, that they may drink from the same fountain from which he has drunk. Our part is to have such communion with the Lord that when a thing is presented to us we may know at once whether it is truth or error. We are to know how to distinguish between the voice of the Good Shepherd and the voices of strangers.

So we find that the fruits of the false prophets, by which we are to know-not judge-them to be false prophets, are their teachings. And each one, instead of depending on some minister to tell him what the Scriptures mean, is to have such a knowledge of the truth in Jesus, that he can for himself decide as to the correctness of the minister's teaching.

Thus no man can throw his responsibility upon another. Let everyone take heed that he does not reject truth. As for judging anybody, that is to be left to the one Judge--the Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy.--Present Truth, January 4, 1894--Timeline: IV-15 (Sermon on the Mount)--Matthew 7:16.

Chapter 152

A Really Good Man

"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth that which is evil. ... A good tree brings not forth corrupt fruit; neither does a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." (Luke 6:45,43)

From good only good can come. A good man does only good things. A good man can no more do bad things, than a good tree can bear bad fruit. "Every tree is known by his own fruit." (Luke 6:44)

No matter what the appearance of a tree may be, its fruit is the test of its character. If it looks good, and yet brings forth poor fruit, that shows that its pretenses are false. Even so if a man professes to be good, and is called good, and yet does bad things, that shows his profession to be a vain one.

But what is it to be good, and to do good deeds? The last part of this question answers the whole. To be a good man is to do good deeds, "He that does righteousness is righteous." (1 John 3:7)

Not that doing good deeds makes one good. Far from it. It is the being good that makes one do good deeds. The good deeds are the natural, inevitable result of the goodness that is within. But the good deeds are the measure of the man's goodness. To be good is to do good, for goodness is active.

Righteousness is right doing. Just as a man cannot do good unless he is good, so a man cannot be good without doing good. It is the fault of mere "professors" of religion, that the world has for the most part a false idea of what Christianity is. It is too often thought to be mere sentiment, the holding of certain correct ideas.

Passing by all false ideas, we come direct to the truth, which is that Christianity is a life,--the life. To be a Christian, is to live right. Christianity is the life of Christ in men and women. One's life is made up of what one does; of everything that one does. Every moment of a man's life, and every act, goes to make up his life. Every act of the true

Christian is a Christian act. That means that every act of the true Christian is a Christlike act,--an act which is the product of Christ's life.

Christ is the standard of Christianity. He is "the Son of man." (Matthew 8:20)

He is "the Man Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 2:5)

Only as one is in Him, can one be "a perfect man." (Ephesians 4:13)

Christ is the representative Man. He is God's idea of what a man ought to be. In Him we find the reality of God's ideal as to man. That is to say, that every real man, every true man, every perfect man, must be a Christian. Just to the extent that a man is below the standard of Christ's life, is he below the standard of a perfect man; he is so much less than a man.

People often complain of the narrowness of their sphere. They long for great things. They feel that their field is too narrow to allow any real expansion to their lives. They despise the humdrum of the everyday round of duties.

Such should remember that the greater part of Christ's life on earth was lived in an obscure town of mean reputation, and that there He was but a common laborer. Only the last three years of His life was he before the public as a teacher and preacher.

At twelve years of age, a Jewish child was reckoned a member of the synagogue, to which only men belonged, and at that age, Jesus, who was subject to His parents, would naturally begin to take an active share in the work of the family.

At thirty He began His public ministry. Therefore we see that eighteen years of His life were spent as a carpenter. That is, His experience as a carpenter was just six times as long as His career as a public teacher.

But during all that time He was the Son of God. He was the Saviour, Christ the Lord, just as really while He was working at the carpenter's bench, as when He was teaching and healing diseases. He was doing the will of God just as really, and just as perfectly, when He was driving the saw and the plane, as when He was silencing the Pharisees, blessing little children, and making the lame to walk. "God was with Him,"

(Acts 10:38) when He was a carpenter in Nazareth, just the same as when He was going about and: "healing all that were oppressed of the devil;" (Acts 10:38) for He said to the Father, "You are my trust from my youth." (Psalm 71:5)

These are simple facts in the life of Christ that are too often overlooked, but which it is necessary to remember if we would live the real Christian life. Did you ever hear the question asked, "What kind of carpenter was Jesus of Nazareth?"

Do you say that it is impossible to answer it? that we have no statement about it? Not so; we know just as well as we know anything about Him, that He was a good carpenter. How do we know that? We know it from the fact that "God was with Him," and that He was a good man. God was in Him, and that was what made Him "the Man."

If He had not been a good carpenter, He would not have been a good man. If this seems irreverent to anyone, it is because he has not accustomed himself to think what it means to be a Christian. To be a Christian means to be a good man,--just such a man as Christ was; and a good man is one who does everything well that he has to do.

Remember the axiom that being good means doing good work, not a part of the time, but all the time. It does not mean doing some things well and other things poorly, but doing well everything that he professes to do. More than half the earthly life of Jesus was spent as a carpenter. It is evident therefore that if He had not done good work as a carpenter there would have been a large part of His life when He was not good, and this thought cannot be entertained for a moment.

As before stated, and as it must be evident to every person, it takes every act of a man's life to make up his life. There is not a single thing that one has to do as a carpenter, a farmer, a housekeeper, a dressmaker, or as a servant in any line whatever, that does not go to make, up the life. Now if one is a Christian, everyone of these acts, no matter how seemingly insignificant, must be a Christian act, that is, an act that comes from the life of Christ dwelling in the person; for the Christian has not two lives, but only one, and that is the life of Christ.

In this connection a few texts might be read with profit, as showing that the Gospel is concerned with every detail of one's life and work. "Whatsoever your hand finds to do, do it with your might." (Ecclesiastes 9:10) "And whatsoever you do, do it heartily,

as to the Lord, and not to men; Knowing that of the Lord you shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. ... Whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." (Colossians 3:23-24,17)

From all this it is evident that for a professed Christian to do poor work, to slight his work, and not to put the full measure of his strength into everything that he does, is a disgrace to his profession. It is to dishonor Christ.

Since Christianity does not consist merely in singing hymns and making prayers, and in doing certain acts of benevolence, but in the whole of the daily life, it follows that the true Christian, being a good man, will be a good workman in whatever line he follows.

Of course all men are not equally adapted to the same thing; but the man who is led by the Spirit of the Lord will not make the mistake of choosing labor to which he is not adapted. Having been guided to the right thing, to the work that God has given him to do, he will be guided by the same Spirit to perfection; for in Christ there is perfection. "Blessed is the man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord and in His law does he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he does shall prosper." (Psalm 1:1-3)

There is no exception here. Everything that the godly man does shall prosper. There is nothing that concerns any human being that is too small for God to be interested in, and to direct. There is nothing in this world, of anything that needs to be done, that is so small and insignificant that it can be done right without the power of God. And whatever is done wholly in His strength, must be done in the best possible manner.

Every inspired prayer is a promise. "The Spirit ... makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God." (Romans 8:27)

Therefore when the Spirit prompts a prayer, we know that it is God's will that we should have the thing prayed for. Now in the prayer of Moses the man of God we read,

"Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work, of our hands establish it." (Psalm 90:17)

So then if one is consciously and willingly a dweller in God, the work of his hands, no matter in what line, whether great or small according to man's estimate, will be established. Everything that he does will be done so well that it will stand throughout eternity. He will not be engaged in a business that he will be ashamed of in the Judgment, as the work that he does will be such that he will not be ashamed to have it exhibited there. Isn't that a glorious possibility?

Christianity is not a small matter. To be a good man means a great deal more than most people think. The true idea of Christianity, if accepted, would make a complete revolution in one's whole life. A few such Christians in every community would make a vast difference in that community, even though they were but day laborers.

Would that all professed Christians would rightly represent "the Man Christ Jesus!" Would that all might more perfectly comprehend the high calling of God in Christ Jesus! Then men would see that: "Godliness is profitable unto all things." (1 Timothy 4:8)

And the time would soon come when God's kingdom would come, and His will be done on earth as it is done in heaven.--Present Truth, October 27, 1898--Timeline: IV-15 (Sermon on the Mount)--Luke 6:43-45.

Chapter 153

Salvation Not in Works

"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name? and in your name have cast out devils? and in your name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity." (Matthew 7:22-23)

The uppermost thought in the minds of these is, "We and our works."

This was the thought they had when they were professedly the zealous servants of Christ, and so completely have they been deceived by it that they even present it as a reason for their admission into the kingdom of heaven, and then, with horror and consternation, they learn that they are cherishing something of no value.

Not, "We and our works," but "Jesus Christ and Him crucified," is the passport that will secure admission there. "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." (1 Corinthians 2:2)--Present Truth, October 18, 1894--Timeline: IV-15 (Sermon on the Mount)--Matthew 7:22-23.

Chapter 154

Faith Works

Faith is shown not by words, but by deeds. Jesus said, "Why do you call me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?" (Luke 6:46)

Men may talk very eloquently about Christ and the Christian life, they may discourse beautifully concerning the meaning of Scripture, and make a fine show of doing Christian work; but if obedience is lacking where they know there is a plain injunction of the Lord, they are worse sinners than those who make no profession of serving Christ. For their apparent piety is but a false light to delude others and lead them into the same disobedience.

Many who have prophesied in Christ's name, and in His name cast out devils and done many wonderful works, will find themselves at the last day among the workers of iniquity, to whom Christ says, "Depart ... I know you not." (Luke 13:27)

Abraham believe God, and he obeyed Him; and the children of Abraham are known today by the same sign.--Present Truth, July 18, 1895--Timeline: IV-15 (Sermon on the Mount)--Luke 6:46.

Chapter 155

Hearing and Doing

"Everyone that hears these sayings of mine, and does them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man which built his house upon the sand; And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell; and great was the fall of it." (Matthew 7:26-27)

The Apostle James gives us another likeness of the one who hears the Word and does it not: "If any be a hearer of the Word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholds himself, and goes his way, and straightway forgets what manner of man he was." (James 1:23-24)

This lets us into the secret of why one is a hearer and not a doer. This man beholds himself, and goes his way and straightway forgets. Now read further, and see how to do it properly: "But whoso looks into the perfect law of liberty, and continues therein, ... this man shall be blessed in his deed." (James 1:25)

Whoever steadfastly continues to look and to hear, will be a doer; for the Lord says, "Hear, and your soul shall live." (Isaiah 55:3)

And "live" means activity. There's life in looking into the law of liberty. The Word of God is living and active; for it is nothing other than the life of God, as manifested in Christ. He is the Rock, the sure foundation, "In whom all the building fitly framed together, grows unto a holy temple in the Lord." (Ephesians 2:21)

It is the Word itself that builds us up. "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." (Acts 20:32)

So then, if we but meditate in that Word day and night, we shall not be mere idle hearers, but shall do and prosper. "Blessed is the man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord and in His law does he meditate day and night. And he

shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he does shall prosper." (Psalm 1:1-3)

God's Word works. Jesus said: "The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwells in me, He does the works." (John 14:10)

In all the miracles of Jesus, as well as in the creation, we see how the Word works. Therefore, "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom," (Colossians 3:16) and the works of the Word will surely manifest themselves. "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before prepared that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:10)--Present Truth, April 14, 1897--Original title: Front Page--Timeline: IV-15 (Sermon on the Mount)--Matthew 7:26-27.

Chapter 156

Building on Sand

"Everyone that hears these sayings of mine, and does them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand; And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell; and great was the fall of it." (Matthew 7:26-27)

It is impossible to imagine more foolish conduct than that which the Saviour describes. No man in his senses builds a house unless he expects it to stand, and provide him a shelter and dwelling-place, and therefore a builder will look carefully to his foundation, choosing the best he can find, and even strengthening that if it appears necessary. If a man took no thought for the foundation, but built his house on the sand, he would be counted a fool.

Yet this folly is nothing to be compared with the madness of hearing the words of Christ and not doing them. The man who builds his house on the sand loses only temporal things. The man who neglects to do Christ's sayings loses eternal life. Yet how many are doing as Christ bids?

Take the instruction given in the sermon on the mount, the very occasion when this solemn warning was uttered. Men who profess to be Christians say openly that it is foolish to think of carrying out all the instruction that the Saviour gives in this sermon. They profess to admire very much the more spiritual interpretation He put upon the duty of men, than was set forth "by them of old time," but when it comes to yielding obedience to the words He spoke, they assert that this is impossible in the present state of things. "Why do you call me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46)

This was the question put to the disciples at this time, and addressed to everyone who names the name of Christ. The mere profession is nothing. No matter how lofty and splendid the edifice built on the sand, when the storm comes it is doomed.

It is not the man or woman whose nature makes meditation enjoyable, and whose intellect, exerted upon sacred things, can wander at will among far-reaching

speculations which dazzle slower minds, that is necessarily in touch with Christ. There may be all of this, and it may be spoken to others with the tongues of man and of angels, yet to some who will say, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name? and in your name have cast out devils? and in your name done many wonderful works?" (Matthew 7:22)

The unexpected answer will be given, "I never knew you; depart from me, you that work iniquity." (Matthew 7:23)

These are the fools whom Christ described. Priding themselves on spiritual attainments, it seems a small matter to them that their own lives are not exactly in accord with the words of Christ. Surely, they think, our splendid services to the cause of religion are of far more importance than the small defects of our daily life.

But it is not enough to have the external righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. If the experience stops there, "You shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. ... Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:20,19)

The man who makes light of sin is also accounted light, less than nothing, by beings of true spiritual insight. These words do not promise that the transgressor shall have a low place in heaven. It simply states that the man who transgresses the law of God in any degree and teaches others to do so, will be esteemed at his true value in the kingdom, no matter what his pretensions may be.

Of course, it is a good deal easier to make anything out of sand than out of rock, which calls for patient, long-continued toil. Men get impatient sometimes at the slow methods of the Gospel; and want to see something accomplished quickly. So they try to accuse men, and find that this quickly draws. But that which is so easily gained is just as easily lost.

It is true that to the careless observer great results seem to be attained, but unless the hearing and doing of the words of Christ is the means employed to build up a church, when the storm comes the structure will fall into ruin. Splendid ritual, plans for securing the assistance of the laws, and every form of enterprise outside of the Word of God is as foolish as the building of a house on sand.

The builders on the rock seldom achieve distinction among men. Their work seems small in amount, and it does not advertise itself. Yet it goes on quietly, gradually, effectively, building nothing that is not on the true foundation. In humility and faithfulness, the words of Christ are allowed free course in the life, and the Word of God alone is resorted to for guidance and wisdom and strength.

It is these who are doing the work. Others fill the public eye and ear, and are accounted the pillars of the church, but when the storm comes, it will be seen that the faithful application of the Word to one's own life was the real agent in accomplishing all that was permanently effected.

Do not envy others, with their high position, and seemingly vast opportunities. Be faithful in the little details that come to you, and God will see that they grow into great things.--Present Truth, April 6, 1899--Timeline: IV-15 (Sermon on the Mount)--Matthew 7:26-27.

Chapter 157

Speaking with Authority

"And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine; For He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." (Matthew 7:28-29)

In the teaching of Jesus there was no conjecture, no speculation, no doubt. He did not give the people various theories, from which they might choose, indicating the one which He thought most plausible. Neither did He quote the opinions of others, to add weight to His own views.

He did not prepare the minds of His hearers for future doubt, by telling them that this was the way the matter looked to Him, or that He believed so and so, and He spoke only that which He knew, and thus He could speak with authority. He spoke facts, not fancies; truths, not theories; and the power of simple truth spoken with the earnestness of actual, experimental knowledge produced conviction.

Jesus said to His disciples before He left the earth, "As my Father has sent me, even so send I you." (John 20:21)

The commission of every true follower of God is that of Christ himself. "He whom God has sent, speaks the words of God." (John 3:34)

Therefore He whom the Lord sends must speak with the same authority as Christ himself. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." (2 Corinthians 5:19)

And now, as though God did beseech men by us, we are to pray them in Christ's stead, "Be you reconciled to God." (2 Corinthians 5:20)

Verse 19, literally rendered, as is indicated in the margin, reads that God "has put in us the word of reconciliation." So the Lord says to those that "follow after righteousness, ... I have put my words in your mouth." (Isaiah 51:1,16)

If our acceptance of Christ is such as to make that true of us individually, we cannot but speak with authority.

It is very common for people to refer to learned and pious men as authority for their belief. When questioned about any point of doctrine, they will tell what "our church holds," or what Dr. So-and-so has said. Now the opinion which they quote may be correct, and the man to whom they refer may be sound in the faith, so that they may not be teaching error; but they who refer to them do not know for themselves whether it is true or not.

The fact that they began by telling what somebody holds or has said on the subject, is the strongest proof that they do not know for themselves.

To illustrate: suppose I am traveling through the country, and I ask a boy the way to a certain town. He begins with, "My father says," or "Dr. B. maintains," or, "It is commonly held by the best judges," or something of that kind, and then proceeds to tell what they say about the way. Now it may happen that his directions are correct, but the very first words of his answer convince me that he himself knows nothing about the way. He has heard it told until he can repeat it, but he does not know it for himself.

The probability is that few travelers would wait for him to repeat his story, but would pass on to inquire of someone who would speak with authority. But if he should promptly reply, "Take the first turning on the right, and the second on the left, and keep straight on," I should conclude that he knew what he was talking about. "But suppose he should be mistaken; would it not be better for him not to speak so positively?" No; it would be better to say, "I don't know."

It would be a serious matter if, in order not to appear ignorant, I should direct a man west when the place which he seeks is east. Everyone will agree that the one who directs the traveler on his way must speak with authority. He who cannot speak thus, must confess his inability, and say nothing. Guesses are good for nothing, and to repeat to me the conflicting opinions of different men only puzzles me the more.

Positiveness is as much more necessary in religious matters as eternal life is more important than trivial matters of this life. But may we speak with positiveness on spiritual matters? Certainly, even as Christ and the apostles did. We may know God by

personal acquaintance. The Apostle Paul said, "I know whom I have believed." (2 Timothy 1:12)

Knowing Him, we know Him to be faithful and true, and so we may know for a certainty all that His word declares. Only a positive testimony can produce conviction and conversion.

Get acquainted with Christ; learn of Him; and all hesitancy and doubt will disappear.--Present Truth, November 21, 1895--Timeline: IV-15 (Sermon on the Mount)--Matthew 7:28-29.

Chapter 158

The Centurion's Servant Healed

The student should not fail to read this narrative in the Revised Version, as it is much more clearly rendered there than in the so-called Authorized Version. Let us briefly outline the story.

Jesus entered Capernaum, after completing His instruction on the mountain, and was met by messengers from a centurion, asking Him to come and heal his servant, who was at the point of death. Jesus at once set out for the centurion's house, but before He reached it He was met by another company bearing this message. "Lord, trouble not yourself; for I am not worthy that You should come under my roof: Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto You; but say the word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under myself soldiers; and I say to this one, Go, and he goes: and to another, Come, and he comes; and to my servant, Do this, and he does it. And when Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him, and turned and said unto the multitude that followed Him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." (Luke 7:6-9,RV)

And the narrative closes with the statement that when the messengers returned to the house they found the servant whole.

Object of the Lesson

What is the lesson for us to learn from this little story? If we get nothing more from it than the mere knowledge of some of the details of one of the miracles that Jesus did, it will not profit us much. Whenever you read the account of any miracle of Jesus, remember these words: "These are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life through His name." (John 20:31)

The only object in telling us how this young man, and others also, received life, is to let us know how and where we may find life. What is the source of life? Our lesson answers the question: it is the Word of the Lord. "That which was from the beginning

[was] the Word of life." (1 John 1:1) "The Word of God lives and abides for ever. ... And this is the Word of the Gospel, which is preached to us." (1 Peter 1:23,25)

These miracles are recorded for the sake of showing us the reality of the life that comes from the Word.

No Healing Except by the Word

Moreover we are to learn that it is the Word alone that heals. Whenever any person is ill, and is healed, it is nothing also but the Word of the Lord that cures him. There is nothing else that can heal.

This fact is often obscured by the so-called "remedies" that are given, in spite of which people often recover. That which people for the most part depend on in cases of disease, is usually what retards recovery, and tends to make it impossible. The fact that so many people do recover from various illnesses in spite of the poisonous drugs that are administered, is evidence of the marvelous power of life that is in the Word which God sends to us.

"What! are not drugs a part of the Word that heals? do you think that the use of means is inconsistent with faith in the Word of the Lord?"

What do you think? The Word is life; now can that which is deadly, and which must be dealt out with the greatest caution, lest the patient get a fraction of a grain too much, and so be poisoned to death, be a means of conveying that living Word?

When the body is worn with labor, and cries out for food, would you administer a dose of poison, instead of giving bread? The questions answer themselves. Poisonous drugs are not means of conveying the Word of life, which makes alive; they are in deadly opposition to it.

But that does not by any means signify that the use of means is inconsistent with healing by the Word. Far from it. Everything that is a means of conveying life is the agent of the Word. Christ is the Personification of the Word, and in Him we live, and move, and have our being, yet we live by eating and drinking and breathing.

The lesson that God would have us learn is that every real means of conveying life to mankind is but a means of conveying the Word of life. The Word itself is invisible; it can and does give life apart from any visible agency; but certain things that our senses can grasp are given to us as means of supporting life, in order that we may appreciate the reality of the Word.

In short, God sometimes lets us see Him heal, and preserve life, without any visible medium, in order that we may know that it is only by the Word that life and health come; and He often conveys life by means of some visible agent, in order that we may not forgot that the spiritual Word is very real.

God's Word in Medicine

The Word is itself a means of healing. When good people, full of faith, say that they do not believe in using any means for the recovery of the sick, but only trust in the Lord, they unconsciously deny the reality of the healing Word. The centurion recognized the fact that the Word that Christ spoke was as real as any messenger that he could send on his own business. God sends His Word on errands, and it obeys Him. It never returns to Him without having accomplished that to which as sent it. "For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and returns not there, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goes forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." (Isaiah 55:10-11)

So we read that when God's people of old were suffering affliction because of their folly, and were near to the gates of death, so ill that they could not eat, "He sent His Word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions." (Isaiah 107:20)

In the miracle recorded in the lesson that we are studying, we have an instance of this. "My son, attend to my words; incline your ear unto my salvation. Let them not depart from your eyes; keep them in the midst of your heart. For they are life unto those that find them, and medicine to all their flesh." (Proverbs 4:20-22,margin)

Healed means Saved

In the Revision we read that the centurion sent to Jesus, "asking Him that He would come and save his servant." (Luke 7:3,RV)

In the Common Version the word "heal" is used. Both mean the same thing. To save is to heal, to make every whit whole. Whoever is not saved is not healed, and not perfectly whole, no matter how well he may seem to be. The Word that makes the body well, is the Word that saves from sin.

We are saved by the life, and Jesus has but one life to give. He does not live a double life. He gives himself, and that one gift of life contains everything that pertains to life and godliness. Our part is to recognize the Lord, to learn to discern His body in His gifts.

The Free Gift

What a narrow idea the elders of the Jews had of the character of Jesus! They supposed that He was influenced by the same motives that they were. "They, when they came to Jesus, besought Him earnestly, saying, He is worthy that You should do this for him; For he loves our nation, and himself built us our synagogue." (Luke 7:4-5,RV)

As though that would make any difference with Him! His call to the Fountain of life and healing is, "Ho, everyone that thirsts, come to the waters, and he that has no money; come buy." (Isaiah 55:1) "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely," (Revelation 22:17)

That is, as a gift. Life is too precious to be bought with money. It is a gift, as freely bestowed upon the pauper as upon the prince. Alas! how few there are who do not regard it as of but little worth!

The True Israel

There was one important thing in connection with this affair, which is not mentioned by Luke. Christ was astonished by the centurion's faith, and said: "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." (Matthew 8:10)

Then He added: "And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matthew 8:11-12)

If we had nothing else, this would settle the question as to the constitution of the kingdom of Israel. That kingdom is composed of those who have faith.

"Know therefore that they which be of faith, the same are the sons of Abraham."

Salvation is by faith. Then the centurion, who had greater faith than anyone in Israel, was ahead of them in the way of salvation. He was, in fact, a part of Israel, while the unbelieving descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were not: "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel." (Romans 9:6)

Those who have the name, but have not faith, are cast out; while those who have simple, childlike faith will form Israel, and will share the inheritance promised to the patriarchs of old. Remember that "Israel" means "overcomer," and is equivalent to "Christian," and you make this lesson a personal matter. There will be many surprises in the kingdom.

Are you trusting in the name "Christian" or in the name--the living Person--of Christ? Accept every word that He sends, even though it may seem to be bitter medicine, and you will find it sweeter than honey--filled with the sweetness of His endless life.--Present Truth, April 12, 1900--Original title: The Word that Heals. The Centurion's Servant Healed--International Sunday-School Lesson for April 22--Timeline: IV-16 (The Centurion's Servant)--Luke 7:1-10.

Chapter 159

The Word Only

It was customary for the Saviour as He went about healing the sick throughout Judea, to come and lay His hand upon them, or allow them to touch Him, and thus impart to them the healing virtue which restored their strength.

And as we read the narrative of His ministry among the sick and afflicted, we naturally receive the impression that the miraculous blessings which He bestowed upon the people came through their personal contact with Him.

We think that if we but had the chance to secure personal contact with the visible, tangible Jesus of Nazareth whom they knew, our opportunities of being blessed as they were would be much greater than they are.

But there was one miracle performed by the Saviour, the account of which leads the thoughtful mind toward quite another conclusion. We refer to the healing of the centurion's servant. The event is thus related by Matthew: "And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto Him a centurion, beseeching Him, And saying, Lord, my servant lies at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus said unto him, I will come and heal him. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that you should come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me; and I say to this man, Go, and he goes; and to another, Come, and he comes; and to my servant, Do this, and he does it. When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. ... And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go your way; and as you have believed, so be it done unto you. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour." (Matthew 8:5-10,13)

Jesus did not come near the centurion's servant; the latter neither touched Him nor saw Him; yet he was healed as effectually as were any upon whom Christ laid His hands. The centurion said to Jesus, "Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." (Matthew 8:8)

And the Saviour put the stamp of truthfulness upon the utterance by saying, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." (Matthew 8:10)

"The word only"! That is sufficient, and this is the language of faith. Those words, and not "I will come," spoke the necessity of the occasion.

Then cannot we speak them with the same assurance, and do we not stand upon a level with the centurion in relation to the healing power of Christ? How far off from the needy one must the Saviour be for His word to lose its power? Farther, we may be sure, than heaven is from the earth.

And this is what we read in another scripture. For it is declared that: "The righteousness which is of faith speaks on this wise, Saynot in your heart, Who shall ascend into heaven (that is, to bring Christ down from above)? Or who shall descend into the deep (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead)? But what does it say? The word is near you, even in your mouth and in your heart,-that is, the word of faith which we preach; That if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved." (Romans 10:6-9)

And this is the same word by which Christ healed all diseases.--Present Truth, April 26, 1894--Timeline: IV-16 (The Centurion's Servant)--Matthew 8:5-13.

Chapter 160

Shifting Responsibility

The following paragraph we recently came across in a religious exchange:

In a recent address Professor Drummond said that he was once conversing with an infidel, when a well-known gentleman passed them on the road. "That gentleman," said the infidel, pointing to the passer-by, "is the founder of our infidel club." "What," said Mr. Drummond, in startled tones, "why that is Mr. So-and-so, an influential man in such a church!" "Yes," said the infidel, "we know he professes Christianity; but his inconsistencies have driven many of us into infidelity, and led to the founding of our club."

From the above, which is undoubtedly true, there are two lessons to be learned. The first is that Christians, if they are not consistent in their life, are active agents of the devil. Says Christ: "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathers not with me scatters abroad." (Matthew 12:30)

Many professed Christians would be shocked to be told that they are doing missionary work for Satan, yet they can easily convince themselves that such is the case. Let them seriously ask, "Am I doing my duty?" "Do I honor Christ and the profession that I make?" "Is my influence positive on the Lord's side?"

Unless these questions can be answered affirmatively, they may know that they are driving men away from Christ. The name of God is blasphemed because of the lives of any of his professed followers. "You therefore which teach another, do you not teach yourself? you that preach a man should not steal, do you steal? You that say a man should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? you that abhor idols, do you commit sacrilege? You that make your boast of the law, through breaking the law do you dishonor God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written." (Romans 2:21-24)

How terrible to think that there is more blasphemy than there would be if many who profess to love God were not in existence. Some professors think to make amends by acknowledging their false position without correcting it. They will try to teach

unbelievers, but will say, "Don't take me for an example; you must not judge of Christianity by me."

But that is just what the world must do. Christians are here in order that this world may be able to judge of Christianity. Said Christ to his disciples: "You are the light of the world;" (Matthew 5:14)

And He prayed that they might "be made perfect in one," (John 17:23) so that the world might know that He was from God.

One of the first things the professor of Christianity should think about is that worldlings will watch him closely, and that they will know whether he is really a Christian or not. They can tell the genuine article every time.

And this brings us to the second lesson that may be learned from the paragraph quoted. It is this:

The fact that professed Christians do not fulfill their obligations, is not the slightest excuse for anybody's unbelief. Whenever worldlings criticize the inconsistencies of professed Christians, they at once condemn themselves; for by their criticisms they show that they know what ought to be done.

And their punishment for evil-doing will be none the less because it was a professed Christian who led them astray. As for the professor, the Judgment alone will reveal the responsibility that attaches to him for his scattering influence.

Taking it all together, neither Christians nor infidels have anything from which to derive comfort for a course of wrongdoing.--Signs of the Times, November 26, 1885--Timeline: IV-22 (The Unpardonable Sin)--Matthew 12:30.

Chapter 161

Which Side Will You Choose?

This world is the scene of a great controversy between good and evil, and Christ says, "He that is not with me is against me." (Matthew 12:30)

The enmity is against God. This is an encouraging thought to the believer when the attacks of the enemy come. "The battle is not yours, but God's." (2 Chronicles 20:15)

God's honor is at stake, and so for His sake as well as man's He must triumph. The rebellion against His law began before ever man became involved in the controversy. "And there was war in heaven; Michael and His angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world; he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." (Revelation 12:7-9)

Although the battle is between Christ and Satan, men cannot be mere spectators. There is no neutral ground where one can be on neither side. Satan succeeded in getting man to join his rebellion against God's authority, and so he makes of every natural heart a citadel of opposition against God.

But God, in His love and mercy, did not leave man when he had chosen the side of Satan. "When we were enemies," (Romans 5:10) He gave His life to bring to us deliverance "from the power of darkness," (Colossians 1:13) and to translate all who desire it, "into the kingdom of His dear Son." (Colossians 1:13)

Therefore He calls to everyone, "Choose you this day whom you will serve." (Joshua 24:15)

Every day each one is making the choice. "Know you not, that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are to whom you obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Romans 6:16) "Without me you can do nothing." (John 15:5) "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13)

To be with Christ, means that His life is manifested in mortal flesh; to be without Christ means to be against Christ, for the life will inevitably be "according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience." (Ephesians 2:2)

Every act of disobedience is the direct working of Satan against the truth of God. Every act of obedience is the working of Christ's power in the hearts of those who choose Him. "For it is God that works in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure." (Philippians 2:13)

Satan not only works disobedience in men, but he works this "with all deceivableness of unrighteousness." (2 Thessalonians 2:10)

So it was that when he led the powers of this world to condemn Jesus, they knew not what they did. But he knew. And he carried on the war against Christ by turning the wrath of the powers of this world against the followers of Christ. But, "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives under the death." (Revelation 12:11)

The "god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4) will continue the warfare to the end; the conflict will become even more severe as the end draws near, and the remnant of the church of Christ will know the power of God to deliver from the wrath of Satan. "Woe to the inhabiters of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has but a short time. ... And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." (Revelation 12:12,17)

It is the righteous law of God, against which he rebelled in the beginning, that he still hates.

It is therefore no light thing to make the choice. On the side of Christ is the reproach of Christ. But even this reproach was esteemed by Moses greater riches than all the treasures of the world (Hebrews 11:26), for with it is the life of Jesus, which works to subdue self to God and to cleanse from sin. "The word of God ... lives and abides for ever." (1 Peter 1:23)

He who builds upon that is founded upon the rock which no storm can shake. To choose disobedience means death; obedience is life, for Jesus said, "I know that His commandment is life everlasting." (John 12:50) "Therefore choose life." (Deuteronomy 30:19)--Present Truth, February 21, 1895--Timeline: IV-22 (The Unpardonable Sin)--Matthew 12:30.

Chapter 162

Parable of the Sower

Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables, "and without a parable spoke He not unto them; That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world." (Matthew 13:34-35)

This was not for the purpose of concealing truth from the multitude, but just the contrary; for the prophet also says in the same connection: "Give ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old: Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have toldus. We will not hide them from their children, showing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord." (Psalm 78:1-4)

The parables of Jesus contain the most direct and forcible instruction of anything in the world. There are two or three parables which are not explained, which are not immediately clear; but Christ's own interpretation accompanies the most of them, as in the instance before us, so that there is no possibility of misunderstanding them. "Take heed how you hear," (Luke 8:18) may well be remembered as we read this parable. It presents several different classes of hearers, by the various places into which the seed of the sower fell. How vivid is the picture! "Behold, a sower went forth to sow; And when He sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Who has ears to hear, let him hear." (Matthew 13:3-9)

We see the man walking along, scattering the seed broadcast, so that:

1. Some of it fails on the hard path, where there is no possibility of its growing, and the birds quickly gather it up.

2. Some falls upon a rock, upon which there is the merest covering of earth, but not enough to hold tiny moisture, or to afford a chance for the seed to take root; consequently as soon as the sun shines upon it with great heat, it is scorched, and withered.

3. Other seed falls upon ground that is in itself good enough, but where there are so many thorns that there is no room for the grain to grow. It is a neglected corner of the field. The plow could not reach it, and no trouble was taken to work it with the hoe.

4. But some of the seed fell into good ground, which had been well cultivated, and it sprang up, and bore abundant fruit.

By the Wayside

The first class are those who hear the Word of the kingdom, and do not understand it. "When any one hears the word of the kingdom, and understands it not, then the wicked one comes, and catches away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side." (Matthew 13:19)

The Greek word here rendered "understand" means literally "to take in." They hear the Word but do not take it in. That exactly corresponds to the seed that fell by the wayside. The hard ground did not take it in, and so it lay exposed as food for the birds.

No one can keep anything that he does not use. The Word of the kingdom is of no use if it is kept for show. It must be taken into the inner life, or it will speedily be snatched away. No matter how much a person may know of the Scriptures, if he does not study for the purpose of practicing, he studies to no profit. The only way to hold truth that we hear is to mix it with faith, and allow it to manifest itself in good works in the life. "The Word is very near unto you, in your mouth, and in your heart, that you may do it." (Deuteronomy 30:14)

Do it quickly, without too long hesitation over the matter, lest you lose it for ever.

Into Stony Places

"But he that received the seed into stony places, the same ishe that hears the word, and anon with joy receives it; Yet he has not root in himself, but endures for a while: for when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, by and by he is offended." (Matthew 13:20-21)

Nevertheless the seed that bears the most fruit does not spring up the quickest. There are many who seem to accept the Word almost before it is out of the speaker's mouth. They overwhelm one with their gushing praise of everything connected with it, from the minister down.

One soon learns to recognize these persons, and to shrink from them. Their quickness to receive the Word is not due to good soil, but to lack of depth. They are always ready and longing for something new not exactly some new truth, but for some mild sensation. They like to have something different from what they have had before, and that makes them just as quick to give up the Word as they were to receive it. They want to be first in everything, no matter what it is. The kingdom of God will never be enlarged by such hearers.

Among the Thorns

"He also that received seed among the thorns is he that hears the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful." (Matthew 13:22)

Then there is a third class, perhaps the most numerous of all. They receive the Word in good faith, and intend to live it out; but they have too much on hand. They wish to have both the world and the kingdom of heaven.

Notice that expression, "The care of this world." We may take it in its most literal sense. It means not only care pertaining to this world, but actually the care of the world. The man who does not with his whole heart trust the Lord, feels upon himself the burden of the world. The care of its proper management rests upon his shoulders; he has assumed the responsibility of it, and feels that he must keep it in running order. No wonder that the Word of the kingdom is soon choked out. It is given no place.

It is the province of that Word to uphold all things: "Upholding all things by the word of His power." (Hebrews 1:3)

But when the man who has received the Word into his heart, usurps the work of the Word, leaving it nothing to do, it naturally withers away from lack of use. Godliness, that is, trust in God, has promise of this world, and also of that which is to come; but he who tries to manage both worlds himself, is sure to lose them both. "For bodily exercise profits little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." (1 Timothy 4:8)

What shall be done in the case of the thorny ground? The Scripture gives the answer: "Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns." (Jeremiah 4:3)

If the thorns are present, that is, if the care of this world is in the heart, the sowing must necessarily be among thorns, and the seed will be choked; the only remedy, and it is a sure one, is to let the plough-share of truth break up the ground, root out the thorns, and cut down every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God.

The Good Ground

"But he that received seed into the good ground is he that hears the word, and understands it; which also bears fruit, and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." (Matthew 13:23)

Lastly there is the good ground, thoroughly prepared, which receives the seed and retains it, and sends it forth again multiplied many times. We know not how the seed germinates; it is not necessary that we should, since it is God that gives the increase. "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knows not how. For the earth brings forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." (Mark 4:26-28)

He who sows the seed will watch it night and day, and will water it every moment, and will be answerable for its increase and perfection, if we will but allow the soil to be

well prepared, and will dedicate it to His use alone.--Present Truth, May 10, 1900--Timeline: IV-24 (Sermon by the Sea)--Matthew 13:1-8, 18-35.

Chapter 163

The Root of the Matter

In the parable of the sower, Jesus represented one class of hearers by the seed that @fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth; and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth; And when the sun was up they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away." (Matthew 13:5-6)

Every farmer or gardener can appreciate this statement, and so can well understand the application that Jesus made. He said: "He that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that hears the word, and anon with joy receives it; Yet he has not root in himself, but endures for awhile; for when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, by and by he is offended." (Matthew 13:20-21)

Note the expression, "yet he has not root in himself." The root of the plant that has life, is in it. Both root and stalk are wrapped up in one seed. So the man who lives righteously, and who continues, must have a root in himself.

What is the root? Let the Scripture answer. Speaking of Christ, the Arm of the Lord, which brings salvation, the prophet said: "He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground." (Isaiah 53:2)

Christ himself says: "I am the root and the offspring of David." (Revelation 22:18)

So the Apostle Paul, speaking to those who have been grafted into the olive tree, partaking of the root and fatness of the olive tree, said, "you bear not the root, but the root you." (Romans 11:18)

Jesus is the root, and though the root bears the plant, the strength of the root is in the plant itself. Christ, the root, dwells in His people, and so completely does He identify himself with them, that He cannot be distinguished from them, but that which He does in them is their own act. It is as though they bore the root.

Through the word of truth received and hidden in the heart, we may have root in ourselves, so that no amount of drought can cause us to wither. "Those that be planted

in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age, they shall be fat and flourishing." (Psalm 92:13-14) "And the Lord shall guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and make fat your bones: and you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." (Isaiah 58:11)--Present Truth, March 28, 1901--Timeline: IV-24 (Sermon by the Sea)--Matthew 13:5-6, 20-21.

Chapter 164

The Wheat and the Tares

We are not left to doubt and conjecture as to the true teaching of the parable which is the basis of this week's lesson. In response to the request of His disciples Jesus himself explained the parable, and so we have His own interpretation for our instruction.

Unseen Realities

From His own interpretation of the parable of the sower, we know that: "The seed is the Word of God." (Luke 8:11)

With this thought in mind we can see that the growth of a field of wheat in which an enemy has sowed tares is not simply a good illustration of the development of God's kingdom in the world, but it is in reality the visible manifestation of it.

This is the secret of all the object lessons from nature which Jesus gave. He did not put new meanings into the operations of nature, but He made clear the lessons which were already there, but had been lost sight of. "In the parables of the lily and the fowls, the seed and the tree, the vine and the fishes, He disclosed the great fact which we are constantly forgetting--that nature has a spiritual as well as a material side--that she exists, not only for the natural uses of the body, but also for the sustenance of the life of the soul. This higher ministry explains all the beauty and wonder of the world, which would otherwise be superfluous and extravagant."--Hugh Macmillan, The Ministry of Nature, "Introduction." "Every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact."--Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nature, Chapter IV "Language."

In the parable before us the likeness between the kingdom of God in the world and the field of wheat among which tears have been sown is not merely an outward or superficial one. The likeness is an inherent one. The facts are the same in both instances.

In the one case the facts are made visible to the natural eye by clothing them with a body, while in the other case, though just as real, they are seen only by the eye of faith. Or to put it in other words, the principles of the spiritual and the natural are the same,

and in the light of the teaching of Jesus when we study the natural, we may again in it also study the spiritual. "The words of Christ placed the teachings of nature in a new aspect, and made them a new revelation. He could speak of the things which His own hands had made; for they had qualities and properties which were peculiarly His own. In nature, as in the sacred pages of the Old Testament Scriptures, divine, momentous truths are revealed; and in His teaching, Jesus laid open before the people, bound up with the beauty of natural things. ... As interpreted by Jesus, flower and shrub, the seed sown and the seed harvested, contain lessons of truth, as did also the plant that springs out of the earth."--Ellen G. White, Special Testimonies on Education, Chapter 10 "Christ as the Example and Teacher of Youth."

The True Seedtime and Harvest

"He that sows the good seed [which is the Word] is the Son of man." (Matthew 13:37)

This is simply the statement of the means by which the kingdom of God was originally developed in the earth. The Son of man, who was also the Son of God, was the One by whom all things were made, and without whom was not any thing made that was made. It was through him that God "spoke and it was." (Psalm 33:9)

And this is the seed, the Word, which was sown in the earth at the beginning: "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth." (Genesis 1:11)

Thus did the Son of man sow good seed in His field which is the world. If the Word of God, by which the world and all in it, including man, was brought into existence, had always been received and obeyed, there would never have been anything but good things in the world. But when man opened his heart to the devil's lie and received it in the place of the Word of truth, then were the tares sowed, and "The enemy that sowed them is the devil." (Matthew 13:39)

As the annual sowing of the seed by the husbandman is symbolic of the work of the Son of man in sowing the world with the Word of truth, the Gospel of our salvation; and as the warmth of the sunlight and the moisture of the dew and the rain are symbolic of the provision which God has made for the development of His Word in the hearts of

men; and as the growth in the vegetable world, "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear," (Mark 4:28) is symbolic of the progress of the kingdom of God both in the hearts of individuals and in the world in general; so the annual harvest is but a symbolic one. "The harvest is the end of the world." (Matthew 13:39)

All other harvests are but pictures in God's great lesson book of nature, designed to present in visible form the one real harvest, when the fruit of the seed, which is "the Word of God," shall be gathered. Then the Word will go forth, "Thrust in your sickle, and reap: for the time is come for You to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe." (Revelation 14:15)

Then will some say: "The harvest is passed, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." (Jeremiah 8:20)

Whether the annual harvest be a good or a bad one depends upon the character of the seed sown in the field, and so it will be in the real harvest at the end of the world. And the harvest time is almost here. The season is nearly ended. What will the harvest be?

Our God is a Consuming Fire

Before the coming of Christ, John the Baptist had taught of Him, "Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into His garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." (Matthew 3:12)

That this destruction is not a matter of mere arbitrary decree, but that grows out of the very nature of God and His relation to sin, will be seen by reading a few scriptures. "They shall see the Son a man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." (Matthew 24:30) "And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel." (Exodus 24:17) "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power." (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9) "For our God is a consuming fire." (Hebrews 12:29)

The harvest, which is the end of the world, and the coming of the Lord occur at the same time: "And as He sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matthew 24:3)

And then the undimmed revelation of the glory of the Lord will be a consuming fire, an utter destruction, to all sin and consequently to all those in whom sin is found in that day. The prophet Isaiah inquires: "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? He that walks righteously, and speaks uprightly; he that despises the gain of oppressions, that shakes his hands from holding of bribes, that stops his ears from hearing of blood, and shuts his eyes from seeing evil; He shall dwell on high; his place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure. Your eyes shall see the King in His beauty." (Isaiah 33:14-17) "Behold He comes with clouds, and every eye shall see Him." (Revelation 1:7)

The question to be decided is, whether we shall see Him and live, or be destroyed "by the brightness of His coming." (2 Thessalonians 2:8)

Those in whom His glory is being revealed here, consuming all sin, will be prepared by this experience of His indwelling presence, so that in that day of glory they will "be glad also with exceeding joy." (1 Peter 4:13)

The Revelation of the Glory

The declaration that: "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father," (Matthew 13:43) is not a poetical exaggeration, neither is it a comparison, but a simple statement of fact. "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." (1 John 1:5) "The Lord God is a sun." (Psalm 84:11) "The sun shall be no more your light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto you; but the Lord shall be unto you an everlasting light, and your God your glory." (Isaiah 60:19) "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." (Revelation 21:23)

Once when Jesus was here revealing the glory of God , this glory was permitted to appear clearly, and then: "His face did shine as the sun." (Matthew 17:2) "We know that

when He shall appear we shall be like Him." (1 John 3:2) "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament." (Daniel 12:3)

This simply means that the glory of which man was crowned at his creation, when he was made in the image of God, and which has been lost, will be restored through the acceptance of Christ, who is the "brightness of His glory." (Hebrews 1:3) "For you have made him a little lower than the angels, and have crowned him with glory and honor." (Psalm 8:5) "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)

This is not merely an external brightness, but is the shining forth of His righteous character which has been wrought in man through faith. Then will man, restored to the image of God, like Him be "clothed with honor, [and] covered with light as with a garment." (Psalm 104:1-2) "Then shall the righteous [because they are righteous] shine forth as the sun [because He who is "the Sun of Righteousness" dwells in them] in the kingdom of their Father." (Matthew 13:43)

Hear Him

Our ears are given to us that we may hear the voice of the Lord, even the "still small voice" (1 Kings 19:12); but sin has made our ears "dull of hearing." (Matthew 13:15)

The work of Jesus is not only to open the blind eyes but also unstop the ears. Then it is simply necessary to look with eyes which have been anointed with eye-salve, and to listen with ears which have been touched by His fingers, and believing what we see and hear we shall become acquainted with God as our strength and our salvation. "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made, even His eternal power and Godhead." (Romans 1:20) "The voice of the Lord is powerful." (Psalm 29:4)

He who said, "Let there be light," (Genesis 1:3) created light by the power of that Word, "and there was light." (Genesis 1:3)

The same One says to him who has ears, "let him hear," (Matthew 13:43) and this word when revealed in faith will make it so. Then, "Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, This is the way, walk in it, when you turn to the right hand, and when you

turn to the left." (Isaiah 30:21) "I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for He will speak peace unto His people." (Psalm 85:8)--Present Truth, March 3, 1898--Notes on the International Sunday-School Lesson, March 13--Timeline: IV-24 (Sermon by the Sea)--Matthew 13:15-43.

Chapter 165

Parables of the Kingdom

This lesson covers three of the parables which the Lord spoke to the multitudes by the sea side.

The lesson assigned is nevertheless very incomplete, since it divides the principal parable, leaving off the interpretation which the Lord gave the disciples after the multitude had deserted, which is the most essential part of the record. Without the interpretation, we are left in the dark.

We shall therefore take it for granted that the student will include it in his lesson; and in order not to break the continuity of the subject, we will first note briefly the two parables that are recorded between the first parable and its explanation.

Wonderful Growth of the Kingdom

"The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his fields." (Matthew 13:31)

Very little and insignificant in appearance is the mustard seed, yet it is wonderfully prolific, and moreover when sown in congenial soil grows most luxuriantly. In some parts of the world, where the climate is mild, and the soil is productive, the mustard plant becomes really a tree, with branches so large that they will bear up a man's weight, and so of course they afford lodging for the birds of the air.

This illustrates one phase of the kingdom, namely, the great results that come from the seemingly smallest causes. "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nothing things that are; That no flesh should glory in His presence." (1 Corinthians 1:27-29)

The Hidden Working of the Gospel

Another phase of the kingdom is presented in the next parable. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." (Matthew 13:33)

The likeness is somewhat similar to the preceding, in that it shows how great influence seemingly insignificant things have, but it differs from the parable of the mustard seed, in that here the cause is unseen, and only the results appear. God sees in secret, and works in secret, and is manifested to the world only by His working. "The kingdom of God comes not with outward show; Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:20-21)

It is the office of the kingdom of God to permeate the whole world, and its influence has been felt even among those who have despised it and rejected it. There is not an infidel in the world, who mocks at the Gospel, and who prides himself upon his "morality" without religion, who is not indebted to the very Gospel which he hates, for the decency that makes him tolerable in respectable society. There is no good thing on this earth, that does not owe its existence to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

But we must remember that the leaven represents the kingdom of God only in the extent of its influence, and its silent way of working, and not in character. The leaven which is put into meal produces fermentation and decay, while the kingdom of God works just the opposite. God takes that which is not, to bring to naught that which is. So where men would take some visible means, God works by invisible agents; and while the leaven that man uses produces decay, the life of God permeating everywhere just as the leaven does, produces purity and incorruption.

A Comprehensive Parable

The parable of the wheat and the tares is well known. A man sowed good seed in his field, but an enemy came, stealthily and sowed tares among the wheat. No one could detect anything wrong until the wheat came up, and then the tares appeared also.

The servants would have pulled up the tares at once, but the master would not suffer it, lest some of the wheat be pulled up at the same time. So both were allowed to

grow together until the harvest, when the tares were gathered in bundles, to be burned, and the wheat was gathered into the barn.

The explanation is so definite and precise that it leaves nothing to be desired. "He that sows the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom, but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy, that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." (Matthew 13:37-43)

There we have the whole Gospel story in a nutshell, together with the fate of both the righteous and the wicked. This earth is the rightful kingdom of the Lord Jesus. In the beginning the whole earth was given to man, and he was given dominion over it. But this, dominion was lost through sin, and Christ came in man's place, and as man He won the earth back by His righteous life.

The good seed was sown in the beginning, but the devil sowed his tares. There are many zealous servants of the Lord who would pull up the tares at once. That is, they would summarily cut off out of the professed church, and even out of the world, all evil persons.

The point of the master's refusal to allow this is better seen when it is remembered that what the enemy sowed in the field is something that greatly resembles wheat. So the danger in rooting it up lay not merely in its proximity to the wheat, but in the fact that one might readily be mistaken for the other.

Only in the time of harvest can it be definitely determined who are the Lord's and who are not. Only then will evil have so fully developed that there can be no mistake made by anybody.

God has not set any in the church as executioners. The preceding parables show what is to be the work of the church in the world, namely, to fill it with the knowledge

of the truth of God; Christ and His angels will do the work of severing the wicked from among the just.

Mark this: The wicked are to be among the just even until the end: If all the professed followers of the Lord were wholly intent upon doing their legitimate work, and would leave judgment to the One to whom it belongs, the kingdom of God would make far more rapid progress on earth.

Judgment Not Yet Given to the Saints

It must be remembered that "the field is the world," and that this parable teaches that even Christ, the rightful Lord and Master of all does not now exercise the office of judge and executioner in this world. Just as the tares are not gathered, out from among the wheat until the harvest of the wicked are allowed to flourish among the just until the end of the world. It is not until "the time of the dead, that they should be judged," (Revelation 11:18) that Christ takes to himself His great power, and reigns, and that He destroys them that corrupt the earth: "Saying, We give you thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which are, and was, and are to come; because You have taken to yourself your great power, and have reigned. And the nations were angry, and your wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that you should give reward unto your servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear your name, small and great; and should destroy them which destroy the earth." (Revelation 11:17-18)

Until that time He does not interfere in the government of this world, but allows men to conduct it according to their own will. The people of God, therefore, who are to be in the world even as Christ is, are not to interfere in political affairs. The time for judgment, that is, authority to sit in judgment, to be given to the saints of the Most High and for the saints to possess the kingdom, is not until the coming of the Ancient of Days: "Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom." (Daniel 7:22)

All the power and authority now given to the servant of God is to "preach the Word, [to] reprove, rebuke, and exhort" (2 Timothy 4:2) according to that word, and then to leave the sincere to decide their course for themselves. "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come." (1 Corinthians 4:5)

The Fate of the Wicked

This earth is, as already said, Christ's rightful kingdom; but it is now largely overrun with weeds. Yet the Lord has patience. Soon the end will come, and then He will rid His inheritance of everything offensive and will utterly destroy it.

Here we have clearly set forth the fate of the wicked. They are to be burned up as weeds and chaff. There is to be no more any place found for them, and the righteous alone will remain forever. "For evil-doers shall be cut off; but those that wait upon the Lord shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be; yea, you shall diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." (Psalm 37:9-11)

The Glory of the Righteous

"Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." (Matthew 13:43)

Mark the expression, "shine forth." It is not that light will shine upon them, so that they will be seen, but the light will proceed from them. Even so it was with Jesus when He was transfigured, when the world to come was represented in the mountain.

The glory which He had from the beginning was with Him all the time that He was here on earth, but only occasionally did it appear so that men could catch a glimpse of it. And yet it was manifest all the time. "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14) "The Lord will give grace and glory." (Psalm 84:11)

He gives glory now in the form of grace, and in the ages to come He will manifest His grace in the form of glory. Compare the following: "That he would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." (Ephesians 3:16) "And has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not

of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:6-10)

In all the good works that Jesus did, He manifested forth His glory. As He is the light of the world, so are we to be, gaining glory for God by means of the good works which we allow Him to do through us. "He that has ears to hear, let him hear." (Mark 4:9)--Present Truth, May 17, 1900--Timeline: IV-24 (Sermon by the Sea)--Matthew 13:24-43.

Chapter 166

Hidden to Be Revealed

When the disciples of Jesus came to Him, to ask Him about a parable that He had spoken, He said to them: "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables; That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them." (Mark 4:11-12)

To the casual reader, and especially to the one who reads with prejudice against the Lord and His Word, these words seem to indicate unfairness on the part of God; let us therefore give them a little further examination.

In the first place we notice that it is the people themselves who have closed their eyes against seeing, and have dulled their ears and harden their hearts: "Therefore I speak to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which says, By hearing you shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing you shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." (Matthew 13:13-15)

Then reading further in the 4th of Mark we find these words: "And He said unto them: Is a lamp brought to be put under the bushel, or under the bed, and not to be put on the stand? For there is nothing hid, save that it should be manifested; neither was anything made secret, but that it should come to light." (Mark 4:21-22,RV)

So we find that things are hidden only in order that they may be revealed. Just as when Jesus thanked the Father that these things were hidden from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes. "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes." (Matthew 11:25)

No one can complain of such a "hiding" of things as consist in revealing them to babes. But where are these things hidden? In Christ, we are told, "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Colossians 2:3)

But He is "the Light of the world," (John 8:12) and whosoever follows Him shall not walk in darkness: "Then spoke Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8:12)

Now a light is not brought in to be put under a measure, or under a bed, but in order to be put on a candlestick, that it may give light to all that are in the house. "Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it gives light unto all that are in the house." (Matthew 5:15) "For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad." (Mark 4:22)

Thus in the same connection in which Christ says that to the disciples it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom, while to the others all things are spoken in parables, He plainly shows that all the hiding of the things of God is of such a nature as to make them more apparent.

That this is so, is still further seen by what we learn of the nature of parables. Many people doubtless imagine that parables were used by Jesus to conceal His meaning from the multitude, whereas just the opposite is the case. "All these things spoke Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spoke He not unto them; That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world." (Matthew 13:34-35) "Give ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old: Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, showing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength, and His wonderful works that He has done." (Psalm 78:1-4)

Why was it, then, that Jesus said that to the disciples it was given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but that to the others it was not given? "And He said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but

unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables." (Mark 4:11) "He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." (Matthew 13:10)

Why was it given to the one, and not to the other? The answer is obvious,--it was because the disciples asked Jesus the meaning of what He said, while the others did not care enough about what He said, to take that trouble.

No person, young or old, can ever expect to learn much if he never asks any questions. If the rest of the people had the same interest to know the truth that the disciples had, they could have learned it in the same way that they did, namely, by asking. For Jesus himself, in encouraging men to ask, said, "Everyone that asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened." (Matthew 7:8) "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that gives to all men liberally, and upbraids not; and it shall be given him." (James 1:5) "For the Lord gives wisdom; out of His mouth comes knowledge and understanding." (Proverbs 2:6)

God is a God that hides himself, yet only in order that He may be found; for He says, "Look unto me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth." (Isaiah 45:22) "That which may be known of God is manifest [not only to the heathen, but] in them; For ever since the creation of the world the invisible things of Him, even His everlasting power and Divinity, are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made; so that they are without excuse." (Romans 1:19-20) "Verily You are a God that hides yourself, O God of Israel, the Saviour." (Isaiah 45:15)

No man on earth has any excuse for not knowing the Lord. Let us use our eyes, or, if they are closed, ask the Lord for the anointing which He so freely gives, in order that we may know all the things that are so freely given to us by Him.--Present Truth, March 10, 1898--Timeline: IV-24 (Sermon by the Sea)--Mark 4:11-22.

Chapter 167

Directions for Hearing

"Take heed what you hear." (Mark 4:24)

These are the words of the Saviour, and they are as important now as when first uttered.

What We Are to Hear

But what shall we hear? This is answered by the directions as to what we are not to hear: "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causes to err from the words of knowledge." (Proverbs 19:27)

Thus we are to hear the words of knowledge. And what words are they? Again we read: "For the Lord gives wisdom; out of His mouth comes knowledge and understanding." (Proverbs 2:6)

The words of the Lord, therefore, are the words of knowledge. "In [Christ] are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Colossians 2:3)

He speaks the words of knowledge, because He speaks only the words of God. "He whom God has sent speaks the words of God." (John 3:34)

Therefore the word of God concerning Christ is, "Hear Him." (Luke 9:3)

His words are God's words; and we are to live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. All other words are worse than useless.

How We Are to Hear

But there is still another exhortation as important as the other. It is this: "Take heed therefore how you hear." (Luke 8:18)

A man may hear the right thing, and yet not be profited, because he does not hear in the right way. How then shall we hear? In the first place, we should hear with gladness. The angels in heaven hearken to the voice of God's word: "Bless the Lord, you His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word." (Psalm 103:20)

They listen attentively, lest any word should escape them. In the second place, they listen for the purpose of obeying: "[They] do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word." (Psalm 103:20)

Whoever listens in this way will have no difficulty in understanding what he hears; for: "If any man wills to do His will, he shall know the doctrine." (John 7:17)

Lastly, it is important that we hear so attentively that we do not forget. There are some from whom the word is snatched away as soon as it is heard. Then it does them no good. "But whoso keeps His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected." (1 John 2:5)

That word "keep" means "to hold." We are to hold the word. Where? In our hearts. Let it remain there so that its life will permeate every portion of the being, and it will make you "perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Timothy 3:17)--Present Truth, May 30, 1895--Original title: Front Page--Timeline: IV-24 (Sermon by the Sea)--Mark 4:24.

Chapter 168

A Parable of the Kingdoms

"So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knows not how." (Mark 4:26-27)

The Sower Sows the Word

We are workers together with God, and He is the great Sower. The field is the hearts of men, and the fruit is the fruit of righteousness. A willing heart is good soil.

We cannot understand "how" the seed grows. It is the mystery of life and of God. But we understand the fact that it does grow. Nicodemus was unable to understand with his head how a man could be born again, but later he understood the fact with his heart. "With the heart man believes unto righteousness." (Romans 10:10)

By Automatic Power

In describing the process the Lord uses a word which makes the subject very plain. "For the earth brings forth fruits of herself," (Mark 4:28)

Literally automatically, or spontaneously, by a controlling power within. Good soil in which the seed is sown cannot help bringing forth the fruit, because the life in the seed causes it to spring up automatically.

And remember that the earth, the soil, is the heart, and the seed is the Word. Just as the seed of corn causes the earth to bear the bread of our physical life, so the "incorruptible seed" of the Word must cause every heart that receives and holds it to bear fruit unto everlasting life. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides for ever." (1 Peter 1:23)

Man an Instrument

The Lord used that word, from which comes our word automatic, to describe the action of His Word in the heart. An automatic figure at a waxworks, for instance, to use a common illustration, moves its head or hand as though alive. It works automatically, by some spring or power within which controls the figure.

Just so man is but helpless clay. The power of Satan has worked within, moving hands and feet and all the members as "instruments of unrighteousness." (Romans 6:13)

Now the great Sower sows the Word in the darkened hearts, and as it is received every word has power within itself to cause the members to move and act "as instruments of righteousness unto God." (Romans 6:13)

Man Not a Machine

While the automaton, or wax figure, is a perfect representation of the way in which the Word works in man, in actual life the instrument is not an unconscious form. The fruits of righteousness can only be rooted in a willing heart. Man is a living free moral agent, and even God will not work in him contrary to his will.

God pleads with men to share His Word, to choose life, to be willing to do His will: "He that wills to do His will shall know the doctrine," (John 7:17) God will teach it to him by living it in him. Every word believed with the heart is a power to put the thing described in that word into life. All the time man is free; he must choose, he must will to do God's will continually, and as he does thus place his will on the side of righteousness, God's powerful word of grace comes in. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." (Philippians 2:12-13)

Every man holds the decision of his salvation in his own hands, but, thanks be to God, when the choice is on the side of life, the working out of that life is by the power of God.

The Word Works

The meaning of all the Bible criticism of which we hear so much is that Satan wants men to believe that there is no power in the Word to work in these days, when he has himself come down to work as never before, "knowing that he has but a short time." (Revelation 12:12)

Men see what the Bible says, but do not believe they can do what God tells them to do. When men study the Word with their hearts they readily learn what God requires, but the general impression is that what He says cannot be done. The whole point of Christian living and salvation, then, comes to just this: "Has the Word that brings salvation, power to work the works of God in the one who believes it?"

The Lord says it has. To the Thessalonians Paul said, "When you received the Word of God...you received it not as the word of man, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which effectually works also in you that believe." (1 Thessalonians 2:13)

It worked so effectually that it turned those who received it from the way of sin and from the traditions and customs of the world, to the truth of God. And it kept them, too, in the persecutions and afflictions that were brought upon them.

It is still the living, working Word, calling men away from the untruths and traditions that have covered the earth with gross darkness. As you hear it, believe it, open the heart to it, and let it work. It will work nothing that is against you, but only for you.--Present Truth, February 11, 1897--Timeline: IV-24 (Sermon by the Sea)--Mark 4:26-27.

Chapter 169

Let it Grow

"So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed intothe ground, And should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knows not how." (Mark 4:26-27)

What does the farmer do after he has cast the seed into the ground? He goes to sleep at night, and about his business in the daytime.

What does he do, to make the seed grow? Nothing? Why not? Because he doesn't know how it grows. Since "he knows not how" the seed grows, it is therefore impossible for him to do anything to make it grow; and so like a sensible man he lets it grow.

It is a grand thing when a man knows enough to keep his hands off, and not interfere in a thing of which he knows nothing.--Present Truth, February 10, 1898--Timeline: IV-24 (Sermon by the Sea)--Mark 4:26-27.

Chapter 170

The Seed-Sowing of the Gospel

"And He said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knows not how. For the earth brings forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear, But when the fruit is ripe, immediately be puts in the sickle, because the harvest is come." (Mark 4:26-29,margin)

The seed-sowing contains not only the promise of the harvest, but it determines what the harvest will be. The harvest is really present in the seed sown. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap. For he that sows to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." (Galatians 6:7-8)

The Word of God tells us that: "All flesh is grass." (Isaiah 40:6)

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is proclaimed to men by the power of the Spirit, "That they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified." (Isaiah 40:6) "For as the earth brings forth her bud, and as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations." (Isaiah 61:11)

Therefore in the growth of plants from the seed we have a perfect picture of the Christian's growth in grace, or of the growth of the kingdom of God in the heart of men.

The first lesson is given by the Lord, and is found in: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone; but if it die, it brings forth much fruit. He that loves his life shall lose it; and he that hates his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." (John 12:24-25)

Nothing in nature exists for itself. The sun shines to give light and warmth to the world. The grass and trees grow only for the purpose of pleasing the eyes of men, and of supplying life to all creatures. To give up and to utterly abandon self, is the law of the universe. "Even Christ pleased not himself." (Romans 15:8) "That which you yourself

sow is not quickened, except to die: And that which you sow, you sow not the body that shall be, but a bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other kind: But God gives it a body even as it pleased Him, and to each seed a body of its own." (1 Corinthians 15:36-38,RV)

If a farmer should say, "I have but one bushel of wheat, and propose to keep it; I will not waste it by throwing it upon the ground," everybody would call him a foolish fellow. The only way to have it increase thirty, sixty, or a hundred-fold, is to cast it into the earth, knowing that he will never see those grains again.

The same thing holds good with the grain that is eaten; we cannot get the life from it without destroying it as grain. The grain that is "preserved" is never of any use.

What is the seed whence all things come? "The seed is the Word at God." (Luke 13:11)

This is true from the very beginning. When the waters were gathered together unto one place, and the dry land appeared, the earth was empty. It could not produce a single thing. Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth; and it was so." (Genesis 1:11)

What was the seed which God cast into the ground, from which everything sprouted? It was nothing other than the Word of God. The Word became grass and trees, just as afterwards it became flesh.

Christ is the Word of God, the Word of Life, which was in the beginning, and from which everything proceeded. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made." (John 1:1-3) "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." (1 John 1:1-2)

He is the Seed whence spring not only the plants of the field, but also the "trees of righteousness." (Isaiah 61:3)

It was as true of Him as of the corn of wheat, that He could not bring forth fruit without yielding up His life. That which the chief priests and scribes and elders said mockingly, as a reproach, was His glory: "He saved others; himself He cannot save." (Matthew 27:42)

If He had thought about himself, and had been intent on saving himself, He could not have saved anybody else, for: "Without the shedding of blood, [the giving of life,] there is no remission." (Hebrews 9:22)

Nay, He would even have lost His own life if He had attempted to save it; for, having come into this wicked and lost world, there; was no possible way out except the way of the cross.

But the sacrifice of Christ goes back of this present world. He was foreordained as a ransom "before the foundation of the world." (1 Peter 1:20)

In order to become a quickening Spirit, He died. Through death He destroys death and the one who had the power of it: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." (Hebrews 2:14)

He is not a useless seed; He died--emptied himself--that He might bring forth much fruit. "That which you sow, you sow not the body that shall be but a bare grain: ... but God gives it a body." (1 Corinthians 15:37)

Therefore when Christ, the true Seed, came into the world, He said, "A body have You prepared me." (Hebrews 10:5)

The sacrifice was complete. Never again does He have the form that He had before coming to this earth; He was made in the likeness of men, and it was as the Son of man that He suffered the death of the cross, and was in consequence highly exalted, receiving a name that is above every name.

The work is still going on, for He is continually giving himself for mankind; or, rather, the sacrifice, which is made once for all, is eternally efficacious and active. Everything in the universe exists, and will continue to exist, only because His life flows out to it and through it.

The seed dies, and produces others of the same nature. From a single grain of corn a hundred others may come, and each one of the hundred will have the same life, and as much of it as the original seed. So it is that: "Unto everyone of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." (Ephesians 4:7) "Of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace." (John 1:16) "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." (Colossians 2:9)

And when He dwells in our hearts by faith,--when the seed springs up in us,--we also are "filled with all the fullness of God." (Ephesians 3:19)

Every believer receives all the fullness of the life of Christ, the true Seed. "As He is, so are we in this world." (1 John 4:17)

This necessarily follows from being born of His death. So the children of the kingdom are the good seed: "The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom." (Matthew 13:38)

The life of the only begotten Son, who emptied himself, passes into the Seed of the woman, the Son of man; but not merely into the Man Jesus of Nazareth, but into so many as received Him. He is the "firstborn among many brethren." (Romans 8:29)

All who receive Him have the power given them to become the sons of God, and that power is the power of the resurrection; for it was the resurrection from the dead that proved Jesus Christ to be the Son of God. "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (Which He had promised afore by His prophets in the holy scriptures,) Concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." (Romans 1:1-4)

The seed by which we are born again is incorruptible, even the Word of God, which lives and abides for ever: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides for ever." (1 Peter 1:23)

And when that Word abides in us, it gives strength, victory over the wicked one, and preserves from sin. "I have written unto you, fathers, because you have known Him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one." (1 John 2:14) "Whosoever is born of God does not commit sin; for His seed remains in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." (1 John 3:9)

Believer's are Here in Christ's Stead

So Jesus Christ was but the Model Man. He is, in fact, "the Man Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 2:5)

There is no other man, for He makes all who believe and makes them in himself "one new man." (Ephesians 2:15)

It is only in Christ that we become "a perfect man." (Ephesians 4:13)

The seed that is sown produces other seeds, imbued with the same life, that they may in turn be producers of life. So all who believe are here on earth in Christ's stead, to carry on, in His name and by the power of His life, the work begun by Him. He calls all to come to Him and drink the water of life; but He adds, "Let him that hears say, Come." (Revelation 22:17)

And, in order that their call may not be in vain, that none may come to them for life and be disappointed, He says, "He that believes on me, as the Scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." (John 7:38)

Not unto the angels, but unto men, has God put in subjection the world to come: "For unto the angels has He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that You are mindful of him? or the son of man, that You visit him? You made him a little lower than the angels; You crowned him with glory and honor, and did set him over the works of your hands: You

have put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him." (Hebrews 2:5-8)

The work of the Gospel, by which men are to be made new creatures, and a new earth prepared for a suitable dwelling for them, is committed to men. "[God] has put in us the word of reconciliation," (2 Corinthians 5:19,margin) by which men are born into the kingdom of God. The Word abiding in us transforms us, so that we have its nature, and are, in Christ, also the Word of God; so that if any man speak, he will "speak as the oracles of God." (1 Peter 4:11) "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made." (Psalm 33:6)

By the same word the heavens and earth are to be made new; but the Word that creates anew is to be in the mouths and hearts of men. God says: "I have put my words in your mouth, and I have covered you in the shadow of my hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, You are my people." (Isaiah 2:16)

The Word of God, the Seed that is to beget children for the kingdom, and also to prepare the kingdom for them, is to be spoken by men. But it will be by men who have died with Christ, giving up their lives, never to take them again, and whose lives are nothing but God's Word incarnate. When they speak they will speak with authority, for they will speak just what they are, yet not of themselves.

Saved Sinners: Saviours of Others

What a glorious prospect and privilege! The greatest glory of "the Word of Truth, the Gospel of our salvation," (Ephesians 1:13) is not that it saves sinners, barely drawing them into the city of refuge, but that it makes saved sinners saviours of others. God sent Christ into the world to save the world: "For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved." (John 3:17)

And He says to all who are willing to be made conformable to His death, "As my Father has sent me, even so send I you." (John 20:21)

Who would count his life dear, in view of such a high calling, especially since the life which we impart to others is the eternal life that abides in us and saves us? "Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have receivedmercy, we faint not; But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." (2 Corinthians 4:1-2)--Present Truth, July 19, 1900--Timeline: IV-24 (Sermon by the Sea)--Mark 4:26-29.

Chapter 171

Hidden Leaven

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." (Matthew 13:33)

Leaven is not seen, but its influence is felt. Even so it will be with the work of God on earth. "The kingdom of God comes not with observation." (Luke 17:20)

It is not always the work that looks the largest, that accomplishes the most good. No one can know how rapidly the work of God is progressing on earth. Even those who are doing the best work, are unconscious of the greater part of it.

The kingdom of glory will be ushered in at a time when even Christ's most faithful followers and workers will think that much remains to be done; because they will not know the influence of their own lives and work, and they cannot know what other hidden agencies God has at work.

This should serve to admonish us never to think that the coming of the Lord is far off, since we can see comparatively little done, and to encourage us to be content to work in quietness.

Although men may not sound the praise of our work, and even we ourselves may think that it is fruitless, we have the assurance that: "[Our] Father ... sees in secret." (Matthew 6:4,6,18)--Present Truth, May 10, 1894--Timeline: IV-24 (Sermon by the Sea)--Matthew 13:33.

Chapter 172

General Review of Matthew 9 to 13

There being no set lesson for this date, we present a few fragmentary notes on certain portions of the lessons that have been studied during the quarter.

The Work of Faith

Some of the first lessons were records of notable miracles performed by Jesus. These were performed in response to faith exercised by the individual, and should serve to direct our minds to the power of faith.

The 11th chapter of Hebrews gives a list of things that have been done through faith, and the inquiry might naturally arise, "Whence does faith derive this extraordinary power?"

The answer will be found in an examination of what faith is, which we can give only in the briefest manner.

Faith is confidence in another. It is a giving up of one's own ideas and will, to some other who is thereby acknowledged to be superior. It is trust, such as the innocent child reposes in its parents' word.

Now anybody knows that whenever such confidence is reposed in any person, it always produces a certain degree of consideration for, or tenderness toward, the trusting one. The traveler who is appealed to for guidance by a fellow-traveler, feels an interest in that other; the fact that a stranger has confided in him makes him feel kindly toward the unknown one. Even the hardened ruffian could scarcely find it in his heart to do harm to one who, trusting to his honor, would unhesitatingly cast himself upon him for protection.

Now whatever good things there are in man, are from above, and exist in the heart of God as much more strongly than in the heart of man, as God is greater than man. So when Abraham, with child-like trust, believed God when He made a promise which to

all human appearances could never be accomplished, his simple belief "was counted unto him for righteousness." (Romans 4:3)

It is not irreverent for us to say that such trust touched the heart of God, and made Him feel especially tender toward Abraham. Faith accomplished what nothing else could.

And let it be remembered that there is good reason for this. Perfect faith implies perfect worship. Faith and humility are inseparable. The greater one's faith in another, the lower his opinion of himself. So that perfect faith in God, such as Abraham exhibited, implied perfect willingness to do whatever God required of him.

Such faith is as powerful today as it ever was. It suffices to secure pardon for sin, even as it did for Abraham, and nothing but such faith will secure pardon. The cleansing of a sinner from the defilement of sin is the greatest of all miracles, and it is one that is daily being performed in response to faith.

Whenever God sees such trust and submission in the heart of anyone, nothing that that one can ask for can be denied. Then who would not pray, "Lord, increase our faith." (Luke 17:5)

Workers Together With God

Jesus said to His disciples, on one occasion, "Truly the harvest is plenteous, but the laborers are few." (Matthew 9:37)

This suggests the query, Who are the laborers? and how do they stand related to the work of Christ? Their relation to Christ is most intimate. Christ is the great source of light:

Colossians 2:9 In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

And, "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." (1 John 1:5)

His disciples derive the light from Him, and are, in turn, to be the light of the world. "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid." (Matthew 5:14)

Thus they are sharers in Christ's work. He himself said to the Father: "As You have sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." (John 17:18)

Thus the disciples become "workers together with God," and prepared, by the only means possible, to receive the cheering words, "Enter into the joy of your Lord." (Matthew 25:21)

Only those who are sharers in Christ's work can be partakers of His joy.

Freedom Only in Christ

The lesson for November 20 (Judgment and Mercy) is a most important one. In it occurs these words: "Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, andI will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and you shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)

There is no freedom outside of Christ. The Christian is the only man on earth who really has his liberty. Sin and lawlessness are a grievous yoke of bondage, and Christ alone can break this yoke from off our necks.

Anarchists fight against all law; they feel that something is galling their necks, and they imagine that it is the law, and so they would fain abolish law. But that which galls them is the yoke of sin which they bear.

The law of God in Christ Jesus is not a grievous yoke. There is no man so much at liberty as the one who keeps the law of God, and this can be kept only when one is in Christ. The one who perfectly obeys the law never feels it. Said the psalmist: "I will walk at liberty; for I seek your precepts." (Psalm 119:45)

And our Saviour set forth the whole matter in the following words: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever commits sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abides not

in the house for ever; but the Son abides ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed." (John 8:34-36)

Before this He had said: "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32)

This agrees with the other, for Christ is the truth. "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6)

Parable of the Tares

The parables in the 13th chapter of Matthew seem to be the most expressive of any in the Bible. The parable of the tares utterly refutes the comparatively modern idea of a temporal millennium.

In the parable, the man who owned the field is represented as saying to his servants who asked if they should not pull up the tares: "Nay; lest while you gather up the tares, you root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest; and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn." (Matthew 13:29-30)

In the interpretation of the parable, the field is declared to be the world, the good seed the children of the kingdom, the tares the children of the devil; the harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels. The Saviour then says: "As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who has ears to hear, let him hear." (Matthew 13:40-43)

This declaration is so plain that no comment can make it plainer. It shows conclusively that there is never on this earth a time of righteousness and peace until the wicked have been destroyed, and that the punishment of the wicked and the reward of the righteous do not take place until the coming of Christ and the end of the world.

Parable of the Net

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down,and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." (Matthew 13:47-50)

The parable of the net that was cast into the sea seems to be of a little different nature from that of the wheat and tares. There would be no object in giving two parables in close connection, to teach exactly the same thing. In this chapter many parables are given illustrative of the kingdom of Heaven, because all its features could not possibly be represented in one parable.

The parable of the net is, we think, more limited in its application than the parable of the tares and the wheat. The latter represents the good and bad as living together in the world until the final Judgment; the former represents both good and bad persons as being taken into the church, and remaining there until they shall be separated by the decisions of the Judgment.

Notice that in this parable there is first a gathering out from the sea, which doubtless represents the world. Into the net are gathered a quantity of fishes out from the great mass of fishes. The net contains both bad and good.

When it is drawn ashore, the catch is sorted, the good being preserved, and the bad thrown away. "[Even] so shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." (Matthew 13:49-50)

The company here brought to view by the fishes in the net is a company of supposed good people, of those whom it is proper to expect that they will be good. The church is just such a company. According to their profession, all the members of the church ought to be good; but they are not. Many that say, "Lord, Lord," will be cast out at the last day. "Not everyone that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the

kingdom of heaven; but He that does the will of my Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 7:21)

No one has any reason to feel safe, simply because his name is on the church roll. The gospel net gathers in both bad and good. This does not mean that any of those whom it gathers in are good in the sense that they are fit for translation, but that they are composed of good material out of which to make saints.

The work of the gospel, after it has gathered them out, is to transform them fully into the divine image. But some are bad; they will not be transformed; they resist the good influences that are cast around them, and so grow worse instead of better.

This parable takes all the point out of the infidel cavils concerning church members who act dishonestly or who fall into gross immorality. Christ has told us beforehand that there will be false professors. Therefore there is no point to the cavil that infidels love to make against religion, when some professors show that they are unsanctified in life.

We learn that both bad and good are drawn into the gospel net. The church is Christ's school, and Christians are learners of Christ, striving to follow the divine pattern, until at last they may come "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." (Ephesians 4:13)

Who has any right to say that the church is a failure, because it contains some dull scholars, and some who refuse to perform their allotted tasks? We judge a school and a teacher, not by the dull, the lazy, or the obstinate pupils, but by those who follow the instruction given them. If those who obey orders show improvement, we say that the school is a good one, and the teacher competent; and we do not pass sentence of condemnation because those who refuse to obey are not benefited.

So we must judge of the church of Christ and of Christianity, not by the lives of false professors, but by the lives of those who heed the example and teachings of Christ, and who yield themselves to the influence of the Holy Spirit.--Signs of the Times, December 8, 1887--Original title: General Review--Timeline: IV-34 (Mission of the Twelve), 32 (Jesus' Eulogy of John), 24 (Sermon by the Sea)--Matthew 9 to 13.

Chapter 173

The Plane of the Gospel

"And Jesus said unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has not where to lay His head." (Matthew 8:20)

When Christ descended from heaven and took upon himself the nature of sinful flesh, He did not stop when He touched the topmost rim of humanity, but descended to the level of the poorest and most humble of birth.

Born in a manger, and reared in an obscure village, He possessed not a single mark of worldly distinction. He was the son of Joseph the carpenter. His foremost followers were fishermen; His food was loaves and fishes, and He testified that He had not where to lay His head. He was among His disciples as a servant.

Yet in it all He was the Son of God. He stood on the level of the sons of God, and angels did His bidding.

The plane of His life is the plane of the Gospel, and to that plane the poorest and humblest have access. The mysteries of salvation and heirship with Christ are not revealed to the wise and prudent, but unto babes. Jesus Christ identified himself with poverty, with humility, with reproach, and with suffering in their keenest forms, but in all He was without sin.

He did not make a low level of His followers, but an exalted one, for it was the level of the sons of the eternal God. It is sin that degrades, and not poverty, humility, and suffering. The plane of sin, though it is covered with men of wealth and power and honor, is infinitely below the plane of the Gospel, with its poor and lowly and outcast saints.--Present Truth, June 28, 1894--Timeline: IV-25 (The Privations of Discipleship)--Matthew 8:20.

Chapter 174

The Master Was With Them

After a whole day of teaching the multitudes on the shore of the sea, He himself sitting in a boat, Jesus said to the disciples, "Let us pass over to the other side. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took Him even as He was in the ship. And there were also with Him other little ships. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awoke Him, and said unto Him, Master, Do You not care that we perish? And He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And He said unto them, Why are you so fearful? how is it that you have no faith?" (Mark 4:35-40)

The last words let us into a great secret; indeed, the whole narrative shows us the same thing, namely, that the disciples ought not to have been terrified, notwithstanding the boisterous wind and the threatening waves. "Why are you so fearful? how is it that you have no faith?" (Mark 4:40)

If they had faith, they would not have been fearful; that is plainly indicated; and that they ought to have had faith is as plainly implied.

But faith always rests upon fact, and the fact in this case was that they were in no more danger than the Lord himself was; and that He did not regard the situation as dangerous, is shown by the fact that He slept peacefully, and by His calmness when they awoke Him. "Do you not care that we perish?" (Mark 4:38)

As much as to say, "Are you utterly indifferent to our danger? Can you live and enjoy your ease, while we go to the bottom of the sea? Is that all the regard you have for us?"

Thus did they in their unreasoning terror reproach the Lord. But their reproach was as foolish as it was undeserved; for He was in the boat with them, and it could not go to the bottom with them, without taking Him also. No danger threatened them that did not threaten Him also. They were as safe as He was. Anyone who reads the narrative can see that this is so.

The seeming indifference of Jesus was not carelessness, but confidence. He had the faith which they lacked. He knew that none could pluck Him out of His Father's hand. When He at last voluntarily yielded himself into the power of death, "It was not possible that He should be held of it." (Acts 2:24)

Much less, then, could the sea swallow Him, although "the prince of the power of the air," (Ephesians 2:2) had lashed it into fury against Him. And here is another thing to be remembered, and that is, that the storm was raised against Him, and not against the disciples. It was He, and not they, that Satan wish to destroy. But notwithstanding the rage of Satan, Jesus was safe.

No waters can swallow the ship where lies
The Master of ocean, and earth, and skies.
--Mary Ann Baker, Hymn: Master the Tempest is Raging, 1874.

"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and for ever." (Hebrews 13:8) "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matthew 28:20) "I will not leave you orphans." (John 14:18,margin)

Jesus is with us as really as He was with the disciples in the boat on the stormy sea. He had been with His people in the most ancient times; for we read of the wanderings of Israel: "In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bore them, and carried them all the days of old." (Isaiah 63:9)

And since He is the same today as then, we know that He shares all our troubles. Still more plainly is this truth stated. Read: "For the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; He compassed him about, He cared for him, He kept him as the apple of His eye." (Deuteronomy 32:9-10,RV)

So the Holy Spirit inspired the psalmist to pray, "Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of your wings." (Psalm 17:8)

This prayer, inspired by the Holy Spirit, must be answered, "For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." (Hebrews 4:15)

What an amount of unnecessary fear and worry we might save ourselves, if we would learn and remember the lesson taught by the story of Jesus on the sea:

• There is not a danger that threatens us, that does not likewise threaten Him.

• There is not an affliction that presses us, that does not in equal measure afflict Him.

• Not a temptation comes to us that does not touch Him.

• Every sin that we bear, He bears also.

He is with us, and He cares for us, and He is abundantly able to deliver us, for He himself has found deliverance. "Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared; Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; And being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him." (Hebrews 5:7-9)

Remember that Jesus came in our flesh. He was not here on His own account, but on ours.

• All that He suffered and endured, was for us.

• Whenever danger threatened Him, it was our danger.

• If the sea would overwhelm Him, it was only that we might perish.

• Satan sought to destroy Him, but only that we might be lost.

But Satan did not succeed. Christ was kept; and since it was our sufferings that He endured, and our dangers that He shared, it follows that His victory and His deliverance

is our salvation. "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." (Isaiah 53:5)

Jesus rested in the midst of the storm. He was care free, but not careless. Even so we, without being careless or indifferent, may "Cast all our care upon Him, knowing that He cares for us," (1 Peter 5:7) and so be free from care, as He wishes us to be. If we do this, living in constant trust, we are as safe as He himself is. "Underneath are the everlasting arms." (Deuteronomy 33:27)

Therefore, "Rest in the Lord." (Psalm 37:7)

For He says of those to trust Him, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall pluck them out of my hand." (John 10:28)

Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe on His gentle breast,
There by His love o'ershaded,
Sweetly my soul shall rest.
--Fanny Crosby, Hymn: Safe in the Arms of Jesus, 1868.

--Present Truth, February 24, 1898--Timeline: IV-26 (The Storm on the Lake)--Mark 4:35-40.

Chapter 175

Jesus and the Storm

Jesus and His disciples were on the Sea of Galilee, when so furious a storm arose that their boat was almost swallowed up by the waves. The tempest raged, and the waves tossed the little craft, and the disciples were helpless with terror; but Jesus was "in the hinder part of the ship asleep on a pillow." (Mark 4:38)

At last the disciples came to Jesus, and awoke Him, saying, "Master, Master, we perish." (Luke 8:24)

Some even said reproachfully, "Master, do You not care that we perish?" (Mark 4:38)

It seemed to them, in their blind fear, that Jesus was almost selfishly indifferent about them. They felt that they had been neglected.

The Master never turned away from a cry of distress, and He at once arose, saying to them as He did so, "Why are you so fearful?" (Mark 4:40)

Then He rebuked the raging winds and the boisterous waves, saying, "Peace, be still. [And immediately] there was a great calm." (Mark 4:39)

What a wealth of instruction there is for us in this short narrative of facts! Note first the power of Jesus over the elements. His word had brought them into existence. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth." (Psalm 33:6) "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made." (John 1:1-3)

By His word their existence was maintained. "Who has delivered us from the power of darkness, and has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, andthat are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or

dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." (Colossians 1:13-17) "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." (Hebrews 1:1-3)

And the same word could control their fierceness. He rebuked the winds and waves, just as a mother rebukes her children when they become too boisterous in their play. The words, "Peace, be still," are identical with, "Hush, be quiet." It was but a trifling thing to Him.

But it was a mighty act, nevertheless, and the ease with which He did it, shows His greatness. No wonder the disciples wondered, and said, "What manner of Man is this! for He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him." (Luke 8:25) "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and for ever." (Hebrews 13:8)

His message to us is, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth;" (Matthew 28:18) and, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matthew 28:20)

We may know, therefore, that He is as actually with us in all times of need, as He was with the disciples in the boat on the Sea of Galilee, and that His power to protect and deliver is the same now as then.

This being the case, what calm confidence we may have. In the height of the storm He said to the disciples, "Why are you fearful?" (Matthew 8:2)

There was no cause for fear as long as He was with them. He has said to us, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my Helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." (Hebrews 13:5-6)

He speaks peace, and He is Lord of all: "The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (He is Lord of all)." (Acts 10:36)

If we listen to His word, it will give us peace, no matter what our trouble may be.

The boat could not go down with the disciples without taking Jesus down too. But it is impossible for us to conceive of His being swallowed up by the sea which He himself had made. So instead of saying that He was in the same danger that they were, we should rather say that they were as safe as He was. They could not go down while in the same boat with Jesus; so none of us can perish while we have His presence with us.

He slept in the midst of the storm. It was not the sleep of indifference, but of confidence. That sleep is not recorded for our curiosity, but for our learning. If the disciples had really known the power and love of their Lord, they would have been as calm as He. There was no reason why they should not be, as He himself implied by His words, "Why are you so fearful?" (Mark 4:40)

From this calmness of Christ, therefore, we are to learn how calmly we are to trust in all times of danger, knowing that He is with us. "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." (Psalm 37:6) "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength." (Isaiah 30:15)--Present Truth, May 17, 1894--Timeline: IV-26 (The Storm on the Lake)--Mark 4:36-41.

Chapter 176

Do You Not Care That We Perish?

The disciples of Jesus were on the sea in a terrific storm. The winds sweeping down from various quarters into the valley of the lake had "lifted up the waves thereof," (Psalm 107:25) so that the boat was tossed about like a toy. The men were at their wits' end, for neither sail nor oar could make any headway against the tempest. The waves dashed over the boat, and beat into it until it was full and in a sinking condition.

Destruction seemed to be the only thing before them, when they thought of the Master. Where is He? In the midst of the tumult He is quietly sleeping in the hinder part of the boat. "And they awoke Him, and said unto Him, Master, do You not care that we perish? And He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And He said unto them, Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" (Mark 4:38-40)

As we read the record we cannot help wondering at the reproachful question which they asked Jesus, "Do you not care that we perish?" (Mark 4:38) "Are you so unmindful of us that you can calmly sleep while we are about to be swallowed up by the sea? Is this your care for those who have left all to follow you?"

Their thought was only of themselves, and they did not stop to consider that He was in the boat with them. In their faithless fright they did not think that if the boat went down with then, supposing that it were possible, it would take Him down too.

If they had but allowed this thought to come into their minds, it would not only have checked their selfish reproach of the Master, but it would have calmed their fears; for surely He who made the sea, and to whom it belongs, "[who] has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm," (Nahum 1:3) could not perish in the stormy waves. The creature could not destroy the Creator. So the fact that Jesus was in the boat was the surest protection that they could have. It was safer in the storm with Him than in the calm without Him.

Is there not in this a lesson for us? How often when people are in deep distress and affliction,--when the waters have almost overwhelmed them and the proud waters have

actually gone over their souls,--they say, "Why do we suffer this? Has God forgotten us? Does not the Master care for our trouble?" "Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul: Then the proud waters had gone over our soul." (Psalm 124:4-5)

Oh, how many, many times has the Master been pained by such words of selfish, faithless reproach from those who call themselves by His name!

But, what are the facts in the case? The Master is actually in the same trouble with them, and, although to them He may seem to be sleeping, and indifferent to their fate, He is suffering as much as they. Listen to the words of eternal truth: "When you pass through the waters I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you; when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour; I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you. Since you were precious in my sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you; therefore will I give men for you, and people for your life. Fear not; for I am with you." (Isaiah 43:2-5)

Do you say that this promise is for those who have perfect trust in God, but that you are too unworthy for it to apply in your case? Not so; remember the disciples in the boat; their fears had drowned their feeble faith, yet the Master was with them nonetheless. And His promise is that He will be with us; nay, He is with us. "If we believe not, yet He abides faithful; He cannot deny himself." (2 Timothy 2:13)

It is this knowledge of His faithfulness that begets faith in us. Read also the words concerning the Lord's presence with His people in the past, and remember that: "[He is] the same yesterday, and today, and forever." (Hebrews 13:8) "In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them, and He bore them and carried them all the days of old." (Isaiah 63:9) "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rides upon the heaven in your help, and in His excellency on the sky. The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms; and He shall thrust out the enemy from before you; and shall say, Destroy them." (Deuteronomy 33:26-27) "Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, my way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Have you not known? Have you not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, faints not, neither is weary? There is no searching of

His understanding. He gives power to the faint; and to them that have no might, He increases strength." (Isaiah 40:27-29)

And yet feeble men, who cannot see one moment ahead of them, and who can see only the most insignificant portion of that which is present with them, dare to murmur against God, because they cannot understand His dealings with them.

There is not a human ill but that Jesus knows it, "For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust." (Psalm 103:14)

Not only does He know, but He cares. "Casting all your care upon Him; for He cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7)

Not only does He know our trouble, as something that He sees, but He actually shares it. He took on Him our nature, being made in all things like unto His brethren. "For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." (Hebrews 2:16-17) Thus He established a connection between us and Him, so that whatever affects us affects Him.

How, then, can we murmur and complain? How can we fear and be troubled for the future? Is not the Master in the boat with us? Is He not sharing our danger? Do we believe the assurance of His word? Then how can we spend time pitying ourselves? To do so--to murmur at our hard lot, or to wonder why such trials are allowed to come upon us--is to disbelieve the Master's words: "I am with you;" (Matthew 28:20) "I will not leave you, nor forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5)

And then it is not only that our selfish fears will be forgotten in the thought that Jesus shares our trouble, but we may rejoice in the midst of the storm, knowing that He cannot perish, and that therefore while He is with us we cannot perish. Though death itself may come, that need not shake our faith, for He died, and in that very act conquered death. Even in this we may triumph. For, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For your sake we are killed all the day long;we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than

conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:35-39) "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." (Psalm 46:1-2)

Whatever the danger, however great the storm, we may be calm in the confidence that He who rules all things is with us, and so we may say, "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid." (Isaiah 12:2)--Signs of the Times, September 21, 1891--Timeline: IV-26 (The Storm on the Lake)--Mark 4:38-40.

Chapter 177

God Cannot Fail

The disciples were rowing across the sea one night, when a tempest arose and threatened to engulf their little craft.

Jesus was also a passenger with them, and worn out with the work of the day was in one end of the boat, "asleep on a pillow," (Mark 4:38) even while the water was dashing over their sides. "And they awoke Him, and said unto Him, Master, do You not care that we perish? And He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. And He said unto them, Why are you so fearful? how is it that you have no faith?" (Mark 4:38-40)

Is it, then, an evidence of no faith for men to be alarmed when their boat is filling with water in a boisterous sea? Yes, for the Lord was with them. They thought they were about to drown, and that the Lord was about to drown with them. And He seemed to pay no heed to His danger nor to theirs.

They were thinking of themselves, but they had no conception of the Lord as other than themselves in such an extremity; no faith in His Divine mission and the power of His life.

Faith would have said, "The Lord is with us. His is the power of an endless life, and His is a Divine mission in the world which no fury of the elements can cut short."

Their unbelief suggested that the Lord was as helpless as they.

The lesson is for us. Whenever danger or trial comes we are to remember that God is alive. When circumstances would seem to overwhelm, and the enemy is raging, unbelief suggests that God is helpless, and that we must perish. But the believer who holds to the promises of God can no more perish than the Lord himself. God has pledged His own existence that His promises shall not fail nor desert one in trial. "For when God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He swore by himself." (Hebrews 6:13)

And this was that we might have "strong consolation" who flee to Him for refuge. "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." (Hebrews 6:18) It is just as impossible for God to forsake us in trouble, if we will but take His promises, as it was that Jesus should sink to the bottom of the sea before His work was done.

How the load of care and perplexity will roll aside if we but remember that God lives and that there is no danger of His perishing. This fact believed, there is but one question to be settled, "What is His will?"

And knowing that, the results and consequences may be left entirely with Him. He who has the power to work the good pleasure of His will in us has all power. "Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be ableto separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38-39) "Where is the fury of the oppressor? He that is bent down shall speedily be loosed; and he shall not die and go down into the pit, neither shall his bread fail. For I am the Lord your God, which stills the sea, when the waves thereof roar: the Lord of hosts is His name." (Isaiah 51:14-15,RV,margin)

Through waves, and clouds, and storms,
He gently clears thy way;
Wait thou His time, so shall this night
Soon end in joyous day.
--John Wesley, Hymn: Through Waves and Clouds and Storms.

--Present Truth, November 14, 1895--Timeline: IV-26 (The Storm on the Lake)--Mark 4:38-40.

Chapter 178

The Fierce Demoniac

The occurrence which forms the subject of this lesson is recorded also in Matthew 8:28-34, and Luke 8:26-36.

Mark and Luke mention only one demoniac, however, while Matthew speaks of two. It seems probable that one must have been especially conspicuous, either by his great violence or by being the spokesman, or rather the medium through which the devils spoke to the Saviour. The text, however, presents no difficulty, since neither Mark nor Luke say that there was but one. Those who wish to find contradictions in the Scriptures must, therefore, seek elsewhere.

It is impossible to read this narrative without being impressed with the reality of the truth taught everywhere in the Scriptures, of the existence, not only of a personal devil, but of an innumerable company of personal demons. To deny this is to deny the teaching of our Lord, for He universally recognized the existence and the personality of evil spirits. He uniformly spoke of them, and to them, as real beings; which shows that He knew them to be such; for, recognizing Him as divine, we cannot for a moment suppose that He was either deceived himself, or that He deceived the people.

Just how evil spirits can take possession of men and control their actions, we do not know; but that they have done so in all ages of the world, we gather from the Scriptures. In the Old Testament those under the control of evil spirits were called witches, or wizards. In the time of our Saviour they were said to be possessed of the devil, or, as in one case, "possessed with a spirit of divination;" (Acts 16:16) margin, Python, which is simply another name for Satan. And in these days one class, at least, of such unfortunates are called mediums; and the system, instead of being called witchcraft, or necromancy, is known as Spiritualism.

It is not to be understood, however, that all who are possessed with evil spirits are mediums; nor does it follow that the control must be continuous. Some are undoubtedly under the satanic influence continually, while others are controlled only when placed under certain conditions.

That such control is possible may seem strange to those who have never given the subject any thought, and some may even doubt whether there be any such thing at all or not; but the Scriptures certainly teach the devil had such power eighteen hundred centuries ago, and why should he not have the same power now?

That he has this power, and that he exercises it, is neither strange nor incredible, when we consider that the nature of fallen men and fallen angels is the same now that it was then; that: "Satan as a roaring lion walks about seeking whom he may devour;" (1 Peter 5:8) and that only too many are taken captive by him at his will.

Just how evil spirits control men we do not know, but we know as much about it as we do about many other things which we believe. We do not know how one mind can influence the other, or how one person can mesmerize another, and yet we know that it is so. Probably it is in a similar manner that devils gain and hold control of those who give themselves up to be led by them.

Of course there are many different degrees of spirit control, and different manifestations. Not all who are possessed are mediums. The one of whose case we read in our lesson, was not a medium, but a wild and violent maniac, endowed with supernatural strength, while, on the other hand, the damsel who had the spirit of divination (Acts 16:16) was probably as mild-mannered and tractable as any one, yet she was under the control of one or more evil spirits.

The tomb referred to in this lesson were sepulchers, or caves, made in the hill-sides for the reception of the dead, some of them hewn out of solid rock. But though intended originally for burial places, many of them had become the dwelling-places of fierce robbers, and places of shelter for such men as the one whose story forms the basis of this lesson.

It was from one of these caverns that this fierce and repulsive creature emerged, bruised, bleeding, and covered with filth. But repulsive and horrible as was his appearance, the Saviour had compassion upon him, as He also has upon the sinner, of whom this demoniac is a fit representative.

All who live in sin are in a measure under the power Satan, and morally they are just as repulsive as was this fierce demoniac. The pitiable condition of such is thus

described by the prophet: "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the soul of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores; they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." (Isaiah 1:5-6)

But Jesus has compassion on them, and though, like the poor man in our lesson, they cry out to be let alone, if the Saviour can discern in them anything whatever that responds to His love, He rebukes the unclean spirit, and gives the poor sin-sick souls power to become sons of God.--Signs of the Times, February 4, 1889--Notes on the International Lesson, February 10--Timeline: IV-27 (The Demoniacs of Gadara)--Mark 5:1-20.

Chapter 179

Jesus at Matthew's House

"And He went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted unto Him, and He taught them. And as He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed Him. And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and His disciples: for there were many, and they followed Him. And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto His disciples, How is it that He eats and drinks with publicans and sinners? When Jesus heard it, He said unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they came and said unto Him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days. No man also sews a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up takes away from the old, and the rent is made worse. And no man puts new wine into old bottles: else the new wine bursts the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles." (Mark 2:13-22)

This lesson shows the marked contrast between the religion of Jesus Christ and the societies which men form.

True and False Ways of Building

All the so-called "benevolent societies" demand that one who joins shall have a "good character," that is, he must be of the same class as those who already constitute the society. "The Church" itself, not any particular organization, but the great body of "organized Christianity," has been largely permeated by this spirit.

As a legacy from the Papacy, which has never yet been thoroughly eradicated from the minds of any body of Christians, the idea obtains to a great extent, that the church

exists for its own sake, and that its chief duty is to guard its own reputation. Accordingly the tendency is to build up walls, and to guard them diligently, lest someone come in, who will bring discredit upon "the name."

To the extent that this state of things exists, the members of the church, and especially the leaders, are more intent upon building up and strengthening the organization, than in saving souls and diffusing the knowledge of Christ in the earth.

So it was with the Jewish church in the days of Christ. Accordingly the Jewish leaders were by the very nature of the case in opposition to Him. His manner of work was so entirely different from theirs, that they regarded Him as an anarchist, as one dangerous to society, in that, as they supposed, He would destroy all law and order and established customs.

In this the Jews were altogether at fault, for Jesus did not, and does not work to overturn any institution or custom, except as the building up of truth crowds out error. He would simply build on the right foundation, but the building which He erects, as well as the method of building, is so contrary to purely human ideas, that to men it seems like a work of destruction.

He worked in the church as it was, as well as in the world, not to found another organization, but to leaven the mass. The work of Christ and the apostles was not to "raise up churches," but to save sinners, to call souls out from the bondage of human tradition and error.

Separated to Serve

Their disciples, like Christ and the apostles themselves, were to remain among their former associations as long as those old associations would tolerate the new life. The unwillingness of the old body, the purely human organization, to receive truth in a living form, naturally resulted in the forming of new congregations.

As the followers of Christ were cast out from the old organization, that would not tolerate growth, they naturally were brought together by similarity of belief and practice, and it was natural enough, and nothing wrong, that these new congregations should receive some distinguishing name, for convenience in referring to them.

But it was never the design of the Lord, nor of the apostles, that these new congregations should be devoted to themselves, to building themselves up, and making a name. They were to be lights to the world, leaven, instilling the principles of the Gospel of Christ, into the mass of mankind, intent only on making known the name of their Lord and Master.

From the acts of Christ himself we are to learn what should be the work of His church--His called-out people--till the end of time.

False and True Authority

The scribes and Pharisees, like the clergy of more modern times, were a class. Their relation to the common people was quite aptly indicated by the position they took while teaching,--a stand high above the people. They could preach to the people from behind a barrier, but they would not condescend to mingle with them. The desk behind which they stood while preaching was typical of the barrier which existed between them and the people, even when they came in contact with any of them.

Their lack of real ability was covered up by an assumption of dignity. They were very jealous for their "rights" and privileges, and could not understand Christ's easy familiarity with all classes. There was no barrier between Him and them, yet everyone instinctively knew that He was infinitely above them in character.

In His intercourse with the people, He had no need to be on His guard to maintain His dignity, for He had the true dignity of moral worth, which cannot be compromised.

When the scribes and Pharisees saw Jesus sitting at table with many belonging to the despised "masses," they said to His disciples, "How is it that He eats and drinks with publicans and sinners?" (Mark 2:16)

To their narrow comprehension, this showed a lack of the first qualifications of a Rabbi. Jesus heard the question, and answered it himself. Turning to them, He said, "They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Mark 2:17) "[He] came not to be ministered unto, but to minister;" (Matthew 20:28) not to build up a reputation, but to

save people of no reputation; not to make a name for himself, but to make known the name of the loving Father of all, to His ignorant children.

He came to save the lost, and He necessarily had to go where the lost were. He could not, in pursuance of His mission, spend His time talking to a congregation of people who thought themselves already in good condition, but He must labor for those who felt and acknowledged their need; and as He could supply that which they really needed, He never had any difficulty in securing a congregation.

The Law Reveals Our Need

Here comes in the use of the ten commandments, the preaching of the law. The law cannot justify, "for by the law is the knowledge of sin." (Romans 3:20)

All it can do is to make known to men their sinful state. "The law works wrath." (Romans 4:15)

It speaks with the thunders of Sinai, awakening men to a knowledge of "the wrath of God, [which comes] upon the children of disobedience." (Ephesians 5:6)

There can be no preaching of the Gospel without it; for since the Gospel is the good news of the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes, it is necessary that people be shown their need of salvation, and also the righteousness of the law, to the obedience of which God wishes to save them.

They that are whole need not a physician; there are none who are really whole; but there are many who think that they are, and they must be convinced that they are sick, before they will accept the services of the Great Physician. Thus, "The law is a tutor, to bring men to Christ, that they may be justified by faith." (Galatians 3:24)

New and Old Wine Skins

There is a very important lesson for us in the statements about the new and old cloth, and the new and old bottles. Let the student remember that the bottles used in those days, even as today in many parts of the East, were made of skins, and not of glass. "Wine skins" is the word used in the Revised Version, and this is what is meant.

Old, withered skins would not stand the strain of new wine, but would be burst by the process of fermentation. The "new cloth" referred to is, as the margin indicates, "raw, or unwrought cloth," which would shrink, and thus make the hole upon which it was patched larger than it was before. Now read: "No man also sows a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up takes away from the old, and the rent is made worse. And no man puts new wine into old bottles: else the new wine bursts the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles." (Mark 2:21-22)

Notice that Jesus speaks about putting new cloth into old garments. Of course no one would think of putting old cloth into new garments, for there is no necessity for patching new garments. Notice also that Jesus stops with the statement that: "New wine must be put into new bottles." (Mark 2:22)

He does not go on to say that old wine must be put into old bottles. What is the reason for this? Evidently this, that He would teach that His Gospel makes everything new. "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

He has no use for old bottles; all must be new. The fresh wine of the Gospel could not be carried in the old bottles of Pharisaism and pride. Not that there was no hope for the professional teachers of the law; but they must be made over entirely new. This Jesus could do.

Moreover, there can be no patchwork in the Gospel of Christ. It is useless to try to patch the teaching of Christ upon an old, formal profession, or upon an ungodly life. Being converted is something more than merely turning round, and "trying to live a different life." It is being made over entirely new.

Jesus could not use the scribes and the Pharisees, to carry His Gospel, because they thought themselves all right. They were self-sufficient, and were not willing to acknowledge that they were nothing in themselves. "Before honor is humility." (Proverbs 15:33) "His heart that is lifted up is not upright in him." (Habakkuk 2:4)

Confessing Our Need

"My God shall supply all your need, according to His riches in glory." (Philippians 4:19)

But the need must be felt and acknowledged, before the help can be appreciated. Therefore never be afraid to confess your lack. The greatest hindrance in the world to progress is the unwillingness to admit mistakes.

To learn, implies that one does not already know as much as he ought; and the dread that people will find this out, effectually prevents many from accepting new and saving truth. So it is that many, very many, are prevented by their pride from accepting Christ; they are not willing specifically and definitely to acknowledge themselves to be sinners. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." (1 Timothy 1:15)

Let everyone be ready always to say, "of whom I am chief," (1 Timothy 1:15) and his salvation is assured.--Present Truth, March 8, 1900--International Sunday School Lesson for March 18--Original title: Help for Those Who Need. Jesus at Matthew's House--Timeline: IV-10 (Call of Levi Matthew), 28 (Matthew's Feast), 29 (The Question About Fasting)--Mark 2:13-22.

Chapter 180

Are You One of the Crowd?

When Jesus was on His way to the house of Jairus to raise the ruler's daughter to life, the crowd accompanying Him was so great as to throng and press Him. They were interested in His work, talking about what He had done, excited, and curious to see and hear more.

But their contact with Him brought no special blessing to them; and they were really in the way of the timid woman who was struggling through the crowd to touch but the border of His garment. The touch brought to her actual life, and she knew it. It was the touch of faith.

The same story has been re-enacted ever since. Today it is popular, and really almost necessary, in order to be counted respectable, to talk about the Christian religion and to patronize it. The crowd is thronging about the Lord. But how many who are about Him are touching Him with the touch of faith, for the healing of the soul, and for the life that heals?

The multitude needed the life no less than the woman. But they did not feel the need. The work of the Lord was regarded only as a matter of deep interest, for intellectual discussion, and as a good thing generally. But today, as then, it means life to the dying, and so few realize there is daily spiritual life in touching Christ by faith.

Many who long for deliverance from the power of sin are hindered from coming to the Lord for life by the formalism and lifelessness which well nigh hides the Christ from view. Yet, thank God, as the living Christ is lifted up, timid souls are pressing in among the crowd and finding life.--Present Truth, May 31, 1894--Timeline: IV-30 (The Invalid Woman; Jairus' Daughter)--Matthew 9:18-22.

Chapter 181

The Power that Saves

"And behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue: and he fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought Him to come into his house; For he had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying. But as He went, the multitudes thronged Him. And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent her living upon physicians, and could not be healed of any, Came behind Him, and touched the border of His garment: and immediately the issue of her blood staunched. And Jesus said, Who is it that touched me? And when all denied, Peter said, and they that were with Him, Master, the multitudes press You and crush You. But Jesus said, Some one did touch me: for I perceived that power had gone forth from me. And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before Him declared in the presence of all the people for what cause she touched Him, and how she was healed immediately. And He said unto her, Daughter, your faith has made you whole; go in peace." (Luke 8:41-48,RV)

Here we have another of the miracles of Jesus, which are written that we might know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, we might have life through His name. Most striking is this miracle adapted to the purpose for which it is designed; for nothing could more clearly illustrate the truth that we receive life and salvation from Christ through faith in Him.

Consider the facts in the case. For twelve years the woman had been suffering, and steadily growing worse. Physicians could do her no good, and she had no more money to spend on them, even if they could. She was dying in misery, without help or hope of help. She was indeed dying, for loss of blood means loss of life. "The blood is the life." (Deuteronomy 12:23)

This is a well-known and universally recognized fact. To shed blood means everywhere to take life. Therefore, when we read that the woman had been losing blood for twelve years, and that the loss was increasing, we know that her life was gradually and surely vanishing away.

But the great Physician came her way, and she had confidence in Him; "For she said within herself, If I may but touch His garment, I shall be whole." (Matthew 9:21)

She touched Him, and immediately she was made whole; that is, all her lack was supplied; the loss was made good. What did she lack? What was she losing? Blood, life. Therefore in that she was made whole, it is evident that what she received was life-new blood. This is the simple fact. As surely as the miracle was performed, so surely did the woman in that instant receive life; yes, she actually received fresh blood; for she was made whole, and her lack was blood.

How was it done? Jesus tells us all that we can know about it, saying, "I perceived that power had gone forth from me." (Luke 8:46,RV)

From this we see that when Jesus supplied new life to the suffering, it came directly from himself. We read that: "All the multitude sought to touch Him: for power came forth from Him, and healed them all." (Luke 6:19,RV)

In this verse, as in Luke 8:46, the Authorized Version has "virtue," where the Revised Version gives us the word "power." "Power" is the better word, for the Greek word is the same word that we have Anglicized as dynamite.

The power that works in all things, and that upholds all things, is the life of God; so the power that went forth from Jesus and healed the woman, as well as the multitudes, was life; and this we have already seen from the fact that Jesus supplied what she lacked, namely, life. "[Jesus] went about doing good ... because God was with Him," (Acts 10:38) and, "With God is the fountain of life." (Psalm 36:9)

The characteristic of a fountain is that although you continually draw from it, it always has just as much to give; so although Jesus was continually bestowing life,--it was flowing from Him to others,--the supply did not diminish, because He had the fountain in Him. "[He is] the Author of life." (Acts 3:15,margin)

The Touch of Faith

Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has made you whole; go in peace." (Luke 8:48)

In the margin of the Revised Version we have "saved," in the place of "made whole;" and this is the better reading. The words in the Greek are identical with those spoken to the sinful woman, who also touched Jesus, and who received forgiveness of sins. (Luke 7:37-50) Jesus said to her, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." (Luke 7:50)

Here, therefore, we have a practical illustration of the statement that: "The just shall live by faith," (Romans 1:17) together with the statement concerning Jesus, that: "we shall be saved by His life." (Romans 5:10)

The woman was saved by the life of Christ, which she received through her faith in Him. By faith she received life from Him, so that she could truly say in the most literal sense, "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20)

From the case before us, we see that these expressions are not mere forms of speech, but the statement of actual fact, We really receive life from the Lord. Whether we believe it and acknowledge it or not, it is true that our life comes from the Lord; for it was to the heathen that the apostle Paul spoke the words, "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." (Acts 17:28)

But there is a difference in the manner of our contact with the Lord. The multitudes pressed upon the Lord as He was on the way to the house of Jairus, but only one touched Him in faith, and thus received new life.

So all the multitudes of earth are in personal contact with Christ, whether they will or not, for only in Him can they have life; but when our touch is the touch of faith,--when we acknowledge Him in all our ways,--then we experience His life as the power that saves. "In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." (Proverbs 3:6)

A Blessed Reality

There was no imagination in the case of the poor woman who was healed by the touch of faith. There are imaginary diseases; but when the life-blood is surely ebbing

away, the weakness that results is not a fancied one. No imagination is powerful enough to give strength to one who is in such a condition.

But the woman was made perfectly well and strong, and this new strength was no more imaginary than was her previous weakness. That which was done for her was as real as though a physician had performed the operation of transfusion of blood from a healthy person. Life is indeed real; and when Jesus tells us that He gives us His life, we may be sure that the gift is not an empty name.

How real and how precious does this miracle make the words, over which so many are offended; namely, "Without shedding of blood is no remission." (Hebrews 9:32)

The blood is the life; the shedding of blood is the giving of life; we have no life in ourselves, but are "dead in trespasses and sins," (Ephesians 2:1) because sin carries death with it. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (Romans 5:12) "Then when lust has conceived, it brings forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death." (James 1:15)

The taking away of sin is therefore simply salvation from death; but those who are dead cannot live unless they receive new life, which must come from outside of themselves; and this life Jesus in His love freely supplies.

A Different Life

Everybody is familiar with the expressed resolve to "live a different life," the different life to be of course a better one. But how few realize that the better life must indeed be "a different life."

The life that they have been living is a life of sin. The life itself is sin. With that life they can do nothing else than sin, for it must be evident to everyone who stops to think, that a person can live no life except that which he has, and that if he lives a different life, he must receive another life.

This new life is just what we get by faith in Jesus, and the miracle which we are considering was done and recorded in order that we might see the reality of the transaction. It is something on which to build faith.

Shall we not then, like the poor woman, "feel after" the Lord? If we reach out the hand in faith, we shall certainly find Him, for: "He is not far from everyone of us." (Acts 17:27) "The word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Romans 10:8-10)--Present Truth, July 14, 1898--Timeline: IV-30 (The Invalid Woman; Jairus' Daughter)--Luke 8:41-48.

Chapter 182

The Hem of His Garment

Jesus was on His way to the house of Jairus, "as He went the people thronged Him. And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, either could be healed of any, Came behind Him, and touched the border of His garment; and immediately her issue of blood stanched." (Luke 8:42-44) "The life of the flesh is in the blood." (Leviticus 17:11)

Therefore the poor woman's life was steadily passing away. From Jesus she obtained that of which she stood in need, namely, life. Jesus said that power had gone from Him. Life from Him went into the woman, and gave her new life.

The miracles of Jesus were recorded "that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life through His name." (John 20:31)

He came for the purpose of giving life to as many as would believe on Him; and the healing of the woman is an illustration of the reality of the life that He gives. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) It is not a matter of theory, but a fact. "Out of the heart are the issues of life." (Proverbs 4:23)

The law of God was in the heart of Jesus. "I delight to do your will, O my God: yea, your law is within my heart." (Psalm 40:8)

Therefore the life of Christ is the righteousness of the law of God. It is the perfection of the law in a living form. And therefore the life which believers in Christ obtain, is the righteousness of God's law, of obedience to the ten commandments. Without that life of Christ received, it is as impossible for a man to keep the law, as for a dead man to walk.

In order to receive this life from Jesus, we must come close to Him, as the poor woman did. Her case shows us what it is to be near to the Lord. There were certainly others who were nearer to Jesus in body than she was; because the throng round Jesus

was so great that she could only reach through and touch the hem of His garment. Yet she got near enough to receive life from Him, while the others did not. It was her faith that made her near to Him, and that saved her.

Even so we are exhorted to: "Draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith." (Hebrews 10:22)--Present Truth, May 24, 1894--Original title: Front Page--Timeline: IV-30 (The Invalid Woman; Jairus' Daughter)--Luke 8:42-44.

Chapter 183

The Blood of His Cross

In that marvelous description of Christ and His work, in the first chapter of Colossians, we find that: "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him reconciled all things unto himself." (Colossians 1:19-20)

Two things are here spoken of as being the good pleasure of God:

1. In Christ all fullness could dwell; and

2. In Christ all things, both on earth and in heaven, should be reconciled to himself.

And one thing is spoken of as having been done, namely, the making of peace through the blood of His cross. No expression is more familiar to the Christian, or to anyone who is accustomed to Gospel preaching, than: "The blood of Christ." (Ephesians 2:13; Hebrews 9:14; 1 Peter 1:19)

Never is there a revival sermon about an invitation to sinners to come to the cross for cleansing in the blood of Christ, and the assurance that they may cleanse themselves from every defilement in His powerful, precious blood.

And yet, for all this, it is a fact that to most people the blood of Christ is mythical and unreal. Many professed Christians, even ministers, now object to all reference to "the blood," as being gross and repulsive, so that we hear much less about it than formerly. A minister in a sermon on "Christ in Creation and Redemption" feels it necessary to apologize for using the objectionable term, by saying, "I cling to that figurative word, despite its painful suggestions, because there is no other word that stands with me for all which that word covers."

It is a "figurative word"? Is it so that there is no real blood of Christ, in which we can be actually cleansed? Sin is a terribly real thing; we all know its power in our bodies; and we know that whatever cleanses it away must be real. We want no

"figurative" cleansing; but if the term "blood" in the Bible were only a "figurative word," then our cleansing would be only figurative, and we should be yet in our sins.

Thank God, the Bible still says just as much about the blood as it used to, and makes no apology for it, and we can cling to it without apology. "The blood is the life;" (Deuteronomy 12:23) and, "The life was manifested, and we have seen it." (1 John 1:2)

This life is the light of men; and: "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." (1 John 1:7)

There is real cleansing in real blood. Silver and gold are counted real things by the inhabitants of this earth; yet they are nothing in comparison with the blood of Christ; for we read: "You were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." (1 Peter 1:18)

Silver and gold are corruptible, and, as they cannot purchase any real blessing, they are unreal; but the blood of Christ is incorruptible; it is eternal substance, and eternal blessing. By it, and in it, "The Lord [has] commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." (Psalm 133:3)

How may we know the reality of this priceless blood? Simply by opening our eyes; for "the life was manifested." "The entrance of God's word gives light and understanding." (Psalm 119:130)

It is a lamp, enabling us to see realities that to our unassisted vision seem only shadows. "Your word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." (Psalm 119:105)

So we read this testimony concerning Christ as He hung on the cross: "One of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bore record, and his record is true: and he knows that what he says true, that you might believe." (John 19:34-35)

There is no question but that the blood that came from Christ's smitten side was real. Usually, it could not be seen; but it was visibly manifest in that time only to help us to recognize its reality when it is invisible; for the most real and enduring things are usually invisible to mortal eyes.

But let us consider another instance where the evidence is clear and conclusive that Christ's real blood was present, although it was invisible. Jesus was on His way to the house of Jairus, in answer to a call for help, and: "As He went the people thronged Him. And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, Came behind Him, and touched the border of His garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanched. And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with Him said, Master, the multitude throng you and press You, and You say, Who touched me? And Jesus said, Somebody has touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me." (Luke 8:42-46)

Here was a case of real need. The woman's disease was real, and she was really healed. Moreover, she received healing from the person of the real Christ. His fullness supplied her lack. What was her lack? She lacked blood. Then what did she get from Jesus? She got a fresh supply of blood; for not only did she cease to lose blood as soon as she touched Him, but she was "made whole," (Matthew 9:22) and, "she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague." (Mark 5:29)

The fresh blood filled her whole body with the warm glow of life. That which the woman received came from Christ. She felt a supply of power come into her, and He felt power go from Him. Therefore, although nothing could be seen, we know that from the body of Christ there went real blood to the body of the woman.

The invisible blood that passed from the side of Jesus for the healing of that poor woman was as real as the visible blood that flowed from His side on the cross. Now we may go a step further. Jesus said, "My blood is drink indeed," (John 6:55)

Or as rendered in the German, "My blood is the true drink."

Therefore He said, "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoso eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, has eternal life;and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6:53-54)

On the night of His the trial, He took the cup filled with "the fruit of the vine," (Mark 14:25) and said, "This is my blood; ... drink you all of it." (Matthew 26:28,27)

He is the true vine, the life of everything that grows, and so in the blood of the grape we get His life blood.

Drinking from the Rock

Now we read further, that the children of Israel in the wilderness "did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ." (1 Corinthians 10:4)

This brings us to the rock in Horeb, upon which the Lord stood, and which, when Moses smote it at His command, sent forth living water for the people. "Behold, I will stand before you there upon the rock in Horeb; and you shall smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel." (Exodus 17:6)

They had "tempted the Lord, saying, Is the Lord among us are not?" (Exodus 17:7)

And the stream of water gushing from the rock showed that He was among them. There can be no question but that the water which the people drank that day, and for many days and months thereafter, came from Christ. It was life to them, and it was the life of Christ; for the Spirit and the water and the blood agree in one113 as seen at Calvary. "And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one." (1 John 5:8) Moreover, "the pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, [proceeds] out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb." (Revelation 22:1)

And in the midst of that throne is the slain Lamb. "And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." (Revelation 5:6)

The water of life, therefore comes from the side of the slain Lamb, and is His precious blood. So the water of life which quenched the thirst of the children of Israel, and brought new life to them, was the blood of Christ; and it is by that same blood that all men get whatever life they possess. It is our life, for His blood literally flows in our veins.

Does this seem too strong a statement? Any reader can see the reality of it for himself, and know that the miracle performed for the poor woman in Capernaum, and for the multitudes in the wilderness, was to teach us that we get life only as the blood of Christ flows from Him to us.

Why do you eat and drink? It is to get life. You know that you get life by that means. If you are weak and pale, you eat the best food you can get in order that you may have good fresh blood, and thereby strength. You know that your blood comes from what you eat and drink. You do not create life; you do not make life, you simply take it in from without.

There is not an element in your body except that which comes in your food and drink. He simply transfers the elements of life into your own system. Thus your blood, along with the other tissues of your body is continually wasting away, is replenished.

Can you not see that there is a continual stream of blood flowing into and through you from without? We are each one but side channels for the river of life which flows from the throne of God. The account of the water flowing from the Rock in Horeb was written for our learning that we might see the water of life, the blood of Christ, flowing from every fountain. It is that we may see the cross of Christ reflected in every water spring, and know that: "Through all created things thrills one pulse of life from the great heart of God."--Ellen G. White, Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, p. 96.

The picture shows a beautiful scene. The moss-covered rocks are as it were pierced in dozens of places, and from each opening leaps forth a jet of sparkling water. It is the exact counterpart of the scene in the desert of Sinai. The flowing water from the rock, as well as from other places on earth where it bursts forth, is to make us see and know that the Lord is among us.

All fullness dwells in Him, therefore the fullness of the earth comes from Him. The water, which represents the fullness, the fertility of the earth, comes from the smitten Rock, that is even with us, and that Rock is Christ.

There is more of Christ than the eyes of man can see, or the mind of man can comprehend. Only "parts of His ways" (Job 26:14) are revealed in His works that we see. Christ comes that we may have life, and that we may have it more abundantly; and that abundant life bursting forth from the earth, shining in the light, and breathing in the air, is intended to make real to us, and to enable us to appropriate the more abundant life that even the heaven of heavens cannot contain.

Water is the universal solvent. It cleanses everything that it comes in contact with. In its visible form it cleanses our bodies: but there are impurities so deeply seated and so firmly fixed that it cannot reach them. But the knowledge of the cleansing, reviving effect of the water that we see, enables us to grasp the reality of the cleansing life-giving power of the water that we cannot see which is able to permeate even the inner chambers of the body and the secret places of the soul, thus cleansing us from sin. "We have redemption through His blood." (Ephesians 1:7) "[God has] made peace through the blood of His cross." (Colossians 1:20) "We [are] saved by His life." (Romans 5:10)

Thus, all creation is God's power to speak peace to us. All the power comes from His hand, all the water flows to refresh and cheer us gives of His love, the assurance of washing all our sins. "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord." (Psalm 107:43) "Now the Lord of Peace himself give you peace always by all means." (2 Thessalonians 3:16)--Present Truth, April 24, 1902--Timeline: IV-30 (The Invalid Woman; Jairus' Daughter)--Luke 8:42-46.

Chapter 184

A Lesson from Real Life

"Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ... Therefore by the offense of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." (Romans 5:1,18-19) "The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." (1 Corinthians 4:20)

The promises of the gift of the Gospel are not matters of mere theory, but a fact. And in order to show us the reality of the power, Jesus Christ came to earth and demonstrated it in such a way that all can comprehend it. In the life of Christ we shall find every Gospel truth illustrated. Let us see something of how the above text worked in real life.

A woman whose life had been slowly and steadily wasting away for many years, and who had spent all her living in a vain attempt to recover her health, and was only made to suffer the more from the experiments of many physicians, heard of the great Physician, and went to Him.

She was tempted, and the multitude of people pressed about Jesus so closely that she could scarcely approach Him; but: "She said within herself, If I may but touch His garment, I shall be whole." (Matthew 9:21)

Her faith was rewarded, for as she touched the border of His garment, immediately she was fully healed.

Although Jesus was crowded and jostled by the people, He instantly detected that gentle touch. That touch was different from every other, because it was the touch of faith, and drew power from the person of Jesus. When the disciples wondered that in the midst of such a crowd He should ask, "Who touched me?" (Luke 8:45)

He said, "Some one did touch me; for I perceived that power had gone forth from me." (Luke 8:46)

That power was the power of His life: for it supplied the woman's need, and what she wanted was life.

Here we have something that our mind can lay hold of, and our senses can appreciate. A real thing was done. Something real went from Jesus into the woman. It was not imagination; it was not a figure of speech; but it was an actual fact that the woman was healed. She had the life that she before lacked, and that life came from Jesus.

We can never know what life is,--only its Author can understand it,--but we do know the need of it, even of the righteous life of Christ; and here we to see how it is obtained. For the words of Jesus to that poor woman show that she was healed in the same way and by the same means by which we are justified and have peace with God. He said unto her, "Daughter, be of good comfort; your faith has made you whole; go in peace." (Luke 8:48)

If we should apply the words of the Apostle Paul to her particular experience, we might read, "Therefore being made whole in body by faith, she had peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:1)

Perhaps this may enable someone to grasp more fully the reality of the righteousness which comes by faith of Jesus Christ.

Nothing is said about forgiveness of sins in this instance, but we may be sure from other instances that such faith as the poor woman had brought healing of soul as well as the body.

But no one need have a doubt as to whether this is really parallel to Romans 5:1, and an illustration of the truth there stated, for we find the same words used with express reference to sins. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:1) In the preceding chapter (Luke 7) we are told of the sinful woman who anointed the feet of Jesus, after her tears of repentance had washed them. Jesus did not repel her, but said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." (Luke 7:48)

And then followed words almost identical with those with which He dismissed the poor woman of whom we have been reading. To the woman who was well in body, but morally diseased with sin, Jesus said, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." (Luke 7:50)

Compare this with: "Your faith has made you whole; go in peace." (Luke 8:48)

This proves beyond all possibility of doubt that the same thing is done in the forgiveness of sins that was done in healing the woman with the issue of blood. The method is the same, and the results are the same.

Therefore as we know that something real was done for the diseased woman, so we may be sure that something real is done for the repentant sinner. Just as something real, although invisible, went from Jesus into the person of the diseased woman, making her perfectly well and strong, even so we are to know that something real comes from Christ into the person of the repentant sinner, making him whole, and free from sin.

That something is nothing less than the actual life of Christ. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ... If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." (1 John 1:9,7)

The blood is the life; and so it is the life of Jesus Christ that cleanses us from sin. This is what we read in Romans 5:10, in continuance of the statement that being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." (Romans 5:10)

Many think that the forgiveness of sins by the imputed righteousness of Christ, is something that exists only in the mind of God. Of course they acknowledge its reality, yet at the same time they do not realize it. There is always something unreal about it in their minds.

The trouble is that they fail to grasp and to make real the living connection between Christ and them. There is between the true disciple and Christ a connection as real as that between the vine branch and the parent stock.

The forgiveness of sins is too often thought to be illustrated by the payment of a poor man's debt by a rich friend. If a rich man pays the debt of a poor man, then the shopkeeper credits the poor man with the sum, and the record on the books shows that the debt is canceled. Of course the poor man is benefited, but he does not actually receive anything that will keep him in future. But it is different when God for Christ's sake forgives his sins. "[Christ] gave himself for our sins." (Galatians 1:4)

His life is given to be manifest in our mortal flesh: "For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." (2 Corinthians 4:11)

Just as the sap flows through the vine to the farthest branches, and just as the life of Christ went into the poor, diseased woman, to make her perfectly well, so the sinless, endless, inexhaustible life of Christ flows into those who have faith in Him, to cleanse them from sin, and to make them walk in newness of life.

His life on earth was one of obedience to the commandments of God. "If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love." (John 15:10)

The law of God was in His heart: "I delight to do your will, O my God: yea, your law is within my heart." (Psalm 40:8)

So that His very life was the fullness of the law. He fulfilled the righteousness of the law: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill." (Matthew 5:17)

That is, the fullness, the perfection of the law, appeared in His life. And it is by this life that we are saved. It is not that we are accounted righteous because Jesus of Nazareth was righteous eighteen hundred years ago, but because: "He ever lives," (Hebrews 7:25) "the same yesterday, and today, and for ever," (Hebrews 13:8) to save by the power of His endless life, all that come to Him. Jesus fulfilled the righteousness

of the law, in order "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." (Romans 8:4)

The Revised Version reads, "That the ordinance of the law might be fulfilled in us," and gives "requirement" in the margin, as an alternative. The idea is, therefore, that Christ kept the law, in order that its utmost requirement might be fulfilled in us. Not by us, but in us: for whereas we have no power to do even what we know to be right, Christ dwelling in us does the right by His own power through all our members when we yield them to Him. This He does for all who trust Him. And thus it is that: "By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." (Romans 5:19)

We may thus note two things:

1. How we are made partakers of Christ's life, and

2. What the nature of that life is, and what it will be in us.

The miraculous healing of the poor woman shows us the first. The second we learn by reading the ten commandments, and by studying the life of Christ.

All that was in His life when He was on earth, is in it now, and that is what He gives to us. And that which was not in His life cannot possibly be given to us in it. Everything that is not in His life is sin, and Christ is not the minister of sin.--Present Truth, May 31, 1894--Timeline: IV-30 (The Invalid Woman; Jairus' Daughter)--Luke 8:45-48.

Chapter 185

The Daughter of Jairus Raised

In reading the account of this or of any other of the miracles of Jesus we must bear in mind the reason why they were recorded for us. Near the close of His Gospel narrative, John said: "Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; But these are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life through His name." (John 20:30-31)

In the present lesson we have this truth very forcibly presented to us. Let us read the entire story. "And, behold, there came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw Him, he fell at His feet, And besought Him greatly, saying, My little daughter lies at the point of death; I pray You, come and lay your hands on her that she may be healed; and she shall live." (Mark 5:22-23)

The margin has, in place of "healed," the word "saved," which is the exact rendering of the Greek word used here and in other similar instances. It teaches us that healing and saving by the Lord are one and the same thing.

Then there comes an interruption, and we have the account of the poor woman with the issue of blood, who came and touched the hem of Christ's garment, and was made perfectly whole,--saved,--and who received from the Lord gracious assurance of the fact that it was her faith that had saved her. "While He yet spoke, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Your daughter is dead; why trouble the Master any further? As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe. And He suffered no man to follow Him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James. And He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. And when He was come in, He said unto them, Why make you this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleeps. And they laughed Him to scorn. But when He had put them all out, He took the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with Him, and entered in where the damsel was lying. And He took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto you, arise. And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she wasof the age of

twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment. And He charged them straitly that no man should know it;and commanded that something should be given her to eat." (Mark 5:35-43)

There is the simple story; the question is, Do you believe it? If you do, the only remaining thing necessary is for you to understand that this was not an exceptional case, but was the manifestation of God's natural working. "He gives life to the dead, and calls those things which be not as though they were." (Romans 4:17)

The things that have been, as well as the things which are to be, are in the sight of God the things that now are. He inhabits eternity, and all things, past, present, and future, are present with Him. Death is in His sight only a sleep; and for those who sleep in Jesus, and who therefore shall be awakened out of their sleep, it is so short a sleep, in comparison with eternity, that they are considered as alive before Him.

Think of one who has been raised from the dead, and who looks back upon his experience after ten thousand million times ten thousand million years of eternity; how long would the few years, or, the few hundred years, that he lay in the grave seem to him? They would not amount to a moment of time in comparison with the time that he has lived. He could no more take account of it than he could of a wink of his eye.

Well, that is the way everything connected with this earth looks to God, who views everything from eternity. To the Lord, who has power to lay down His life, and to take it again at will, death is as though it were not. "[Christ] has abolished death, and has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." (2 Timothy 1:10)

The sleep of death becomes perpetual only to those who reject Him who is the resurrection and the life. "In their heat I will make their feasts, and I will make them drunken, that they may rejoice, and sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, says the Lord." (Jeremiah 51:39)

Simple Faith

Mark the faith of Jairus. He was sure that if Jesus but laid His hands on his daughter, she would live. Even when word came that she was already dead, he manifested not the slightest doubt.

The faith of this man is not likely to be appreciated at first glance. He was a ruler of the synagogue, a man in high position among the people, and Jesus was one who was not recognized by the body of rulers and scribes and Pharisees. He had not studied in their schools, and held no authority from them, and therefore they looked down upon Him.

But in the household of Jairus, Jesus was regarded as a Teacher, and as such He was addressed, for that is the real meaning of the word that is translated "Master." What Jesus knew and could do, rather than where He had studied, appealed to the good sense of Jairus. He recognized a Master Teacher in this humble man of Nazareth, and honored Him accordingly.

The power and authority of Christ's teaching are seen by what follows. The Word that He preached was the Word that raises the dead.

Heathenism, Heartless Mourning

Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus, but His weeping was far different from that of the Jews on that occasion, and of those who were gathered in the house of Jairus. "Jesus wept." (John 11:35) He simply shed tears; they howled, and made a tumult: "And He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly." (Mark 5:38)

The word rendered "tumult" is applied to "the confused noise of a crowded assembly," as in the theater at Ephesus. (See Acts 19:23-41; 20:1; 21:34; 17:5)

They were making such a "tumult" in the house of Jairus, and were "wailing." This word "wailing" is the word that is used to indicate the raising of a war cry, and is defined: "to utter an inharmonious sound, to tinkle, to clank."

Such mourning could not have been very soothing to the hearts of the stricken parents.

It is wholly out of harmony with the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, and therefore He had them all retire from the house. The Spirit of God cannot be present and working

in the midst of a tumult. The work of the Spirit is soft and tender and subduing. Confused noise, boisterous sounds of any kind, whether of singing, weeping, or laughter, discordant noises, in short, anything forced and inharmonious, are entirely foreign to the Spirit of God.

In quietness and confidence is the strength of God's people: "For thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest shall you be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." (Isaiah 30:15)

God's most powerful working is done in silence. His most marvelous work for men day by day is performed in the silence of the night, when they are unconscious.

How quickly these hired mourners showed the shallowness of their sorrow! As soon as Jesus said, "She is not dead, but sleeps. They laughed Him to scorn." (Mark 5:39-40)

Literally, they jeered at Him. In an instant they turned from professed weeping, to railing and mocking laughter.

It is impossible for our language to do justice to the tender words of Jesus, which He spoke to the little girl. The word "Talitha" is allied to the word meaning a young lamb, so that we may see in it an expression of tenderness, as, "Little one, arise!" Almighty power and infinite tenderness were united.

And straightway the damsel arose. Why? Because the Master had told her to arise; and He spoke with authority. Well, He speaks to us the same word. He says, "Awake, you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light." (Ephesians 4:14)

By the power of that Word, if we receive it in faith, we may arise from whatever condition of helplessness we are in. Believing, we have life through His name. "But these are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life through His name." (John 20:31)

Do you believe?

Eating the Life

"He commanded that something should be given her to eat." (Mark 5:43)

Why was this seemingly trivial incident recorded? Because it was not by any means trivial. It shows that the Lord does not overlook the smallest detail, and that no detail is of trifling importance. We are told, "As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him." (Colossians 2:6)

The little girl had received the Word of life in Christ, which is Christ himself, and had by it received life: now her life must be continued by the very same means, but under a visible form.

Jesus would show that in the food we eat we receive a continuation of the same life that comes to the dead through the speaking of His word. This raises eating to a position of sacredness, in that it is one of the visible means of receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. "He that has ears to hear, let him hear." (Mark 4:9)--Present Truth, April 5, 1900--Original title: Life from the Dead. The Daughter of Jairus Raised--Timeline: IV-30 (The Invalid Woman; Jairus' Daughter)--Mark 5:22-24, 35-43.

Chapter 186

Miracles and the Gospel

When John sent from his prison to know if Jesus was indeed the expected Messiah, Jesus had the messengers stand by while He was healing the people, raising the dead, and doing mighty works. Then He said to them, "Go your way, and tell John what things you have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and to the poor the Gospel is preached." (Luke 7:22)

But Jesus is not the only one who works miracles. The spirits of devils do them also: "For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty." (Revelation 16:14)

False Christs and false prophets work miracles to deceive: "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." (Matthew 24:24) "And he exercises all the power of the first beast before him, and causes the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he does great wonders, so that he makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, And deceives them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live." (Revelation 13:12-14) "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshiped his image." (Revelation 19:20)

Miracles by themselves, therefore, are not necessarily a proof of one's Divine authority; and Christ did not depend on them alone to test His Divine mission. "Unto the poor the Gospel is preached." (Luke 7:22)

It was by His words, more than by His miracles, that men were convinced. The rough soldiers who were sent to seize Him, said, "Never man spoke like this Man." (John 6:46)

And so we are thrown back upon the word as the only test. If the ones who perform great signs and wonders are in any point opposed to the plain word of God,--if they seek in any degree to weaken its force, or to show that it does not mean what it says,--know at once that they are not of God. "To the law, and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." (Isaiah 8:20)--Present Truth, May 24, 1894--Timeline: IV-31 (The Inquiry by John's Disciples)--Luke 7:22.

Chapter 187

Prophecies Concerning the Messiah

If there is one of the characters mentioned in the Bible, who is deserving of sympathy, it is John the Baptist. His whole life seems to have been marked by loneliness. "[He] was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel." (Luke 1:80)

And even then, although thousands and tens of thousands flocked to hear him preaching, he seems to have had few intimate friends. He lived a life apart from men. He knew that he was but a voice,--the sounding forth of the Word,--and when that Word came before the people, his work was ended. "He must increase, but I must decrease," (John 3:30)

Thus said the prophet to those who would raise a feeling of bitterness in his heart against the One who was succeeding to his popularity. Only a few months was he honored by the people as a prophet, and then he was cast into prison, and no one seems to have thought anything more about him.

Accustomed all his life to the freedom of the forest and the mountains, where he had lived in the open air, it is no wonder that his spirits drooped when he was shut up in a close prison cell.

Moreover, there was still a veil over the prophetic periods in the book of Daniel; and although John did not make the mistake that so many others made, of thinking that the kingdom of heaven, which he had testified was at hand, was a temporal kingdom, like the other kingdoms of this earth, yet he evidently supposed that a few months would suffice for the complete establishment of it.

He well knew that Christ's kingdom is spiritual, and that its setting up means the end of all other kingdoms, and the destruction of all sin and sinners, but he did not know the times and the seasons which the Father had placed in His own power. So when the end did not immediately follow the preaching of Christ, he went to Him, asking "Are you He that should come? or look we for another?" (Luke 7:20)

The reply of Jesus was characteristic. He knew the mind of the prophet, and He knew what answer would satisfy him. "In that hour He cured many of diseases and plagues and evil spirits; and on many that were blind He bestowed sight. Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things you have seen and heard; the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached unto them. And blessed is he whosoever shall find none occasion of stumbling in me." (Luke 7:21-23)

This was the evidence that the kingdom of heaven was really at hand. No other kingdom on earth was ever established by such means.

The kingdoms of this earth are established by war, and bloodshed, men are made blind and deaf and lame, and are slaughtered by thousands, in order that some earthly monarch may reign "in peace."

But Christ's kingdom reverses all these things. To relieve and remove suffering is the mission of the kingdom of God. It is not by God's will that any soul on earth suffers either poverty or disease. To the poor and oppressed, who are robbed of their rightful wages, and who are even killed, that their lives may not be a witness against their oppressors the Scripture says: "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waits for the precious fruit of the earth, and has long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be you also patient, stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draws nigh." (James 5:7-8)

It is a striking comment on the knowledge which John had of the nature of the kingdom whose forerunner he was, that the answer of Jesus was sufficient for him. The word of the Lord had not come to him in the wilderness in vain.

The answer which Jesus sent to John is just as pertinent today, and is just as much needed, as it was then. Men's minds are too high to consider what seem to them small things. To preach the Gospel to a single ruler by night, or to a woman engaged in her daily toil, and to engage in unostentatious deeds of mercy, are thought to be well enough in a way, but totally insufficient to accomplish the great result of establishing the kingdom of heaven on earth.

No; men nowadays look rather to legislatures and armies to finish the work. In Acts of Parliament, and in the march of conquering armies, they think they see the progress of the kingdom of heaven. What a sad misconception of the kingdom of heaven!

Christ's triumph is signalized by the healing of the sick, and the relief of the poor. Just in proportion as this is done, do we see evidences of the approach of the end. "These signs shall follow them that believe: in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall in no wise hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." (Mark 16:17)

The crowning proof of all is that good tidings are preached to the poor. They are God's especial charge. Note how full the Bible is of expressions of God's solicitude for the poor and needy. "I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor." (Psalm 140:12) "He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts up the needy out of the dunghill; That He may set him with princes, even the princes of His people." (Psalm 113:7-8)

He does not merely tell them of good times coming, but He lifts them up now, and makes them kings. He imparts to them "the Spirit of adoption," (Romans 8:15) which gives liberty, and emancipates them from the cringing, beggarly spirit that has dominated them.

God's good message to the poor is not merely that they will be fed and clothed by some charitably-minded followers of His, but that there is freedom for them,--freedom from the things that in many cases have held them in poverty and wretchedness. Instead of being regarded as objects of charity, in the kingdom of heaven they are priests and kings instead of being mere recipients, they are made "good stewards of the manifold grace of God." (1 Peter 4:10)

This being the case, it will be seen that much of the so called Christian work that is done among the poor is in direct contravention of the work of the Lord. His work is not to have a host of pensioners, who shall be content if they but receive their daily or weekly portion,--to perpetuate the spirit of mendicancy,--but to fit the poor to engage as men in the work that He has given men to do.

Nothing but the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the power of God to salvation unto everyone that believes, can accomplish this. Liberty of soul, salvation from sin, is the great gift that Christ bestows upon the poor. As an accessory to this, come food and clothing, in harmony with the promise, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matthew 7:38)

Jesus sets high value upon unswerving devotion to principle. This was the characteristic of John the Baptist. Royal bribes or threats were alike unable to make Him swerve a hair's breadth from principle.

Since the message of John the Baptist is that which is to be given until the coming of the Lord in the glory of His kingdom, it is evident that the same spirit that characterized him, must distinguish all Christ's followers to the end. How few there are who will follow principle in all things, regardless of consequences.

It is not necessarily because men fear to do this, but chiefly because they do not recognize principle, and do not appreciate its value. People, and even the leaders of the people, are more accustomed to follow rules than to be guided by principles, and they have not educated themselves to discern principles of truth.

Let a man be joined by indissoluble bonds to right principle, and he cannot fail to succeed in the end, no matter how adverse his circumstances may be. And his success will not be at all attributable to any wisdom or skill that he possesses, but to the fact that truth cannot be crushed. Truth is the thing that is; it is eternal, and whoever cleaves to it shall abide for ever.

John was a great prophet, but: "He that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." (Matthew 11:11)

This is no disparagement of John, but a statement of the wonderful privileges bestowed upon all Christ's faithful followers. Much of the difficulty that has been experienced over these words of the Lord, has arisen from the erroneous idea that greatness in the kingdom of heaven is proportionate to the amount of work done. The pagan idea of salvation by works is hard to eradicate.

What can anybody do in this world that is worthy of recognition by the Lord, or that should be thought worthy of reward? The whole of this earth life is less than a speck compared with eternity, and the little that the greatest can do in it is not worthy of being mentioned.

We cannot buy the kingdom of heaven by good deeds. Salvation is not by works. God does not pay us for our service, but rewards us with life according to His great mercy. How can there be any talk of rewards for service, when everyone has forfeited his life, and is saved only as an act of grace?

God sees not so man sees, and His standard of honors is not man's; but the blessed thing is that He does only that which is right, and that everybody in His kingdom will acknowledge this, and will be perfectly content. In a kingdom where lowliness is greatness, it is impossible for the greatest to feel any envy if he sees the lowest placed above him, since he that is least is greatest still.

It is strange, but a fact, that many people regard the Gospel and the duties that it carries with it, as a sort of bitter medicine, which may result in good by and by, but which can be taken only with a wry face. God is, at the best, regarded by them as a severe Master, bent on cutting off everything in which they can take any delight. Unfortunately this idea is fostered by too many religious teachers, who actually think that there are some things to be almost apologized for.

The fact is, that God offers only good things, and would not deprive anybody of anything except that which is a damage to him. He puts gladness into the hearts of His children, and in His service there is only joy. He does not impose any hard things upon us, but calls us to share His easy burden.--Present Truth, April 19, 1900--Original title: Prophecies Concerning the Messiah. Proof of Christ's Mission. Jesus and John the Baptist. Luke vii. 16-28--International Sunday School Lesson, April 22--Timeline: IV-31 (The Inquiry by John's Disciples)--Luke 7:20-23.

Chapter 188

The Works Testify

While in prison, John the Baptist, hearing concerning the works of Christ, sent two of his disciples to Him to inquire, "Are you He who should come, or do we look for another?" (Matthew 11:3)

Instead of answering him as we would naturally think He would, He simply replied: "Go, show John again these things which you hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached unto them." (Matthew 11:4-5)

In this case it was the works that testified to the true messiahship of the Saviour. So today, it is the works we do and the words we utter that tell for or against the Gospel. May they all be wrought in Jesus Christ, so that: "Whether therefore we eat, or drink, or whatsoever we do, [we may] do all to the glory of God." (1 Corinthians 10:31)--Present Truth, August 31, 1899--Original title: Back Page--Timeline: IV-31 (The Inquiry by John's Disciples)--Matthew 11:3-5.

Chapter 189

What to Tell

Jesus said to the disciples of John, "Go your way, and tell John what things you have seen and heard." (Luke 7:22)

That is all that any Gospel worker has to do. He has not to strain himself to make a learned discourse; he has not to theorize and speculate; he has only to tell what he has seen and heard. Not what he has heard men say, but what he has heard from the Lord. The command is, "Hear Him." (Mark 9:7)

Tell only what you know from personal acquaintance with Jesus. This was the source of the apostles' power. They had been with Jesus, and they said, when forbidden to teach, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." (Acts 4:20)

You may not have heard and seen very much, but that little will be as effective as the greater amount that another has seen and heard. But do nothing to add to its effectiveness by adding something that you do not know from personal knowledge. That will weaken the whole.

The testimony of the man in court, who knows only one thing about the case, and who sticks to that one thing, is as useful as any man's testimony could be. But he throws discredit on what he does know, as soon as he begins to tell something that he does not know.

This wonderfully simplifies Christian work, and provides a place for everyone. "Go your way, tell...those things which you have seen and heard." (Luke 7:22) "Continue in those things which you have learned, and have been assured of, and knowing of whom you have learned them." (2 Timothy 3:14)--Present Truth, May 10, 1894--Timeline: IV-31 (The Inquiry by John's Disciples)--Luke 7:22.

Chapter 190

The Gospel to the Poor

"To the poor the Gospel is preached." (Luke 7:22)

These were the words which Jesus sent to John, to convince him that He was indeed the Christ. He was anointed with the Holy Spirit for the express purpose of preaching the Gospel to the poor. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord." (Luke 4:18-19)

But in these days it is thought that the poor need something else. Professed ministers of the Gospel are devoting much of their time to discussing "the living wage," and to devising legislation whereby the condition of the poor may be bettered. "Well," says one, "do you not sympathize with work for the poor?"

Most certainly; but we are convinced Christ knew and practiced the best way. No man can improve on His method. The object which "labor reformers" have in view is very often all right, but the method which they employ for the accomplishment of that object is more often all wrong.

It does not seem as though the preaching of the Gospel would help the poor; but it will. They have never been permanently helped by any other means. All the propositions for bettering their condition by means of the State, have been tried many times, and have failed. Rome tried it, and instead of diminishing poverty, increased it. The Gospel of Christ, which is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes, is the only hope of the poor.

This does not mean that the starving are to be fed with a sermon, nor the naked clothed with religious tracts. The Gospel is not in word only, but in power. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." (James 1:27)

He who does not sympathize with the poor and needy, and help them to the utmost of his ability, does not know the Gospel of God. "[Christ] went about doing good." (Acts 10:38)

He did the good himself, and they who know Him will do likewise.

But personal help seems too slow a way; one man can do so little, and the dismal results are so small, that men seek to do the work by wholesale. Just as personal labor with sinners seemed so slow a way of saving them, that people seek to accomplish the result in a mass, by means of general law.

But it will not do. That help which does not come from and as a result of the preaching of the word, will be like salt thrown into the ocean.--Present Truth, May 17, 1894--Timeline: IV-31 (The Inquiry by John's Disciples)--Luke 7:22.

Chapter 191

Miracles and the Gospel

When John sent from his prison to know if Jesus was indeed the expected Messiah, Jesus had the messenger stand by while He was healing the people, raising the dead, and doing mighty works. Then He said to them, "Go your way, and tell John what things you have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and to the poor the Gospel is preached." (Luke 7:22)

But Jesus is not the only one who works miracles. The spirits of devils do them also: "For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty." (Revelation 16:14)

False Christs and false prophets work miracles to deceive: "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." (Matthew 24:24) "And he exercises all the power of the first beast before him, and causes the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he does great wonders, so that he makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, And deceives them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live." (Revelation 13:12-14) "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshiped his image." (Revelation 19:20)

Miracles by themselves, therefore, are not necessarily a proof of one's Divine authority; and Christ did not depend on them alone to test His Divine mission. "Unto the poor the Gospel is preached." (Luke 7:22)

It was by His words, more than by His miracles, that men were convinced. The rough soldiers who were sent to seize Him, saying, "Never man spoke like this Man." (John 6:46)

And so we are thrown back upon the word as the only test. If the ones who perform great signs and wonders are in any point opposed to the plain word of God,--if they seek in any degree to weaken its force, or to show that it does not mean what it says,--know at once that they are not of God. "To the law, and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." (Isaiah 8:20)--Present Truth, May 24, 1894--Timeline: IV-31 (The Inquiry by John's Disciples)--Luke 7:22.

Chapter 192

Dramatic Words

The last words of the prophet Malachi are a marvel of condensed information, warning, and counsel.

The reason of this is not far to find. They were the last words of Jehovah to the world, by the mouth of His prophets, until that great day of joy, and fate, when the Messiah should come,-the turning point in the world's history.

God's last message foretelling that supreme event to the world, and counseling in regard to it, might be expected to be positive and intense in expression. The warning is expressed in terms that cannot be mistaken: "Behold the day comes, that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble, and the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." (Malachi 4:1)

The very next words, however, conveyed the contrasting promise, "But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings, and you shall grow up as calves of the stall. And He shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, says the Lord of hosts." (Malachi 4:2-3)

Then comes the earnest counsel, "Remember the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments." (Malachi 4:4)

But God is not willing that His servants should remain in ignorance of that which is to come upon the earth. Information is to be given them, and to that end He says, "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." (Malachi 4:5)

Christ refers directly to these words in His address to the multitude in reference to John the Baptist and his ministry. Here He tells them plainly, without the slightest circumlocution: "For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger

before your face, which shall prepare your way before you. And if you will receive it, this is Elijah, which was for to come. He that has ears to hear, let him hear." (Matthew 11:10,14-15)

This unqualified statement, connecting himself and John the Baptist immediately with the last words of the latest prophet, were very dramatic and striking. It might have been thought that those who had ears would have heard.--Present Truth, October 29, 1896--Timeline: IV-32 (Jesus' Eulogy of John)--Matthew 11:10-15.

Chapter 193

This is Elijah

It is a natural tendency of the human mind to give more heed to personalities than to principles--to look more to men engaged in some great work, than to the point and principle of the work itself. This caused the scribes and Pharisees to make a great mistake in the days of John the Baptist, and has caused great mistakes in all ages since that time.

The prophet Malachi had prophesied of the coming of Elijah before the day of the Lord, to prepare the world for His appearance. But this prophecy was fulfilled, so far as it related to the first advent of Christ, in the coming of John the Baptist; for the Saviour said of him, "If you will receive it, this is Elijah, which was for to come." (Matthew 11:14)

John himself had testified that he was not Elijah, and he gave a true answer to the question asked him, for he was not the person who had prophesied before Ahab, and called down fire from heaven on Mount Carmel. The nature of his identity with Elijah is explained in the 1st chapter of Luke, in the words of the angel who talked with Zacharias: "He [John] shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; and to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." (Luke 1:17)

It is not the man as a person, but the spirit and power which actuates him in his work, that is important for us to consider. We should not be fascinated by a striking personality, so as to lose sight of the principle that is embodied within him.

John would do nothing to call attention to himself as an individual, but merely declared himself to be "the voice of one crying in the wilderness." (Matthew 3:3)

The important question to be considered in connection with any work is not, "Who is the mouthpiece?" but, "Whose is the voice that is speaking?"

The important thing about Elijah was not his physical self, but the voice that spoke through him; and when that voice, with the same spirit and power, spoke through John, John became Elijah.

And whosoever now is sent forth in the spirit and power of Elijah to prepare the way of the Lord and make ready a people for His coming, fulfills the prophecy as did John.

But we must bear in mind the truth, of which this instance affords a striking evidence, that any man, in himself, is nothing; and that whatever prominence and importance attached to his name is due only to what he receives from God.--Present Truth, June 28, 1894--Timeline: IV-32 (Jesus' Eulogy of John)--Matthew 11:14.

Chapter 194

Justifying God and Being Justified

"And all the people when they heard, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John." (Luke 7:29,RV)

John preached the baptism of repentance, and those who were baptized by him confessed their sins. Thus they justified God; for it is God who declares that: "All have sinned." (Romans 3:23)

And whosoever confesses that he has sinned, thereby declares God's justice. He confesses that God is just in His sayings and in His judgments, as David said in his confession: "Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in your sight; that You might be justified when You speak, and be clear when You judge." (Psalm 51:4)

But, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

If we justify God, we shall partake of His justness. God has no good thing that is not for His children; and we get His goodness by acknowledging it. If we recognize and acknowledge His power, we receive of that power.

If we truly acknowledge the perfect righteousness of His word in every particular, we shall be filled with that righteousness. "And this is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." (John 17:3)--Present Truth, May 24, 1894--Timeline: IV-32 (Jesus' Eulogy of John)--Luke 7:29.

Chapter 195

Judgment and Mercy

"Then He began to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto you, Chorazin! woe unto you, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you." (Matthew 11:20-22)

Before passing to the main subject, we may note that we have no record of any miracles that were performed in Chorazin, nor is there in the Bible any other reference to that place, except in the parallel passage in Luke. The Scripture is silent concerning those "mighty works" that were done there, and but for this incidental allusion, we would not know that any such place ever existed.

This is one of the things that proves that the gospels are not fictitious tales. A writer of fiction would have referred only to Capernaum, or to some other place already mentioned as the scene of mighty miracles; he would not have brought in Chorazin without first recording some miracles wrought there. But Matthew writes as one who deals with things of common report, and that were not done in a corner.

The question has sometimes been raised, "If Tyre and Sidon would have repented, if the works done in Bethsaida had been done in them, why were the works not done, and they thus given a chance to repent?"

Dean Alford answers this question thus: "Because every act of God for the rescue of a sinner from his doom is purely and entirely of free and undeserved grace, and the proportion of such means of escape dealt out to men is ruled by the counsel of His will who is holy, just, and true, and wills not the death of the sinner, but whose ways are past our finding out."

But there seems to be an answer that is more satisfactory. First we must remember that: "[God] is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9) "Who will have all men to be saved, and to

come unto the knowledge of the truth." (1 Timothy 2:4) "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy." (Psalm 103:8) "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." (Exodus 34:6-7)

He himself says, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." (Ezekiel 33:11)

Therefore it may be set down as a fact that God never brings judgments upon people without first giving them sufficient warning, and time for repentance. Whenever the wicked are destroyed, it is their own fault, and not because God has not given them enough chance to repent. See the case of the antediluvians. "And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be a hundred and twenty years." (Genesis 6:3) "The longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water." (1 Peter 3:20)

In order fully to understand the matter, we must read also these verses, which immediately follow: "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in your sight." (Matthew 11:25-26)

Here the same principle is involved, but in such a way that the answer is suggested. We are not to understand that Jesus rejoiced because any had failed to receive light and knowledge, but rather because there were some to whom it could be revealed. And we are to understand that "these things" were hid from "the wise and prudent," not because God willed that they should not know them, but because they refused to receive them; and here is the proof. Paul says, "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." (2 Corinthians 4:3-4)

Here we are told that "these things" are hid only from those whose minds Satan has blinded; but Satan cannot blind the minds of any who do not willingly yield to him.

"Know you not, that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are to whom you obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Romans 6:16)

Of the Jews the Lord said: "For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." (Acts 28:27) "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12)

These texts conclusively show that the truths of the gospel are hidden only from those who close their own eyes. When Christ said that "these things" were hid from "the wise and prudent," He referred to those who were wise in their own conceit, and not to the truly wise. Of the heathen we are told that: "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." (Romans 1:22)

They were so wise in their own estimation that they did not like to retain God in their knowledge; they felt, like modern Spiritualists, that their reason was fettered so long as they held to "the God-idea;" and so they were left to a mind void of judgment, to do all manner of iniquity.

The "wise and prudent" are the worldly wise, of whom Paul said: "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wisemen after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty." (1 Corinthians 1:21-27)

It is very common to hear people speak of men who "know so much that nobody can teach them anything." It is not meant that the men are really wiser than anybody

else in the world, but that they think themselves so very wise that they will not receive instruction from anybody.

So with the "wise and prudent" ones of this world. They imagine themselves to be so wise that they need not listen to the teaching of Christ, and so the glorious light of the gospel is hid from their eyes.

But one who doesn't think he knows it all already may be taught. So David says: "Good and upright is the Lord; therefore will He teach sinners in the way. The meek will He guide in judgment; and the meek will He teach his way. ... The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant." (Psalm 25:8-9,14)

The man who nurses his pride, shuts himself off from receiving the light which if received would guide him to life. Thus it was with the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon, and with Sodom. If the mighty works that were done in Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum had been done in them, they would have repented; but the mighty works could not be done in them. They themselves made it impossible for the mighty works to be done, because in their wicked pride they would not receive even the first principles of truth.

It was just so in Nazareth, of which place it is said: "And He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." (Matthew 13:58)

Nazareth was proverbial for its wickedness: "And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46)

As soon as Jesus began to teach there, the people rejected His words. "And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these parables, He departed thence. And when He was come into His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence has this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? is not His mother called Mary? and His brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then has this man all these things? And they were offended in Him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country, and in his own house. And He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." (Matthew 13:53-58) "And

He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up: and, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto Him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And He closed the book, and He gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him." (Luke 4:16-20)

Before Jesus left them, however, He emphasized the point which we have noted, namely, that unbelief and hardness of heart will shut out the help that God is willing to give, by referring to the cases of the widow of Sarepta and Naaman the Syrian. There were many others as needy as these two, but they were not as willing to receive help.

In the city of Sodom everybody was saturated with wickedness. They were wholly abandoned to their own depraved lust, and therefore they were so hardened that the moment the message came to them from God, they mocked and tried to kill the messenger. If their hearts had been submissive enough to listen quietly to truth, mighty works might have been done, and many might have been converted, and the city thereby saved from destruction. But the works were not done, because they would not allow them to be done.

The Saviour closed His discourse with the following most beautiful and tender appeal: "Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and you shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)

There are two yokes and two burdens. The burden of sin is indeed heavy; if it is not lost at the foot of the cross, it will sink the bearer into perdition. To all who are heavily laden with sin, Jesus says, "Come unto me, ... and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

There is no doubt about this. If they come, He says, "You shall find rest unto your souls." (Matthew 11:29)

Then why not go? Why carry a heavy burden, when somebody freely offers to carry it for you? In exchange He will give His own burden, which is light. The "yoke of bondage" is a galling yoke. From this Christ will set all free who will come to Him, and He says, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed." (John 8:36)

A yoke implies service. Those who are entangled in the "yoke of bondage," are the servants of sin; they carry the heavy load. Christ's yoke is easy, but the fact that those who come to Him must take his yoke upon them, shows that those who come to Christ must engage in His service. They must be workers.

But Christ's service is not slavery. It is a pleasure to work when the yoke fits the neck. None can be followers of Christ unless they learn of Him to do His work. The earlier one becomes used to work, the more efficient will he be; so the prophet says: "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth." (Lamentations 3:27)--November 3, 1887--Timeline: IV-32 (Jesus' Eulogy of John)--Matthew 11:20-24.

Chapter 196

Warning and Invitation (1898)

Rejected Opportunities

"Then began He to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto you, Chorazin! woe unto you, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you." (Matthew 11:20-22)

Similar language followed concerning Capernaum, in comparison with Sodom. Of those cities where the most wonderful works of Jesus were done, nothing remains but the name.

Plants that have been cultivated, and then left to themselves, are in a much worse condition than those that have never been cultivated. So the parts of the earth where the greatest light of the Gospel shown in past ages, are now the most benighted. "If the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matthew 6:23) "But why were there not mighty works done in Tyre and Sidon and Sodom? why were they not given a chance as Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum?"

This is a question that very naturally arises. It would seem as if it can be answered only by reading why Jesus did not perform many miracles in Nazareth: "And He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." (Matthew 13:58)

God leaves no one to perish through any fault of His. All that can be done, He does for all. He has not left himself without witness in any nation. "Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless He left not himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." (Acts 14:16-17)

There is not a spot under heaven where God's heavenly messengers--the sun, moon and stars--have not proclaimed the Gospel. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and

the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night shows knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their wordsto the end of the world." (Psalm 19:1-4) "And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah said, Lord, who has believed our report? So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." (Romans 10:15-18)

To everyone is given the light to enable him to be saved. In some places it is possible to do more work than in others; yet the seemingly less favored places cannot complain that they are discriminated against, since they do not appreciate and use the light they have. They have only themselves to blame if the mighty works which would be convincing are not done in them, because their own unbelief has shut those works out.

The man who refuses to receive instruction is as culpable as the man who receives it and turns away from it. God is just, and every tongue will swear to it in the Judgment. "Look unto me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength: even to Him shall men come; and all that are incensed against Him shall be ashamed." (Isaiah 45:22-24)

No tongue can be lifted against Him in the Judgment: "No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, says the Lord." (Isaiah 54:17)

But every mouth will be stopped: "Now we know that what things soever the law says, it says to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." (Romans 3:19)

Knowledge of God

"At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in your sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no man knows the Son, but the Father; neither knows any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." (Matthew 11:25-27)

What! thankful that the Gospel has been hid from some? Yes, since the hiding of it from them, is the revelation of it to babes. That is indeed a most wonderful way of hiding the Gospel, namely, to make it so plain and simple that even babes can understand it. Surely no "wise and prudent" man will ever have the face to accuse God of impartiality on that ground.

Fancy a wise man who has "not been able to see the evidence for the truth of the Gospel," coming to the Lord, and saying, "You have hidden these things from me, and have revealed them only to little children; and it is not fair!" "Ah, but how does it happen that they are revealed to babes? how is it possible for them to understand these deep things?"

The only reply can be, "Because you have made them so simple."

And then the report would come, "And do you, who boast of your wisdom, mean to say that you could not comprehend a thing that was so easy that a child could grasp it?"

The wise man would be at a loss for a reply, would he not? "Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? ... God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise." (1 Corinthians 1:20,27)

Little children recognized the Messiahship of Christ, when doctors of the law saw nothing but an uproar. "And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased, And said unto Him, Do you hear what these say? And

Jesus said unto them, Yea; have you never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings you have perfected praise?" (Matthew 21:15-16) "Except you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:3)

Thank the Lord, that He has made the way so very easy and simple that a child can know it. No one need err unless he is wise in his own conceits, and despises the truth because it is so plain. Yes, truly we may well join with Christ in thanks to the Almighty Father.

We sometimes hear about people who believe in God, but cannot accept Christ; that is, they believe in God, but are not Christians. We hear of them, indeed, but we never see them; for there are no such folks in existence. "No man knows the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son reveals Him." (Matthew 11:27)

It is impossible to know who God is, to say nothing of believing on Him, except through Christ. "No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." (John 1:18)

Christ is the revelation of God to man. "If you had known me, you should have known my Father also: and from henceforth you know Him, and have seen Him. Philip said unto Him, Lord, show us the Father, and it suffices us. Jesus said unto him, Have I been so long time with you, andyet have you not known me, Philip? he that has seen me has seen the Father; and how say you then, Show us the Father?" (John 14:7-9)

His name is: "God with us." (Matthew 1:23) "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." (Colossians 2:9)

Whoever knows and worships the one true God, in spirit and in truth, is a Christian.

The Easy Burden

Who that reads the Bible is not familiar with the gracious invitation in: "Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon

you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and you shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)

Christ gives rest, because in Him God's work is complete, and finished work well done brings rest. Our labors weary us, and wear us out, since they are never done; they are always imperfect. Our best work is sin. "All our righteousness are as filthy rags." (Isaiah 64:6)

But in Christ everything was created: "For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." (Colossians 1:16-17)

And when it was all finished, "God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good." (Genesis 1:31)

The eye of God could see no chance for improvement. And as the works were thus "finished from the foundation of the world," (Hebrews 4:3) so the rest was then prepared; and the proof of it is found in the fact that: "God did rest the seventh day from all His works." (Hebrews 4:3)

Christ is the Creator and therefore the Redeemer, since redemption is creation: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2 Corinthians 5:17) "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:10) "And that you put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." (Ephesians 4:24)

And since the Sabbath is the sign and seal of perfect creation, it is in Christ that we find the Sabbath indeed, God's rest, which is the seventh day. Sabbath means rest. "Moreover also I gave them my Sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them." (Ezekiel 20:12)

It is by the Sabbath that we know God. But we have just read that it is only in Christ that we can know God. So we see that the Sabbath is in Christ, and Christ is in

the Sabbath. He is the Word, by which everything was created and upheld, and so He calls us to Him to find the Sabbath, namely, rest on the eternal Word.

What assurance have we that in Him we shall find rest? This, that His burden is light. What is His burden? "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:6) "[He] bears the sins of the world." (John 1:29,margin)

How many sins does He bear? "The sins of the whole world." (1 John 2:2)

And how does He bear them? Easily. It is true, they nailed Him to the cross, and laid Him in the tomb; but, "[He] endured the cross," (Hebrews 12:2) and lives in spite of "the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be held of it." (Acts 2:24)

All the sins of the world cannot crush Him. Why? Because He destroys them. Although He has the sins of the whole world on Him, you may look at Him ever so closely, and you will not see a single sin. The longer you look, the more righteousness you will see, but never a trace of sin. With all that load of sin on Him, He enjoys everlasting rest and peace; "For He is our peace." (Ephesians 2:14)

Well, then, He is certainly the one to come to, for I cannot endure the burden of my own sins. Although I have only my own sins to bear, the weight is greater than the whole world. I am heavy laden, and can find no rest because of my sins. "But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." (Isaiah 57:20)

They crush me. But Jesus bears them, too, and since He finds the burden so light, I will let Him bear them all alone, and I will rest in Him.

The rest is waiting; why not enjoy it? Who will not say to the Lord,

Out of my bondage, sorrow, and night,
Jesus, I come! Jesus, I come!
Into your freedom, gladness, and light,
Jesus, I come to Thee!

Out of my sickness into Thy health,

Out of my want, and into Thy wealth,
Out of my sin, and into Thyself,
Jesus, I come to Thee!
--William T. Sleeper, Jesus, I Come, 1887.

--Present Truth, February 10, 1898--Timeline: IV-32 (Jesus' Eulogy of John)--Matthew 11:20-27.

Chapter 197

Warning and Invitation (1900)

It is impossible to learn of anyone in whom we do not believe. Jesus is the greatest Teacher we can possibly have, but in order to learn of Him, we must come to Him in faith.

What if He does sometimes say things that are hard to be understood? Does not every teacher do the same? If He did not say anything except what we already know and believe, He would not be a teacher, and we should learn nothing.

We know that He is true, and the very embodiment of truth and mercy; of this we have abundance of evidence; therefore when we hear Him say something that seems to our dull minds to clash with what is just, then is the time to keep still and listen, that we may learn.

It ill becomes the pupil to criticize the teacher, and it is a most presumptuous thing for man to question the justice of God. We may be sure that the Judge of all the earth will do right, and so we need give ourselves no uneasiness concerning God's dealing with Tyre and Sidon and Sodom. "That be far from You to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from You: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25) "Then He began to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto you, Chorazin! woe unto you, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. Howbeit I say unto you that it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of Judgment, than for you. And you, Capernaum, shall you be exalted unto heaven? You shall go down into Hades; for if the mighty works had been done in Sodom, which were done in you, it would have remained until this day. Howbeit I say unto you, that it shall he more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of Judgment, than for you." (Matthew 11:20-24)

Was God then unjust in destroying all those cities, or allowing them to be destroyed? Not by any means. "The men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly." (Genesis 13:13)

They knew better, for they had the law, since sin is not imputed where there is no law, and they had also the example of righteous Lot: "And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation ofthe wicked: For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds." (2 Peter 2:7-8)

The city of Sodom was destroyed by fire from heaven, but it was not so with the cities of Tyre and Sidon. They perished at the hands of man, by siege, etc., in the way that many other cities have disappeared. So it was with Chorazin and Bethsaida, of which there is no more trace than there is of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Why did they disappear? Evidently because they did not have in them the elements of stability. The historian would say that "they fell by the hand of time;" but their fall was punishment visited upon them by God, just as surely as was that of Sodom and Gomorrah; and on the other hand, these cities fell because they had not in them the elements of stability, just as surely as did the other cities.

Whether destruction comes suddenly or slowly, as the manifest judgment of God or seemingly in the ordinary course of events, it comes only as the consequence of sin. If any of those cities had been righteous cities, they would not have fallen.

All Men Without Excuse

But someone will say that Tyre and Sidon and Sodom might have been saved if they had been given a chance; and arguing upon this basis, there are some who say that they must have another probation, and therefore they deduce the theory of probation for men after death. All such reasoning is but a cobweb of imagination.

We know full well that they all did have the opportunity to know the truth, and that they rejected it. We know also that God has done all that infinite power could do for the salvation of the world, since He has given himself; and what He has done for the world He has done for every individual. Therefore we may be sure that God did all for those wicked cities that it was possible to do for them.

He would not allow the inhabitants of Canaan to be destroyed until their cup of iniquity was full; and all His ways are equal. Further, we know that in some places Christ in His earthly ministry could not do many works, because of their unbelief: "And He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." (Matthew 13:58)

Therefore we are justified in concluding that He could not do any more mighty works in Sodom and Tyre than He did do. He was doing mighty works there, as He does in every place, so that they were without excuse, because His everlasting power and Divinity were as clearly to be seen there as elsewhere. They had their chance, therefore.

The text itself, however, removes every possibility for complaint against God. Christ says that it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon and Sodom in the day of Judgment than for Capernaum and the other cities where the most mighty of His works were done. So we see that whatever claim they have for clemency in the day of Judgment will be accorded them.

Capernaum and the cities near had great opportunities. The fact that so many mighty works were there done by the Lord, shows that they were hopeful places in which to work. There was in them a spirit which made it easy to do work there; nevertheless they rejected all the light at the last. Their case in the Judgment will be worse than that of Sodom, although we have no reason to think that they were given up to such abominable wickedness as Sodom was.

From this we may learn that people of respectability and outward morality, who reject truth, are much worse in the sight of the just God than are the most degraded and shameless sinners, who have not had the same advantages. An outward morality, a respectability in the eyes of man, is a dangerous thing on which to rest one's hope of eternal life.

The Knowledge of God is the Highest Wisdom

Christ is the great Teacher, in that He reveals God to men. "No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." (John 1:18)

The things that are hid from the wise and prudent are revealed unto babes; and this helps to make more clear the case just referred to. God does not do what men call "mighty works" before babes; they could not understand them if He did; but He does reveal himself to them.

And the fact that God is revealed to babes, is in itself the strongest possible proof of the justice of the condemnation of all who are lost, no matter how great their ignorance of the truth. For since the deep things of God are so plainly revealed that babes can comprehend them, there is certainly no excuse for any person in the world. "All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no man knows the Son, but the Father; neither knows any man the Father, save the San, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." (Matthew 11:27)

Here is marvelous instruction in self denial, which is the highest wisdom. Everything is delivered into the hands of Christ, and He uses the power only to reveal the Father to men, while He himself remains unknown.

We speak of knowing Christ, but in knowing Him we learn only the character of God. In seeing Him, we see God. "Jesus said unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known me, Philip? he that has seen me has seen the Father; and how do you say then, Show us the Father?" (John 14:9) "[He] emptied himself," (Philippians 2:7,RV) that the Father might appear. In all the universe no one knows the Son, save the Father. Such was and is the sacrifice of Christ. Looking down upon fallen humanity, His heart was filled with love and pity, and He said to the Father, "I will declare your name unto my brethren." (Hebrews 2:12)

So He was content to be despised and unknown, to be misunderstood and rejected, without any complaint, knowing that the Father understood Him. Is there not here instruction for us? Not His own claims, but those of the Father, would He press. Nobody save the Father can know Him, but through Him every creature may know the Father.

What Makes the Burden Light

After this how fitting is the call to come to Him, and to learn of Him, because He is meek and lowly in heart! "Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, andI

will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)

How great His lowliness and meekness are, we should not know but for the fact just stated. He is content to be known by nobody, and to be considered nobody, if only the Father may be revealed and understood.

This is what makes Him the greatest teacher in the universe; for there is no teacher like Him; and through His meekness God is allowed to appear as He is. Only in meekness is there true wisdom. Only in meekness is there rest and peace.

And such rest! Who can describe it? It is "The peace of God, which passes all understanding." (Philippians 4:7)

It is rest from the burden of sin. This rest the Lord gives now, else there would be no reason in calling weary sinners to himself. The thing that is too hard for us, becomes easy in Christ. The sin that we could not overcome, and which we clung to with affection even while striving to be free from it, is in Christ thrown off as lightly as a feather, and to do so is a delight.

That which makes it easy is the fact that He gives us the power that upholds the worlds,--His own Word, himself. "God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." (Hebrews 1:1-3)

He bears all things, all the worlds, yet His burden is light; when we come to Him in childlike faith, He makes us sharers of His burden, and thereby sharers of the power by which it is sustained. How sad that so many are content to remain in ignorance of this wonderful piece of wisdom.--Present Truth, April 26, 1900--Original title: Christ the Great Teacher. Warning and Invitation--Timeline: IV-32 (Jesus' Eulogy of John)--Matthew 11:20-30.

Chapter 198

Christ, the Knowledge of God

Jesus said: "All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no man knows the Son, but the Father; neither knows any man the Father, save the Son, and He to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." (Matthew 11:27)

Again we read, "No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." (John 1:18)

And accordingly, when Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father, and it suffices us," (John 14:8)

Jesus answered, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known me Philip? He that has seen me has seen the Father; and how say you then, Show us the Father?" (John 14:8)

Man cannot by searching find out God. It is true that God has promised to make known His ways to men, that they may know Him; but the ways of God cannot be found out by human reasoning. No one can find out anything about God, if he studies with a critical or a selfish spirit. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant." (Psalm 25:14)

No man is understood except by his friends; who could expect to understand God except by loving Him?

But, more than this, it should be understood that God is known only in Christ. The life of Christ is the life of God, but the life cannot be studied critically, as an artist would study a picture. We can know the life of God only as it is lived in us. "For with You is the fountain of life; in your light we shall see light." (Psalm 36:9)

Christ is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." (Revelation 13:8)

Therefore we must, like Paul, determine to know nothing but Christ and Him crucified, if we would know the truth about the ways of God. "For I determined not to

know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." (1 Corinthians 2:2) The cross of Christ reveals the deep things of God. Every conclusion arrived at outside the light of the cross, will be but a libel on the character of God.--Present Truth, September 21, 1893--Original title: Front Page--Timeline: IV-32 (Jesus' Eulogy of John)--Matthew 11:27

Chapter 199

Christ the Bearer of Burdens

"Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, andI will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and you shall find rest unto your souls." (Matthew 11:28-29)

This is the invitation of Christ, the world's Redeemer, to all those "that labor and are heavy laden" in the journey of life. It is the invitation of Him who "has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows;" (Isaiah 53:4) of Him who is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities; [who has been] in all points tempted like as we are." (Hebrews 4:15)

He knows fully the nature of the responsibility He is assuming; and He is fully able to assume it, for He has said, "All power is given unto me in Heaven and in earth." (Matthew 28:18)

It is a very easy thing to cast our cares and our sorrows upon Him who has thus made himself the great Burden Bearer of the race, yet how few seem inclined to avail themselves of the privilege. He does not force us to give Him our burdens; we can't carry them ourselves if we choose to. But He stands ready to take freely every load that is laid at His feet.

Yet it is almost always the case that we take our burdens to our earthly friends, instead of to the Lord. We go to them for their sympathy--which perhaps they are not slow to give--and we talk over our troubles with them, and get such satisfaction from it as we can; but ah, who ever knew their burden of tears and grief to get any lighter by this process? Who ever found that it did not, on the contrary, make it even heavier than before? And besides this, it has added to the load of others who already have burdens enough of their own.

But when we come to Jesus with our load, what a difference! When we have told Him all our sorrows, how much lighter the burden all at once becomes! and we experience the rest that He promised to the weary and heavy-laden.

But let no one burden themselves with borrowed troubles, for all these they will have to carry alone. Jesus has not offered to take upon himself our imaginary troubles, but only those which are real. He has said, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." (Matthew 6:34)

To borrow trouble is to distrust God. Our blessings are not sent to us weekly or monthly, but "daily"; as He has taught us to say, "Give us this day our daily bread." (Matthew 6:11)

Thus there is no occasion to burden ourselves with the imaginary troubles, which are usually the hardest to bear.--Present Truth, August 24, 1893--Timeline: IV-32 (Jesus' Eulogy of John)--Matthew 11:28-29.

Chapter 200

Caste and Christianity

Christianity annihilates caste. Jesus Christ came from the throne of God to the station of the lowliest man of earth, and in this He broke down every barrier between them. He was "meek and lowly in heart," (Matthew 11:29) and so poor that He had not where to lay His head. "[He] took upon Him the form of a servant," (Philippians 2:7) and was among men as one that serves, and not as a lord or a "gentleman": "For whether is greater, he that sits at meat, or he that serves? is not he that sits at meat? but I am among you as he that serves." (Luke 22:27)

Yet in all this He retained His Divinity; for God was in Him, doing the works that He did. "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwells in me, He does the works." (John 14:10)

And therefore there is not a barrier that God has erected or that He upholds between the lowliest station upon earth and His own throne.

Men have made barriers between themselves and those they deem their inferiors; and certain distinctions and classes are recognized by "society;" but we are plainly told that: "There is no respect of persons with God." (Romans 2:11)

Jesus Christ bore down every "middle wall of partition", and left for every man a straight, clear path to the place He himself occupies upon the throne of the Infinite. "For He is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us." (Ephesians 2:14) "To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne." (Revelation 3:21)

Not even cherubim and seraphim bar our way; they are no higher caste. The angel that brought the revelation of Christ to John, said, when John fell at his feet to worship him, "See you do it not; for I am your fellow-servant; and of your brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book; worship God." (Revelation 22:9)

Any man therefore who puts a barrier between himself and his fellow-men must at the same time barricade himself away from God; for it must be outside of that path which God has opened from earth to himself; and he will never get into that path until he takes his barrier down.--Present Truth, June 13, 1895--Timeline: IV-32 (Jesus' Eulogy of John)--Matthew 11:29.

Chapter 201

Partners with God

"Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people." (Matthew 9:35)

That was the kind of work that Jesus did, The reason why He did it is told: "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him." (Acts 10:38) "[He was] a Man approved of God...by many miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him." (Acts 2:22)

He was in partnership with God--one with Him, the visible member, so to speak, of the firm, of which God the Father was the silent partner. So He said: "The Father that dwells in me, He does the works." (John 14:10)

There are two very distinct words used in Matthew 9:35, but they are in our English versions rendered by two words that to the ordinary mind mean essentially the same thing, namely, "sickness" and "disease." The first word is correctly rendered, and perhaps the second one is also, if we resolve it into its elements, "lack of ease." What the word rendered "disease" in this and other places really means is: "infirmity," "weakness," "softness."

The corresponding adjective is rendered "soft" in Matthew 11:8 and Luke 7:25, in the expression "soft raiment," and in 1 Corinthians 6:9 it is rendered "effeminate." The statement in verse 35 therefore is that Jesus went about, God being with Him, healing every sickness of every sort, and all weakness, infirmity, every case of disordered nerves which rendered the possessor impatient and irritable. He healed not only actual sickness, but every enfeebled condition.

Before His healing touch, all weakness, lassitude, inertia, lack of energy fled, and bounding vitality came. He came to save those who were "without strength," (Romans 5:6) and He did it, "for God was with Him." (Acts 10:38) "And they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." (Matthew 1:23)

That being the case, the same sort of work ought to be done by those who believe in Him. Even such is the promise. "And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." (Mark 16:17-18) "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself,...and has put into us the word of reconciliation," (2 Corinthians 5:19) so that as ambassadors for Christ, God is to work through us, in Christ's stead, even as He did through Jesus himself.

Christ was here working by the power of God, to set an example of labor. He showed the nature of the work that God wishes to have done, and the character of His chosen workmen.

The Twelve Sent Forth

Proof of this is found in what immediately follows the statement quoted at the head of this lesson. Jesus called the twelve to Him, and sent them out to preach the Gospel of the kingdom, "and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of disease and all manner of sickness," (Matthew 10:1) even as He himself did. The words here are identical with those in the statement concerning Jesus. He gave His disciples authority,--power,--over all devils, and to heal every sickness and every infirmity. And that means, of course, that He gave to them personally the power to rise above all infirmity. Lassitude is a thing foreign to the kingdom of heaven; superabounding life characterizes all that pertains to God. He says to us, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matthew 28:20)

And as God is with Him, and He as God is with us, the works that Christ's followers are expected to do, even until the end of the world, are not such as mere men could do of themselves, but such as would reflect honor on the power of God dwelling in men. "Honor and majesty are before Him; strength and beauty are in His sanctuary." (Psalm 96:6)

The only real trouble with any person is lack of power. "The flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; so that

you cannot do the things that you would." (Galatians 5:17) "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." (Romans 8:8)

Sin is weakness, degeneration, lack of Divine power; but the Gospel is "the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes." (Romans 1:16)

The cross of Christ is the power of God. Jesus Christ is our strength and our Redeemer; and He gave himself, for us; therefore strength, endurance, must characterize the subjects of His kingdom. This He indicated in the command, "As you go, preach, saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils; freely you have received, freely give." (Matthew 10:7-8)

The word rendered "sick" in this text is literally, "without strength," so that the command is really to heal those who have no strength. "Strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees." (Isaiah 35:3)

This shows Christ's true followers to be indeed partners, workers together, with God, "[Who] gives power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increases strength." (Isaiah 40:29)

Just take a glance at the character of the men whom Christ chose for this great work. They were of the common people. Quite a number were fishermen. We look back upon what the most of them became under the Holy Spirit's guidance, and we unconsciously attribute this power to them from the beginning, and assume that Christ chose them because of their peculiar attainments. No; they were very ordinary men. "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are; That no flesh should glory in His presence; But of Him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; That, according as it is written, He that glories, let him glory in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 1:27-31)

God chooses His workmen, not for what they are, but for what He can make of them.

In the church the terms "clergy" and "laity" have been adopted to mark the distinction between the ministers of the Gospel and the common people; but no such distinction exists in the Bible. The word "laity" is from the Greek word laos, people; but that is just what Christ's ministers are. Of Christ himself it is said: "I have laid help on One that is mighty; I have exalted One chosen out of the people." (Psalm 89:19)

The Jewish priests came to regard themselves as a distinct class, far above the people, and so the Pharisees spoke contemptuously of "this people who know not the law." (John 7:49)

The rulers marveled when they saw that Peter and John were but "laymen,"--common people,--and "They took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." (Acts 4:13)

That is the secret of power. The possession of great gifts does not ensure one against failing. Judas was sent out as one of the twelve, and there is nothing to indicate that he did not have the same power that the rest had. Why not? The Lord did not choose His followers for what they were, but for what He could make of them if they would yield to His influence.

Judas did not always listen to the promptings of Satan. There were in him possibilities of becoming a superior laborer. Even Satan was once a trusted servant of Jehovah, full of power and wisdom and beauty. It was jealousy, wounded pride,-or rather the yielding to pride, for pride when it is present is sure to get wounded,-that caused his downfall.

So covetousness, offended dignity, made a traitor of one of the twelve intimate companions of Jesus. Beware of self-love. It is well to "covet earnestly the best gifts, [but the] more excellent way" (1 Corinthians 12:31) is the possession of love, "the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit." (Romans 5:5)

Take heed, "that you receive not the grace of God in vain." (2 Corinthians 6:1)

And, "Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." (1 Corinthians 10:12)--Present Truth, May 24, 1900--Timeline: IV-34 (Mission of the Twelve)--Matthew 9:35-10:8.

Chapter 202

The Twelve Sent Forth

Parallel accounts are found in Mark 3:13-19; 6:7-11 and Luke 9:1-6, but the one in Matthew is the fullest. Connect this lesson with the last verses of chapter nine, where we are told that Jesus had compassion on the multitude, because: "They fainted, and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd." (Matthew 9:36)

Jesus bade His disciples pray that the Lord of the harvest would send out laborers into His harvest, and the next thing mentioned is that He called His twelve disciples to Him, and sent them forth.

Power and Authority

"He gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease." (Matthew 10:1)

In the margin we find "over" instead of "against," and the Revised Version reads: "He gave them authority over unclean spirits." (Matthew 10:1)

Still more emphatic is the record in Luke 9: "He called His twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure disease. And He sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and heal the sick." (Luke 9:1-2)

Some suppose that this commission has expired, and that miracles no more occur in the church; but that is equivalent to saying that the preaching of the Gospel has ceased; for the power by which the devils are cast out, and the sick are healed, is the power by which the Gospel is preached in its fullness. "The Gospel ... is the power of God unto salvation unto everyone that believes." (Romans 1:16) "The preaching of the cross is to those who are saved the power of God." (1 Corinthians 1:18)

Now the power of God is unlimited and undivided; wherever the power of God is displayed, there nothing is impossible. The power of God is the same now that it was nineteen hundred years ago. The same power that saves men's souls, heals their bodies, and cast out devils. If we say that we do not see such power accompanying the

preaching of the Gospel, that shows, not a defect in the Gospel, but in the relation of men to it. If the power is not manifested, then it is for each Christian to ask himself, Why?

But as a matter of fact, the same power and authority which Christ gave to the twelve is manifested today wherever the Gospel is really preached, and souls are saved. The Gospel is the power of God to salvation from sin. It purifies the heart by faith. "Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, you know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knows the hearts, bore them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as He did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." (Acts 15:7-9)

Now all men are by nature sinful, and therefore under the power of Satan. "And you has He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." (Ephesians 2:1-3) "But rise, and stand upon your feet: for I have appeared unto you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of these things which you have seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto you; Delivering you from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send you, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." (Acts 26:16-18)

Satan is the author of sin: "He that commits sin is of the devil; for the devil sinned from the beginning." (1 John 3:8)

Just to the extent that one is a servant of sin, is he under the control of Satan. When therefore a soul is saved from sin, he is simply delivered from the power of the devil. The man in whom Christ dwells by faith, has had the devil cast out. Thus it appears that wherever the Gospel is really preached, and wherever there is real conversion, there has been the miracle of the casting out of devils.

God does not do things simply to astonish people, and to cause them to stare. Many people long to see miracles and wonders, just as they long for any excitement or sensation. God does not gratify the curiosity of such. But He is continually working miracles, however, and they who do not see them would soon cease to see anything marvelous in the raising of the dead from their graves.

Those who serve God in Spirit and in truth, acknowledging His power in all things, are continually lost in wonder at His marvelous works. To them there are no little things, for the least thing that God does is miraculous, because it is infinite. "The weakness of God is stronger than men." (1 Corinthians 1:25)

When men are living by God's Word, and are continually recognizing His power, they do not go wild when something is done that even the unthinking call a miracle. They know that miracles are God's natural working.

When the young man fell down from the third storey, while Paul was preaching, "and was taken up dead," (Acts 20:9) the Lord by Paul restored him to life, and the apostle continued his discourse. It was not because the people were unappreciative, but because they lived in constant appreciation of God's power and working.

When professed Christians learn to recognize God in all His works, and acknowledge His wonderful working in all things, so that if a dead man should be raised to life they would not give the world the idea that the manifestation of such power is an unusual thing on God's part, we may expect to see the early days of the church restored.

That which Christ said to the twelve, He says to all. To every Christian, even the humblest, He gives "power and authority over all devils." "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." (James 4:7)

With the shield of faith we are able to "quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." (Ephesians 6:16) "[Christ] suffered for us in the flesh, [that we might arm ourselves] with the same mind." (1 Peter 4:1) "[He] suffered being tempted." (Hebrews 2:18)

When the devil tempted Jesus, the Lord said to him, "Get you hence, Satan, ... [and] the devil left Him." (Matthew 4:10-11)

There was power and authority over the devil, which is given to every believer. Take it, use it, and rejoice in it.

The Lost Sheep of Israel

Jesus said to the twelve as He sent them forth, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matthew 10:5-6)

There is something about this charge that is not perfectly clear to our present understanding. The explanation will doubtless be found in the condition of the twelve at that time, since we see that even after Jesus ascended, it was a long time before there was much preaching to any besides the Jews.

But of one thing we may be sure, and that is that the words of Jesus to them did not mean that they should be narrow in their sympathies and labors. The Gospel from the beginning, even as today, is for "all people." (Luke 2:10) "But you shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and you shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

Let us note a few items concerning the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The Son of God came because "God so loved the world." (John 3:16)

He gave himself "for the life of the world." (John 6:51) "By the grace of God He tasted death for every man." (Hebrews 2:9)

Yet He himself said, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," (Matthew 15:24) although He was sent "that the world through Him might be saved." (John 3:17)

Moreover at the very time that Jesus said that He was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, He was about to grant the request of the heathen woman, and heal her daughter.

Again, the Apostle James, recalling how "God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name," (Acts 15:14) said that this was in fulfillment of the words of the prophets, as it is written: "After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, says the Lord." (Acts 15:16-17)

So we see that the house of Israel is restored and built up by the conversion of the Gentiles. "All Israel shall be saved," (Romans 11:26) by the bringing in of: "the fullness of the Gentiles." (Romans 11:25)

Thus we see that the Gospel which the twelve were sent to preach was not a narrow one. It differed in no respect from that which God sends to us and which we are to proclaim to others. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:6)

So we are the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and unto us is the word of this salvation sent. "And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Revelation 22:17)

Then, "As you have freely received, even so, freely give." (Matthew 10:8)--Present Truth, February 10, 1898--Notes on the International Sunday-School Lesson, February 20--Timeline: IV-34 (Mission of the Twelve)--Matthew 10:1-15.

Chapter 203

Confessing Christ

"Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 10:32-33)

What is it to confess Christ? This is a most important question, for upon it depends our future happiness or woe. In the parallel passage we read: "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." (Mark 8:38)

These texts show the importance of confessing Christ. Confessing Christ is something more than acknowledging His existence, or that He is the Son of God. Even the devils do this: "And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with you, Jesus, you Son of God? are you come here to torment us before the time?" (Matthew 8:29)

But it does not affect their character, nor will it avert their punishment. Neither does confessing Christ consist in making a high profession of Christianity. For, says Jesus, "Not everyone that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name? and in your name have cast out devils? and in your name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, you that work iniquity." (Matthew 7:21-23)

Here we learn that those who have not only made a high profession, but who have been apparently shining lights, and have done much work, will be denied by Christ in the last great day. Then it must be because they have not confessed Him; for all who confess Him will be acknowledged by Him. But he who does not confess Christ, denies Him: "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathers not with me scatters abroad." (Matthew 12:30)

So that our Saviour's words show us that a man may deny Christ while bearing the Christian name, and being what is called "a pillar in the church."

If now it is desired to know in brief what it is to confess Christ, turn and read: "That if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, Whosoever believes on Him shall not be ashamed." (Romans 10:9-11)

Confessing the Lord Jesus is the outgrowth of a heart belief in Him. And what is heart belief in Christ? It is such a belief as produces righteousness, "For with the heart man believes unto righteousness." (Romans 10:10)

The belief that does not produce righteousness, is no belief at all. Righteousness is right-doing. It is the opposite of sin, for unrighteousness is sin. "All unrighteousness is sin." (1 John 5:17)

But sin is the transgression of the law: "Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." (1 John 3:4)

Therefore righteousness is obedience to the law of God. So Moses said, "And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as He has commanded us." (Deuteronomy 6:25)

Therefore we may understand that true belief in Christ leads invariably to keeping the commandments of God; and true confession of the Lord Jesus Christ is the utterance of one who has such a living, acting, practical faith in Christ.

What a wonderful promise, that if we confess Him, He will confess us! And what will He confess concerning us when He comes? Here is the answer: "For both He that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare your name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto You." (Hebrews 2:11-12)

Then when He comes in the glory of the Father, with all the holy angels, Christ will not be ashamed to greet as His brethren all those who have confessed Him before men, by their lives of obedience, as well as by their words. He will claim such as members of His own family, heirs of God, and joint heirs with himself. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God." (1 John 3:2)

We are now members of the family of Christ. If so, let us heed the apostle's injunction to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called. Let us not disgrace the family, and cause the Head of it to be ashamed of us. "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." (Matthew 10:34-36)

Notwithstanding the above statement, it is true that the gospel of Jesus Christ is a "gospel of peace." (Ephesians 6:15)

And this loving exhortation should be most carefully heeded: "But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." (2 Timothy 2:23-25)

And this: "But I say unto you, That you resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. ... Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." (Matthew 5:39,44)

Then how can there be strife and "a sword," as the Saviour said, if these injunctions are followed? They exist just because these injunctions are followed. He does not say that it will be the Christian man who will be at variance with his father. This could not be, for variance is one of the things the possession of which will shut a man out of Heaven: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these ... variance ... of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." (Galatians 5:19-21)

But men are naturally prone to evil; and they resent anything which condemns their course. So the sinful son will be at variance with his pious father; the father himself will be at peace with all men. "And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." (Matthew 10:36)

The man will not be a foe to those of his own household, but they will be his foes because of his goodness, just as Stephen was stoned because he was a Christian; just as Daniel was cast into the den of lions, because he prayed to God; just as "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution, [because] evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse." (1 Timothy 3:12-13)--Signs of the Times, October 20, 1887--Timeline: IV-34 (Mission of the Twelve)--Matthew 10:22-42.

Chapter 204

A Marvelous Thing

There was one thing at which our Lord himself marveled while here on the earth, and that was unbelief. Many things cause great surprise to His disciples and the multitudes that attended Him, but the most surprising thing to Christ himself was the blindness and hardness of the human heart.

This so hindered Him in His own country that: "He could there do no mighty work there, save that He laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. And He marveled because of their unbelief." (Mark 6:5-6)

Also when He healed the centurion's servant (Luke 7:2-9) He marveled, not because the centurion had faith, but because His own people had less faith than did this Roman.

Unbelief is a stranger thing than is the mightiest miracle ever performed; because there has been a cause for every miracle, but for unbelief there is no cause.

It is not strange that God can do most astonishing things, for He is omnipotent and omniscient; but it is strange indeed that man will not believe His word. It is so strange as to be absolutely without reason.

Do you believe the Lord? If not, why not?--Present Truth, September 20, 1894--Timeline: IV-35 (Second Rejection at Nazareth)--Mark 6:5-6.

Chapter 205

The Death of John the Baptist

From the closing part of the preceding chapter (Matthew 13:53-57), we learn that Jesus came "into His own country, [and that] He taught them in their synagogue [with such power that] they were astonished." (Matthew 13:54)

But instead of receiving the truth as a power to work changes in their characters, they remembered that this was: "The carpenter's son," (Matthew 13:55) and that they were well acquainted with His brothers and sisters, "And they were offended in Him." (Matthew 13:57)

And, "At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus," (Matthew 14:1) and it called to his mind one who had spoken before him with a similar power, and he said, "This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead." (Matthew 14:2)

How did Herod know anything about the resurrection of the dead? Evidently from the preaching of John the Baptist. "For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and a holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly." (Mark 6:20)

The Gospel of repentance and preparation for the kingdom of heaven which John preached included the resurrection from the dead, and was preached with the resurrection power. "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, And saying, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 3:1-2) To this Herod bears witness when he recognizes the work of Jesus has been of the same character as that of John the Baptist.

When Herod heard of the wonderful works of Christ in healing the sick, casting out devils, and raising the dead, he was exceedingly troubled and perplexed. His convictions were that God, whom John preached, was indeed present in every place, and that He had witnessed the wild mirth and wicked dissipation in the royal banqueting room, and that His ears had heard his command to the executioner to behead John, that His eye had seen the exultation of Herodias, and the taunting insult with which she had reproached the severed head of her enemy. And many things which he had heard from

the lips of the prophet now spoke to his conscience in louder tones than the preaching in the wilderness.

He had heard from John that nothing could be hidden from God, therefore he trembled lest some terrible punishment should be visited upon him for the sin he had committed. When Herod heard of the words of Christ, he thought that God had resurrected John, and sent him forth with still greater power to condemn sin.--Ellen G. White, The Spirit of Prophecy, Volume Two, p. 82.

The Power of John's Ministry

Jesus had already said concerning John: "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist: ... And if you will receive it, this is Elijah which was to come." (Matthew 11:11,15)

In his work as the prophet of the Lord, the true God, Elijah fearlessly reproved sin even in high places and called upon the people to recognize and worship Jehovah as God. "And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab saidunto him, Are you the one that troubles Israel? And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but you, and your father's house, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and you have followed Baalim." (1 Kings 18:17-18)

And although "John did no miracle," (John 10:41) yet his work was "in the spirit and power of Elijah," (Luke 1:17) and his words brought conviction of sin to the hearts of all classes, including Herod the tetrarch. His mission was to turn the minds of the people to the coming Messiah, saying to all, "Behold the Lamb of God!" (John 1:36)

And this he did not merely by his word but by revealing Christlike principles in his life.

His life was so unselfish, marked with humility and self-denial. His teachings, exhortations, and reproofs, where fervent, sincere, and courageous.--Ellen G. White, The Spirit of Prophecy, Volume Two, p. 57.

Thus the declaration of Herod, "This is John the Baptist," (Matthew 14:2) was a remarkable testimony to the character of John's work, as being done in the same power

in which Jesus worked. Thus it ought to be with every faithful servant of Jesus now. So, after the resurrection of Christ, those who examined Peter and John concerning their work, "took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." (Acts 4:13)

Victorious in Death

The imprisonment and death of John testify to his own faith in his own work. His mission was: "To make ready a people prepared for the Lord." (Luke 1:17)

And this involved confession of sins and faith in the saving power of the Gospel. In pursuance of his work He reproved sin of every kind, and when as a result of his faithfulness he was cast in the prison, his own faith in the Gospel which he had preached to others sustained him, and he was "faithful unto death," (Revelation 2:10) just as He whose forerunner he was, "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Philippians 2:8)

Those who look upon outward appearances merely might conclude that the work of John the Baptist ended in defeat, but: "The Lord sees not as man sees; for man looks upon the outward appearance, but the Lord looks upon the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7)

And He recognized in the integrity of His servant and in His refusal to compromise right principles, a victory greater than a Hastings or a Waterloo. Because Jesus was faithful unto death, "Wherefore God also has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name." (Philippians 2:9)

And with every loyal servant He shares His "new name": "Him that overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name." (Revelation 3:12)

Surfeiting and Drunkenness a Cause of Crime

But the faithfulness of John does not relieve Herod of the responsibility of taking his life, and this whole occurrence is a temperance lesson of great power. When in his right mind Herod would never have made such a rash promise as to give to this

profligate dancer "whatsoever she would ask," (Matthew 14:7) or even having made it, he would never have kept it when she said, "Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger." (Matthew 14:8)

But, "Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee." (Mark 6:21)

And with his passions inflamed by surfeiting and drunkenness, and "pleased" by the bewitching presence and art of the dancer, his reason was overborne. Shocked by the inhuman request of the young woman, he is for the moment brought to his sense, "And the king was sorry." (Matthew 14:9)

But bound by a false sense of honor, and waiting in vain for his drunken companions to release him from his oath, he gave the fatal command and the life of a righteous man is sacrificed to the hatred of Herodias. But this crime is one of the many which lie at the door of intemperance.

Too often in these days the most solemn responsibilities rest upon those who, from their intemperate habits, are not in the condition to exercise the calm judgment and keen perceptions of right and wrong with which their Creator endowed them. The guardians of the people, men in authority, upon whose decisions hang the lives of their fellow creatures, should be subject to severe punishment if found guilty of intemperance.

Those who enforce laws should be law-keepers. They should be men of self-government, in full harmony with the laws governing their physical, mental, and moral powers, that they may possess full vigor of intellect and a high sense of justice. In the martyrdom of John we have a result of intemperance among those invested with great authority. This eventful birthday feast should be a lesson of warning to the lovers of pleasure, and an exhortation to Christian temperance.--Ellen G. White, The Spirit of Prophecy, Volume Two, p. 80.

They Went and Told Jesus

Herodias was satisfied when she had received the head of John and the disciples were permitted to have the body, which they buried, "and went and told Jesus." (Matthew 14:12)

How much is revealed in these few words. Having lost a faithful leader they "went and told Jesus." In their grief at his shameful death, they "went and told Jesus." With a natural longing for sympathy in their hour of trial, they "went and told Jesus." This is the privilege of every Christian now. "For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like is we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:15-16) "Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." (Isaiah 53:4)

When we have been overcome by any power of evil, we can go and "tell Jesus." He will not take any advantage of our confessions. When death has gained an apparent victory and one has been taken from the family circle, we can go and "tell Jesus." He who wept at the grave of Lazarus, wept with and for us as well, and He says to us: "I will come again." (John 14:3) "Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?" (1 Corinthians 15:54-55)

Whatever our circumstances in life, it is our privilege to go and "tell Jesus;" and this He invites us to do.

Have we trials and temptations,
Is there trouble anywhere?
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!
--Joseph Medlicott Scriven, Hymn: What a Friend We Have in Jesus, 1855.

--Present Truth, March 10, 1898--Original title: As Free as a Bird--Timeline: IV-36 (Martyrdom of John the Baptist)--Matthew 14:1-12.

Chapter 206

This World's Reward of Faithfulness

Death of John the Baptist

The testimony of Jesus concerning John was, "He was a burning and a shining light, and you were willing for a season to rejoice in his light." (John 5:35)

The object of light is to enable us to see the way, so that we may not stumble in it, or wander out of it. It necessarily reveals defects. It does not make defects, but shows where they are. The sun is a faithful witness, and will record on the sensitized plate, just what it beholds, without adding to, or taking from. "All things that are reproved are made manifest by the light; for whatsoever does make manifest is light." (Ephesians 5:13)

When light ceases to show the sharp distinction between the good and the bad, the right way and the wrong way, it is light no longer. Light has no option in the matter; it must reveal things as they are; it cannot do otherwise than expose deformity when it exists.

Accordingly John, as a burning and a shining light,--not the Light that lights every man that comes into the world, but the one who bore witness of that Light by letting the true Light shine through him unchecked,--could not refrain from reproving the sin of Herod, who had unlawfully and wickedly taken his brother Philip's wife.

The fact that Herod was king could not make any difference. A king is but a servant of God, set in high a position that he may reveal the character of God more widely than other man, and who, if he is unfaithful to his Master, has the greater influence for evil; and therefore it is even more necessary that the sins of rulers be pointed out, that they may be corrected, than those of people in less exalted positions. "He that rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God." (2 Samuel 23:3)

It has been clearly pointed out in these pages, from the Scriptures, that the 40th chapter of Isaiah is the message of John the Baptist. He was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for

our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together." (Isaiah 40:3-5)

Compare with: "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; And all flesh shall see the salvation of God." (Luke 3:1-6)

But the message of John the Baptist does not end with those verses; that message continues through the whole of the remainder of the book of Isaiah. In reproving Herod, John was but delivering the message that he was commanded to give, namely, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins." (Isaiah 58:1)

Firmness with Meekness

The idea that John the Baptist was a harsh reprover, hard and unsympathetic in his nature, delighting in laying bare the sins of people, both high and low, and smiting to wound, is a false one. Many have unconsciously formed this opinion of him, but it is most unjust.

He was a true servant of God, and as such he necessarily answered to the inspired description of the character of a servant: "The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil." (2 Timothy 2:24-26)

The Lord does not send reproofs to condemn people, but to convict and convert them. The Comforter reproves. "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." (John 16:7-8) "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved." (John 3:17) "Reproofs of instruction are the way of life." (Proverbs 6:23)

Therefore God does not send any of the servants of Christ out into the world to condemn the world, but only to show them the way of life. No sin ought ever to be mentioned except for the purpose of saving sinners. To hold the errors and wickedness of any person or class of people up to ridicule or reproach, is in itself wicked unfaithfulness to God.

There was hope for Herod, and opportunity for him to repent and be forgiven, and therefore John kindly but firmly reproved him. Strength is best manifested in connection with gentleness. The most skillful surgeons who wield the knife with firmness, are often the kindest and gentlest of men.

Unswerving loyalty to principle and unequivocal denunciation of sin, may be, and must be if real, combined with kindness of disposition, hatred of controversy, and love of peace.

Herod's wickedness was due to weakness of character. That is, of course, in a certain sense true of everybody; but while sin is always weakness, there are many sinners who are leaders, and many others who are simply led.

There are men of strong characters, designed for leaders in the right way, who sin boldly and fearlessly, and who have a positive influence over others, but are not themselves apparently influenced by anybody; and there are weak men, who would be good (or would at least seem to be good) if everybody else were good, and there were no temptation to evil, but who, being surrounded by evil, make no definite resistance. They love evil, although they fear its consequences, and having no settled principles, they are easily made the tool of designing persons.

Of this nature was Herod. He was angry with John for disturbing his conscience, and had put him in prison, but even this was because of his evil associations. We read that: "John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife. Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not: For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and a holy, and kept him safe." (Mark 6:18-20,RV,margin)

Herod was ruled by his paramour, and so John was cast into prison; yet the king had for a long time refused to do him any hurt. He doubtless thought that he could set him free later on.

Danger of Trifling with Truth

There is in all these incidents a most important lesson for us to learn. We see how helpless the man is who does not definitely yield to the Lord. Herod took on the color of his surroundings which were bad. Indeed, people of that disposition almost always sooner or later drift into bad company.

He was like many other men, who will make any concession to gain and hold position and power, where their self love and desire for vain glory can be gratified, yet who, by their very concessions to gain power, show that they are slaves. In short, he was a politician, and, like Pilate, was a perfect type of his class.

He knew that John was a true prophet, and that he spoke the truth, and he could not help honoring him; yet his weak interposition to save him from the malignant hatred of Herodias, arose rather from the fear of the consequences of putting a prophet to death, than from love of his goodness.

His dealing with John was like that of Pilate with Christ. They thought that by making some concessions to the haters of good men, they could have their own way later, and save them; but they did not know the power of the master to whom they weakly yielded themselves.

The man who has not a definite conviction, and who does not decidedly accept that which he knows to be true, is the slave of evil. He who dallies with his conscience, and trifles with truth, is sure to be swept away by the flood of sin.

Put Not Your Trust in Princes

Herod did not wish to kill John, and he was sorely troubled when he saw how he had been trapped. But he had given his oath, and so "could not help himself." Therefore he was not a king, but a slave.

The history of John the Baptist is a picture of the people of God immediately preceding the coming of Christ, with this exception, that the decree that they shall all be killed will be prevented from being carried out by the appearance of Christ in glory, to deliver His people, and destroy the enemies of truth. "And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed." (Revelation 13:15)

There are some who place a great deal of dependence upon rulers; they think that the cause of God has much to gain from the State. It has much to give, but nothing to receive. The world is as much opposed to God now as it ever was. "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. ... All they that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (2 Timothy 3:13,12)

There are men in high position, who, like Cyrus and Nebuchadnezzar among the heathen kings, and Nicodemus and Joseph among the Jewish rulers, will accept the truth, and will devote themselves to it; but these are the exceptions. There are many others who would willingly shield the righteous from persecution, if they could do it and keep their position.

But laws have been passed, which seem innocent enough, and calculated to benefit the people, but which can and will be used by malicious persons to persecute those who are faithful to God. Then these officials will say, "I am exceedingly sorry: but I have sworn to uphold and execute the laws, and I cannot help myself."

And so the faithful will suffer, while the wicked seem to triumph. But, "The triumphing of the wicked is short." (Job 20:5)

Jesus says, "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life." (Revelation 2:10)

It is far better to lose one's life for a principle, than to gain a respite by compromising. The world rewards faithfulness with death, but God rewards it with life.

Cease To Do Evil

Ought Herod to have broken his oath? Would it have been right for him to refuse to fulfill his promise? Most certainly. It was decidedly wrong for him to make such a promise, and swear to it; for he made it in the heat of passion, and the kingdom was not his to give away.

The very fact, however, that it was wrong for him to make the oath, is evidence that it would have been right for him to break it; for it is always right to break off from an evil.

Foolish, worldly-wise statesmen say that the best thing to do with a bad law is to enforce it. No; the best thing to do with it is to abolish it. And if it is contrary to God's commandments, the best thing for men to do is to disregard it. The best thing to do is always to do right; but since "all have sinned," (Romans 3:23) the best thing to do is to "cease to do evil." (Isaiah 1:16)

It is never wrong to stop in an evil career. It is always right to stop doing wrong. Let no one deceive himself or allow others to deceive him with false logic. The logical course always, the Christian course, is to break off sin by righteousness. "Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto you, and break off your sins by righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of your tranquillity." (Daniel 4:27) "Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto you, and break off your sins by righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of your tranquility." (Daniel 4:27)--Present Truth, May 31, 1900--Timeline: IV-36 (Martyrdom of John the Baptist)--Mark 6:14-29.

Chapter 207

He Himself Knew What He Would Do

Jesus had gone out into a desert place, and, as usual, a great multitude followed Him. Thousands of hungry people were present, with nothing to eat, and Jesus said Philip, "Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" (John 6:5)

Philip at once began to calculate, and concluded that it could not be done, since two hundred pennyworth (200 days' wages) of bread would not be sufficient for each one to have a taste.

Peter volunteered the information that there was a lad present, who had five barley loaves and two small fishes, but such a small amount was not worth mentioning among so many. No; it was clearly an impossibility; the people must get along the best they could, for there was no food there for them.

But Jesus was not disturbed by these conclusions. He had simply asked the question, "Whence shall we buy bread?" in order to prove the disciples, "for He himself knew what He would do it." (John 6:6)

He knew how many hungry people there were present, and how much, or rather how little food there was at hand, yet He was not at all troubled. He knew what He would do, and He proceeded to do it. Not one of the great multitude went away hungry. Everyone was filled, and there was an abundance of food left.

How did it come to pass? The Bread of Life was with them. He who calls to all the world, "Come, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price," (Isaiah 55:1) had no need to go away to buy food for those who had followed Him.

Fifteen hundred years before that time, the ancestors of the same people were in the desert, and they had nothing to eat. "And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, and the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full: for you have

brought us forth into the wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger." (Exodus 16:3-4)

But they did not starve, for bread in abundance was sent them from heaven. They were fed from the same source as their descendants by the sea of Galilee. Yet the lesson was not learned. From the wilderness of Sin they journeyed "according to the commandment of the Lord, and pitched in Rephidim; and there was no water for the people to drink. ... And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses and said, Wherefore is this that you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?" (Exodus 17:1,3)

But they did not die. Water was provided for them in abundance, for: "the fountain of living waters," (Jeremiah 2:13) was with them, and, "they drank of that Spiritual Rock." (1 Corinthians 10:4)

As we read these narratives, we read them in the light of the result, and so have not the sympathy with the murmurers that our own experience would warrant us in having. We do not realize what apparently good reason they had for complaint.

One of the first qualifications of a good general is that he shall be able to provide for those in his charge; and a prime necessity for a camp is plenty of good water. If we were in the same position that the Israelites were, we should most likely say, "Anybody who doesn't know better than to choose a camping place in a dry desert, ought to give up his place to somebody else; a child would know enough to pitch by the side of water."

But how did they happen to be there? Was it accidental or lack of judgment that brought them into that difficulty, for which they had to be extricated? Not by any means. They pitched there "according to the commandment of the Lord." (Exodus 17:1)

And what was more, it was God himself who led them there, for, as Moses said to the people, "You did not believe the Lord your God, Who went in the way before you, to search out a place to pitch your tents in." (Deuteronomy 1:32-33)

And did God lead them into a place where there was no water? No; for He himself was with them, and He is "the fountain of living waters." (Jeremiah 2:13)

All the time, "He himself knew what He would do." (John 6:6) "He knows the way that I take," (Job 23:10) for He himself is the Way. "Jesus said unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6)

Yea, "Known unto God are all His works from the foundation of the world." (Acts 15:18)

We get into difficult places, and know not what to do, and we fancy that because we are at our wits end, the case is hopeless. But God is not taken by surprise. Instead of having abandoned us to our fate, it is He who has led us in the difficulty, in order to show us His salvation.

And He led us there because it was the very best way. He always knows what to do next, because He saw the situation long beforehand.

Then since we are in the hands of Him who knows us, our needs, and the way, and who always knows what He will do, and whose will is always for deliverance, let us rest in the knowledge that: "All things work together for good to them that love God." (Romans 8:28)

No way can be so dark and difficult but that He knows it and the way of escape. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits." (Psalm 103:2)--Present Truth, March 17, 1898--Timeline: IV-38 (Feeding the Five Thousand)--John 6:5-6.

Chapter 208

The Bread of Life

Just as God's thoughts are very deep, so that no person can ever sound them to the bottom, but can look into them again and again, and always find more in them than he had before dreamed of, so with the record of the wondrous things that Jesus did; for all that He said and did was only an expression of God's thoughts.

The story of the feeding of the five thousand is one of the most familiar, and it has often been treated of in these pages, yet we can study it again with as much profit as if we had never before read it. Indeed, the more we have read it, the more we can learn from it.

God's words and acts are for ever, and the Bible is to be our teacher as long as we live; if we were not to come book to its pages time after time, we could well burn our Bible as soon as we have once read it. But since it is to be our meditation day and night, we must never allow ourselves to think that we have learned all that any scripture has for us. "O how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day." (Psalm 119:97)

Christ Not a Mere Historical Personage

The worst manner possible in which to read the life of Jesus is to consider it merely as a history. We are so prone to think of all the events in the life of Jesus as something in the past; but in so doing we unconsciously deny His Divinity; for since He is Divine,--the Word that was in the beginning with God, and is God,--so is He "the same yesterday, and today, and for ever." (Hebrews 13:8) "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." (John 1: 1-2)

That which He did a thousand years ago, is that which He does still, and which He will always continue to do. Miracles are His ordinary and natural manner of working.

In the wonders and miracles and signs which God did by Jesus of Nazareth, He was simply taking off the covering that hides Him from the eyes of men, and letting

everybody see into His workroom, that they may know how He employs himself day by day continually.

But if we think that He has ceased working, because He has again hidden himself from human sight, the revelation has been all in vain for us. From the record of the life of Jesus we should learn not only to recognize His workmanship, but to see Him actually at work all round us every day.

In Him All Things Are Created

Let us therefore first think of what Jesus really did. He created food for a vast multitude of people. It is true that He had something to begin with, but He did not draw upon the original store, but increased it instead. There was more food left, after all had satisfied their hunger, than there was at first.

As He took the food in His hands, it multiplied, so that it is as clear as daylight, that it came from Him--directly from His body. In this miracle, therefore, we have an illustration of the statement that: "In Him were all things created." (Colossians 1:16,RV)

Even if He had not afterwards said anything about it, the act alone is sufficient to show that He is the Bread of life, and that only as we consciously eat and drink His life do we eat as we ought, or have real life.

Whoever studies this lesson ought not to be content without at the same time reading the entire chapter. Reference is made to the manna in the wilderness, and it is made clear that Jesus did for the five thousand, exactly what He did for the multitudes who came out of Egypt with Moses. He fed them with himself--with His flesh and blood.

And then when we read the account of the last supper, the night Jesus was betrayed, we have Christ's explicit statement to that effect. That meal is the pattern for all our living; not that we must eat nothing but bread and drink the juice of the grape; but the meaning is that we should eat only that which is the perfect manifestation of His spotless life.

The manna in the desert was the daily food of the people. It was "the corn of heaven," (Psalm 78:24) "spiritual meat." (1 Corinthians 10:3)

But it was given to satisfy all the wants of the body. The bread with which Jesus fed the five thousand was barley bread, such as the people ate day after day. And that of which He plainly said, "This is my body," (Matthew 26:26) was the regular Passover bread, such as was found in every house in the land.

All these things are intended to show us that the food that we eat every day is what Christ provides for us, from himself. The miracle of feeding the five thousand is continually being performed on a much Iarger scale, and has been from the beginning. This is the great lesson for us to learn--that Christ is with us, working miracles in our behalf, just as really and truly as when all men could see Him going about doing good.

An Indulgent Parent

It has often been set forth in these pages that the Lord's Supper, as the model meal, teaches us that the flesh of animals should form no part of our bill of fare. But someone will surely say, with an air of triumph, as though he had disproved the whole teaching, "But Jesus fed the five thousand with fish as well as bread!"

They think that this is a proof that He wishes that we should eat animal food; but that is a mistaken idea.

Let it be noted that in drawing the lesson from the miracle, Jesus spoke only of bread. Further, it should be remembered that it was only at the Lord's Supper, where no animal food was, that Jesus said, "This is my body;" and that in the wilderness, where He gave the people "bread from heaven" (Exodus 16:4), He gave then no flesh of animals.

And finally, we should not overlook a single expression that is used in connection with the fish in the desert. He gave them of the fish, "as much as they would." (John 6:11)

He did then just what He has always done, and what He does still: He provides everything, and allows each person to choose for himself. He multiplies fish, animals,

and birds, as well as fruits and grains, and gives people the privilege of eating what they please.

At the same time He has twice indicated in the most striking manner what is best for men, and what they ought to choose:

1. In the beginning, when He prescribed the proper diet for men; and

2. At the deliverance from Egypt, when He gave them only manna, providing it day by day.

Yet when the people longed for flesh, He gave it to them, performing a miracle to that end. He gives to all people exactly what they wish, even though it is contrary to what He knows is best, but in so doing He does not free them from the consequences of their unlawful desires. It is always best, however, to choose only that which God has indicated is best.

A Companionable Teacher

Jesus knew what He would do, yet He asked the disciples what should be done. Like a father who is a companion and a teacher to his children, Jesus took His disciples into His confidence, making them sharers in His work. He gave them opportunity to express their opinion, so that their minds would be more intently fixed in what was done.

He knew what He was about to do, but they did not, and so they began to speculate. If they had really known Him, they would at once have looked to Him to provide food for the people. We are, however, no more considerate than they. We have not learned the lesson, that: "He gives to all life, and breath, and all things." (Acts 17:25)

We forget, even after we have once learned, that God is always working to provide for His children, and therefore we indulge in so many anxious speculations as to where our support is to come from.

Jesus would have us know that not only does He miraculously feed us, but He makes us partners in His work of feeding others, which is much greater. It is recorded in one place that when the disciples counseled Him to send the multitude away, so that they could buy food for themselves, He said, "They need not go away; give them to eat." (Matthew 14:16)

That is proof that they might have done exactly what Jesus afterwards did, if they had believed. They did indeed feed the multitude, in that they carried the food to them from the hands of Jesus. By this He teaches us that we should give to others as freely as He gives to us.--Present Truth, June 7, 1900--International Sunday-School Lesson, June 17--Timeline: IV-38 (Feeding the Five Thousand)--John 6:5-14.

Chapter 209

A Lesson in Economy

When Jesus had fed five thousand men, besides women and children, with five loaves and two small fishes, and they had all eaten till they were satisfied, He said to His disciples, "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost." (John 6:12)

Here was more than an ordinary lesson in economy. It is doubtful if anyone would have thought of saving the remnants of that dinner, if Jesus had not spoken of it. If any thought were given to it, it would naturally have been on this wise: "There is no use in bothering with these little fragments, when we have one with us who can miraculously supply us with abundance."

But Jesus in this has shown us that while He supplies our need, He does not pledge himself to supply our extravagance. We must show our appreciation of His bountiful gifts, by not squandering them.

The men who saw how easily Jesus had provided food for the multitude, at once resolved to take Him and make Him their king. Here was such a king as they desired,--one who could assure them a living. They felt sure that they would never be troubled with a scarcity of provisions, with Him for their king, no matter whether the season was good or bad.

A good living, without any work, has been the desire of certain classes, even till this day. People will readily profess faith in Christ, when they are led to believe that Christianity consists in being supported without any effort on their part.

But Jesus frustrated their designs, by taking himself out of their way. They had entirely mistaken His mission. When they found Him the next day on the other side of the sea, He reproved them for seeking Him because of the loaves and fishes. He wished to be followed for His own sake, for the rich spiritual blessings that He could bestow, and not for merely temporal supplies.

There are many today who are making the same mistake about Jesus that the Jews of old made. Even Christian ministers are falling in with the idea, and are causing the

people to believe that Christianity means short hours and long wages. They are trying to catch the masses with the promise of abundance of loaves and fishes.

By such inducements they are only preparing the people for a bitter disappointment, and for rejecting Christ as fiercely as the Jews did when they found out that He would not serve their selfish ends.

It is true that Jesus has promised that all needful things shall be given to us, but the first thing is to seek the kingdom of God, and His righteousness. He does not promise wealth nor even comfort in this life. It is enough that the disciple be as his Lord, and He had not on earth a place of His own whereon to lay His head. With power to feed others, He was dependent on the kindness of friends for His own daily food.

The reproach of the Jews, as He hung on the cross, was true: "He saved others; himself He cannot save." (Matthew 27:42)

He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many. "Hearken, my beloved brethren, Has not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He has promised to them that love Him?" (James 2:5)

The portion of Christ's followers is in this life poverty of worldly goods, and the riches of His grace; but in the world to come they will have possessions far beyond the utmost stretch of human and imagination. "He that overcomes shall inherit all things." (Revelation 21:7)--Present Truth, June 7, 1894--Original title: Front Page--Timeline: IV-38 (Feeding the Five Thousand)--John 6:12.

Chapter 210

Give Them to Eat

Jesus and His disciples had gone away by themselves into an uninhabited portion of the country, but the people, hearing of it, flocked to Him out of the cities by thousands. The day had been spent in healing the sick, "And when it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now passed; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals. But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give them to eat. And they said unto Him, We have here but five loaves and two fishes." (Matthew 14:15-17)

We can easily picture the astonishment of the disciples when Jesus said to them, "Give them to eat." (Matthew 14:16)

They never had a day's provision ahead for themselves, and here were five thousand hungry men, besides women and children equally hungry. The food that they then had in their possession was not sufficient to provide each one of that multitude with a very small taste; and yet the disciples did give them food so that "They did all eat and were filled." (Matthew 14:20)

How was it accomplished? Just in this way: "[Jesus] took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, He blessed, and broke and gave the loaves and two fishes to His disciples and the disciples to the multitude." (Matthew 14:19)

There are greater multitudes today who are hungering for the bread of life. Few of them are conscious of the fact that it is the bread of life that they are longing for, but they do not know what will supply that need. And though they are out of the fold, the Lord has not cast them off, and they are among those to whom He refers when He says, "Feed my sheep," (John 21:16) and, "Feed my lambs." (John 21:15)

The Lord says to His disciples, "Give them to eat." (Matthew 14:16)

If we cry, "Who is sufficient for these things?" (2 Corinthians 2:16)

The answer comes, "Our sufficiency is of God." (2 Corinthians 3:5)

We are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, and "the words which man's wisdom teaches," (1 Corinthians 2:13) are empty and vain. But Christ has "The words of eternal life," (John 6:68) and "He whom God has sent speaks the words of God." (John 3:34)

Receiving the bread of life fresh from His hands, we may give them to the hungry people, who, eating them, will find them to the joy and rejoicing of their hearts. "Your words were found, and I did eat them; and your word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart: for I am called by your name, O Lord God of hosts." (Jeremiah 15:16)--Present Truth, August 15, 1895--Timeline: IV-38 (Feeding the Five Thousand)--Matthew 14:15-20.

Chapter 211

Christ the Bread of Life

Jesus had gone over the Sea of Galilee with His disciples, and a great company of people had followed Him, because they had seen his power in the healing of disease. After He had finished His instruction for the day, He looked at the great multitude of people who had assembled, and said to Philip, "Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat? This he said to prove Philip, for He himself knew what He would do." (John 6:5-6)

After the disciples had shown that they did not know what to do, Jesus had the people sit down on the grass. There was a lad present who had with him five barley loaves and two fishes, an amount of food so utterly inadequate to the need of the people that we are not surprised at Andrew's remark, "What are they among so many?" (John 6:9)

If all had been equally divided among the five thousand men present, there would have been scarcely as much as a crumb apiece. But read what followed: "And Jesus took the loaves; and when He had given thanks, He distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. When they were filled, He said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten." (John 6:11-13)

What a wonderful miracle this was! It is certain that the five loaves with which they began, would not nearly have filled twelve baskets; therefore we find that there was a good deal more left after feeding the five thousand than there was when they began, so that in reality the original amount of bread was not drawn upon at all. There was an act of creation performed by Christ, who is the Creator of all things. "In Him were all things created." (Colossians 1:16,RV)

Creative power resides in Christ. As He took the bread in His hands, it multiplied. Therefore the bread which the people ate that day came from Christ.

All the miracles of Christ were done that we might believe that He is indeed the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, we might have life through His name. And no miracle that was ever performed shows more clearly than this how we may feed upon Him, and receive life thereby. We shall see that this was the lesson that Jesus intended to have us learn from it.

The next day the people followed Jesus to Capernaum, and there He exhorted them: "Labor not for the meat that perishes, but for that meat which endures unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you; for Him has God the Father sealed." (John 6:27)

They rightly understood that this meat that would endure forever consisted of acts of righteousness, and so they asked Him what they should do that they might work the works of God. "Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent." (John 6:29)

Believing on Christ means appropriating Him. Therefore the meat that endures unto everlasting life is righteousness, and that is obtained by believing or appropriating Christ. Jesus virtually said to them that He himself was that food. With strange forgetfulness of the miracle that Jesus had wrought the day before, the people said: "What sign do you show then, that we may see, and believe you? What do you work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat." (John 6:30-31)

Jesus then proceeded to show them that the bread which the fathers ate in the desert was bread that God himself gave to them, and that He himself was the bread. "Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He which comes down from heaven, and gives life unto the world. Then they said unto Him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that comes to me shall never hunger; and he that believes on me shall never thirst." (John 6:32-35)

So that the miracle by which they had been fed the day before, was but a repetition of the miracle of giving the manna. "For the bread of God is He which comes down from heaven, and gives life unto the world." (John 6:33)

And then, to leave no possible doubt as to what he meant, Jesus added, "I am the bread of life: he that comes to me shall never hunger; and he that believes on me shall never thirst." (John 6:35)

Again: "He that believes on me has everlasting life. I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." (John 6:47-51)

Here was a plain statement that just as their fathers had eaten manna in the desert, and they had eaten bread in the desert, and they had eaten bread in the desert the day before, by which physical life had been preserved, so they were to eat of Christ, the living bread, which would give them spiritual life forever. But this was too much for them to believe. "The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" (John 6:52)

The same question is asked at this day. How is it possible that we can get righteousness and life, even the righteousness of God, and eternal life, just by believing on Christ? Jesus said that it is by eating Him. But that only makes it seem more absurd to unbelief.

If the Jews had not been so blinded by unbelief, they would have thought how they had eaten bread from Christ the day before, and that would have answered their question. And today he who doubts that one may eat of Jesus, and thereby get His life of everlasting righteousness, shows that he does not believe the record of the feeding of the five thousand.

Jesus did not in any degree modify what He had said, to accommodate their unbelief. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except you eat the flesh of theSon of man, and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoso eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, has eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, dwells in me, and I in him. As the living Father has sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eats me, even

he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven; not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eats of this bread shall live for ever." (John 6:53-58)

The Jews ate the manna in the wilderness, and if they had seen things by faith, they would at the same time have eaten of Christ, who was signified by that manna. Thus they would have received eternal life.

Now the Bread of Life was there in person before them. He had come down from heaven to give himself for the life of the world. Whosoever eats of Him shall have eternal life.

But though men might eat of the manna, and the natural bread that God gives them, without having any faith, no man can eat of the Bread of Life without faith; for it is by faith that Christ is eaten.

In this there is a lesson for all who come to the table of the Lord. The apostle Paul said, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (1 Corinthians 10:16)

Men may eat of the bread of the Lord's Supper without any faith, but in that case they do not eat of Christ. He can be received only by faith. And He may be eaten at any time and all the time, for the eating of the bread of the communion is only to symbolize the continual eating of Christ.

But Jesus did not leave this matter in doubt. He himself explained the figure which He used. He said: "It is the Spirit that quickens; the flesh profits nothing." (John 6:63)

"The flesh profits nothing." Suppose that it were possible for the priest to change the bread of the mass into the actual body of Christ, as it is claimed that he does; that would not amount to anything. Suppose that all men should eat of that bread; nay, more, suppose that Christ's physical body, as he was on the earth, had been divided up, and a piece given to every man, and that all had eaten it; that would have been to no profit. It is not physical meat that endures to everlasting life. The life is spiritual, and only spiritual food supplies it.

So it is not worthwhile to dispute as to whether or not the priest can transform the wafer into the body of Christ, since if he could, he would be doing nothing toward supplying the needs of men.

Christ is the Word. The Scriptures are from Him, and they are life. Their life is the life of God in Christ. Whosoever, therefore eats them, eats Christ. We eat them by believing them, and allowing them to work His own righteousness in our life. "Your words were found, and I did eat them; and your word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by your name, O Lord God of hosts." (Jeremiah 15:16)

Now the question will arise, "How it is possible that we can, by believing the words of Christ, receive righteousness and life?"

This is the very question that the Jews asked. No man can tell; we can only know the fact. He cannot so much as tell how the bread that we eat at our tables can become a part of our life. We know that it does so, and that satisfies us. No man was ever yet so foolish as to refuse to eat his breakfast because he could not know how it was going to give him renewed life.

He has proved that it does, and that is enough. That daily food comes direct from Christ. It is He that gives us all things to enjoy. "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy." (1 Timothy 6:17)

And as men eat the bread that comes from Him, and are refreshed, so He wants them to eat of His own body, by means of His words--the bread of everlasting life, that so their soul may be refreshed. This is the word that comes to us all: "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusts in Him!" (Psalm 34:8)--Present Truth, December 1, 1892--Timeline: IV-38 (Feeding the Five Thousand), 40 (Sermon on the Bread of Life)--John 6:5-63.

Chapter 212

To Make Him King

"When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take Him by force, to make Him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone." (John 6:15)

When the Jews sought to take Jesus by force and make Him King, He evaded them.

His kingdom was not of this world, and their momentary zeal to give Him political power sprang from their own corrupt and selfish interests.

As He was true to the principles of His kingdom and preached the Gospel of loyalty to God, they ended by crucifying Him.--Present Truth, December 10, 1896--Timeline: IV-39 (Jesus Walks on the Lake)--John 6:15.

Chapter 213

The Comfort of the "I Am"

"When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take Him by force, to make Him a king, He departed again into a mountain himself alone." (John 6:15)

This was immediately following the feeding of the multitude. By reading another record we learn that before He departed for the mountain He sent the disciples away, "constrained His disciples to get into the ship." (Matthew 14:22)

This word would imply that He was obliged to insist that they get into the ship. They did not want to do this, for they with the rest who desired to make Him king, wished to be with Him; and they, doubtless more than any of the others, desired this, for they knew His power better than the others did, and could not understand why He refused to use it in the ordinary way. "And when even was now come, His disciples went down into the sea, And entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them." (John 6:16-17)

That was a lonely time, but Jesus saw them thus from where He was, for we read that He saw them "toiling in rowing." (Mark 6:48) "And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew. So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they saw Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing near unto the ship; and they were afraid. But He said unto them, It is I; be not afraid." (John 6:18-20)

On reading this, one cannot help thinking of the last words of Christ as recorded in: "And Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go, therefore, and teach all nations. ... and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matthew 28:18-20)

Here in this Gospel commission, that all are familiar with, we have a command, the reason, and the consequence. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth, therefore go and do this work."

Who is this that presumes thus to speak? What mockery it would be in any ordinary person to make such a statement,--it would be simply making sport of us.

There is nothing more discouraging to a person who is losing heart, who feels helpless and weak, than to see somebody else go ahead and succeed when he cannot; and this discouragement is increased tenfold if that other, boastful in his strength, says, "It is easy enough for me; why don't you do it?" So the statement of Jesus, "I have all power in heaven and in earth,--I can do whatever I will, now you go and do the work;--if I can do it, you ought to," would in an ordinary man be mockery, and totally discouraging. But that is not the way He says it. He says, "Go and do this work, and, lo, I am with you."

Who is with us? I Am--that is His name. It is His name that goes with us. The name of the Lord, the strong tower, that name that is above every name, that name in which there is salvation, is with us; and that is what He said to the disciples that night when they were toiling and rowing. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runs into it, and is safe." (Proverbs 18:10) "Wherefore God also has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name." (Philippians 2:9) "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

Although they were out in the sea, twenty-five furlongs from either shore, they were not alone. Jesus was in the mountain praying, but He saw them. Then after a time they saw Him coming to them, and they were frightened; but He said to them, "Be not afraid; I Am." (John 6:20)

He announced His name, they received Him gladly, and immediately the remaining distance was covered; when He was in the boat with them, they had reached the end.

Receiving the End of Your Faith

Before He came into the boat, when they did not know of His presence, because they didn't see it,--and what our eyes cannot see we are, like the heathen, prone to forget,--they were toiling in rowing, wearing themselves out.

As soon as He came into the boat, they were at the end. Why? because He is the Beginning and the End, the Author and the Finisher, the Perfecter. So when we get to the very beginning of our work, lo, it is ended--that is, when we begin in Him.

That is the way it will be in this work of proclaiming the last Gospel message: when we think it has scarcely begun,--because there seems to be so great an amount before us still to do,--lo, the work will be finished, because He says He will cut short the work in righteousness , and as He is our righteousness136, He will cut short the work in himself. "For He will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth." (Romans 9:28) "In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is His name whereby He shall be called, The Lord Our Righteousness." (Jeremiah 23:6)

And here is something that should serve as a warning: While many are flattering themselves that by and by they will be ready to serve the Lord, ready to engage in the work,--and to engage in the work of the Lord is simply to serve Him,--before they know it, the work will be ended, and the opportunity forever gone.

When the disciples received Jesus willingly, gladly, into the ship, "immediately the ship was at the land where they went." (John 6:21)

The work was done. So when we gladly receive the Lord without any reservation, without any hesitation, then we will find that the work is done. That is what does the work. "Lo, I am with you," (Matthew 28:20) the One with all power in heaven and earth. Jesus walked on the sea. He had power over the earth, the waves, the winds, and the elements. That power came to Him from the Father. Why? Because: "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell;" (Colossians 1:19) because He did always the thing that pleased the Father, and the Father was pleased to be manifested in Him, and them He showed His power. When they received Him into the boat,--Him in whom is all fullness, all completion,--their work was completed. "And He that sent me is with me: the Father has not left me alone; for I do always those things that please Him." (John 8:29)

His Power Given to Us with Himself

The One who did this is the One who says, "Now go, and I am with you; my name is with you."

That name by which the poor man at the gate of the temple was healed: "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, arise and walk." (Acts 3:6)

What is the name? I Am. That name worked with the man, so that it was no more difficult for him to walk than it was for Christ. The presence of Christ came into the man and then he could walk. Jesus could walk where others could not. That man, practically without any legs, could walk when he took the name of Jesus. So when Jesus says, "I am with you," (Matthew 28:20) He does not mean along side of us, taunting us with an exhibition of His superiority over us, making us discouraged at the sight of what He can do. No; that name "I AM," identifies itself with us, and operates in us, and then is the saying fulfilled, "You are complete in Him." (Colossians 2:10)

How can we come into communication with that power? How can we be so conscious of it that we can let ourselves rest upon the name, and in the name? "All power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth." (Matthew 28:18)

Then you cannot get away from the power--you cannot go where the power of God is not. "Where shall I go from your Spirit? or where shall I flee from your presence?" (Psalm 139:7)

Where will man go that he will be beyond the presence of God's power? He cannot get off the earth, and the earth is full of the glory of the Lord. The earth is a standing memorial of the power of the Lord, and the heavens proclaim it. All speak the words, "I Am," and make known everlasting help and salvation.

Positive Terms

Mark well the words that Jesus uses. He says "I Am." There is no negative with Him. We very often put a negative with the I Am, that is, "I am not." But He does not does not do so.

Rachel would not be comforted for her children, because they were not,--didn't exist. That is our condition. We are not anything; we are less than nothing, and vanity. We are not sufficient.

Then comes One who is--I Am. I am not able to do the thing that I should,-but Jesus says, "I Am." There comes every time the reply,--I Am.

Our very word of complaint is a suggestion of victory, if we would only recognize it. In stating our lack of sufficiency, we begin with the very term which means success. "I am not able." We start in with I Am. If we leave off the "not," then we have the success. It is not we who are able; "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves [even] to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God; Who has made us able to be administrators of the new covenant." (2 Corinthians 3:5-6)

And thus out of the very depths we can step at once to the heights; out of our discouragement we can find courage; out of weakness we are made strong. So when we begin to say, "I am not," just stop: "Lo, I Am."

Christ is the positive truth,--I Am,--so we can leave off the negative, and there we can rest. When we say: "I am not able to bear the burden I am struggling under,--I feel that it is crushing me," Jesus says, "I Am." "My yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28)

Cast all your burden upon me--I am able. When we say: "I am not able to endure this contempt, this slight, this lack of appreciation, this being cut off and misunderstood,

Jesus says, "I AM." So whenever we may say of anything that needs to be done, "I am not able," then we may go back and cut off that negative, listening to Christ, "I Am able." "He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him." (Hebrews 7:25) "He is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." (Jude 1:24)

And the evidence of this, although we cannot see Him, is the power that we see all about us-in the heavens, and in the earth; yea, it is: "The power that works in us." (Ephesians 3:20)

- If we keep our mind on the presence of Christ;

- If we let Him impress our dull, stupid minds with the fact of His presence;

- If we will let Him write His law upon our hearts, and put it into our minds; then we can know what it is to have the strength of Him who said, " Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matthew 28:20) And His presence

will give us rest, no matter how hard the work may be.--Present Truth, August 8, 1901--Timeline: IV-39 (Jesus Walks on the Lake)--John 6:15-21.

Chapter 214

I Am (1897)

Jesus was walking on the stormy sea, coming to the aid of His disciples, whom He had seen "toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them; But they, when they saw Him walking on the sea, supposed that it was an apparition, and cried out; For they saw Him, and were troubled. But He straightway spoke with them, and said unto them, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid." (Mark 6:48-50,RV)

These were comforting words to the disciples, and they have comforted many disciples since that night on the sea; but the disciples at that time did not derive all the comfort from them they ought, "for their heart was hardened;" (Mark 6:52) and very few of the disciples since that day have seen in the words as they read them all that the Saviour really said.

The words rendered, "It is I," meant far more than a simple assurance that it was their Teacher, a real person, who was coming to them, and not an apparition. They included that, which was certainly reassuring; but if the hearts of the twelve had not been hardened, they would have found not merely relief from their childish fears, but eternal comfort; for the words that Jesus uttered, literally translated, were, "Be of good cheer; I am."

Here we see that Jesus identified himself with the "I Am" who sent Moses to deliver the children of Israel from Egypt. "I Am that I Am." (Exodus 3:14)

That expresses infinity of existence,--the One "who is, and was, and who is to come, the Almighty." (Revelation 1:8)

Of God alone can it be said that "He is." That means that He is the Source of all existence, for everything that exists, exists solely in Him. "I Am" is the power that creates and upholds. In Jesus is the name of God, "For in Him were all things created." (Colossians 1:16,RV)

The words that Jesus spoke that night on the sea, were used by Him several times, but only once do they appear in our translation, namely, in: "Before Abraham was, I am." (John 8:58)

But twice more in the same chapter He declares himself to be the "I am," and points us to the cross as proof of the fact. Thus: "When you have lifted up the Son of man, then shall you know that I am." (John 8:28)

From John 12, we know that the lifting up of Christ is His crucifixion: "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 12:32-33)

There is no salvation except by the cross of Christ; and the cross, as we have seen, is the proof that He is the "I Am," the Creator; therefore He said, "If you believe not that I am, you shall die in your sins." (John 8:24)

"I Am" signifies eternal power,--self-existent, independent power. It is the name of Him who is "from everlasting to everlasting," (Psalm 90:2) and who is the dwelling-place of all mankind,--the One in whom "we live, and move, and have our being." (Acts 17:28) "In His hand are the deep places of the earth; the strength ofthe hills is His also. The sea is His, and He made it; and His hands formed the dry land." (Psalm 95:4-5)

So when Jesus said to His disciples, "Be of good cheer; I am," (Mark 6:50) He really assured them that in Him was the power that made the sea, and that could therefore rule its raging, and that could save them, not only from momentary danger, but from eternal death.

In that name, "I am," there is everlasting strength. And it is all our hope. "He that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him." (Hebrews 11:6,RV)

To us, as well as to the disciples on the sea, He says, "Be of good cheer; I am."

He is always present, with all power in heaven and on earth. Simply believe that He is, and continue believing, and you have eternal salvation. "I am He that lives, and

was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death." (Revelation 1:18)

How boundless are those words, "I am." "He that has ears to hear, let him hear." (Mark 4:9) "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts," (Hebrews 3:15) as did the twelve, and thus lose the infinite comfort and strength that lies in the assurance, "I am." When in deep trouble or temptation, fix your mind upon the fact that He is. Listen to His voice saying, "I am," and let your soul be swallowed up in contemplation of it, and you will be lost to everything else. Trouble will be light as air, and temptation will lose its power. The tempter will flee from you.

What cannot one endure, who knows not only that Christ is near, but that His presence creates, upholds, and saves! Let Him be to you the "I am," and you will find that in Him you have everything that is. For, "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32)

Let this be your confidence, and soon you will "see Him as He is." (1 John 3:2)--Present Truth, April 7, 1898--Timeline: IV-39 (Jesus Walks on the Lake)--Mark 6:48-50.

Chapter 215

I Am (1900)

Jesus Walking on the Sea

It had been a busy day with Jesus. On receiving the news of the death of John the Baptist, He had gone by boat across the Sea of Galilee, to an uninhabited place, but was unable even there to find the solitude He desired, for as soon as the people heard of His departure, "they followed Him on foot out of the cities," (Matthew 14:13) and He had spent the day healing their sick. "When Jesus heard of it, He departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed Him on foot out of the cities." (Matthew 14:13)

There is, by the way, something most precious and at the same time most pathetic in this seeking of the multitudes after Jesus. What a blessed thing to be so filled with the attractiveness of God, that people are irresistibly drawn to one. "God was with Him," (Acts 10:38) and He had not to beg the people to come to hear Him speak words of life, that were more than sound.

Yet it is most pitiful to think that among all the multitudes that followed Jesus, there were none who loved Him for himself alone. Though surrounded by thousands, Jesus was always alone, for there were none, even of His most intimate disciples, who understood Him.

As the representative Man, He longed for human sympathy, and was helped by it whenever He found any of it; but with

Him it was all giving, and very little receiving. He spent no time, however, in self-pity, but was "moved with compassion," (Matthew 14:14) when He saw the needs of the people, "and He healed their sick." (Matthew 14:14)

That in itself would have been more than sufficient for a day's work, for the healing of every case was a drain upon His vitality: "And the whole multitude sought to touch Him: for there went virtue out of Him, and healed them all." (Luke 6:19) "And Jesus said, Somebody has touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me."

(Luke 8:46) "When the even was come, they brought unto Him many that were possessed with devils: and He cast out the spirits with His word, and healed all that were sick: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses." (Matthew 8:16-17)

But the thousands of people were in the desert place without food, and Jesus would not send them away hungry. He regarded them as His guests, since they had come out to see Him, and as a Son over His Father's house, He felt bound to fulfill all the duties of hospitality. "But Christ is faithful over God's house as Son." (Hebrews 3:6,ESV)

So He set to work to feed them all, drawing upon the treasures of His own life for the supply. No wonder then that, having sent His disciples and the multitude away, "He went up into a mountain apart to pray." (Matthew 14:23)

There was One who understood Him, and from whom He could receive comfort and encouragement and a renewal of strength. "And when the evening was come, He was there alone. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, distressed by the waves; for the wind was contrary." (Matthew 14:23-24)

Jesus was alone, and the disciples evidently thought that they were alone, for one record contains the words, "It was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them." (John 6:17)

This seems to indicate that the disciples felt a little nettled, to say the least, at the thought that Jesus had constrained them to leave Him, and to cross the sea alone. But they did not know Him. They were to learn that however lonely He might be, He never for a moment lost sight of the needs of others, in thinking upon His own condition. That night they were to receive a practical demonstration of the promise, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5)

They were to have an experience which in all their after lives would make them appreciate the reality of the words, "Lo, I am with you always." (Matthew 28:20) "In the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea." (Matthew 14:25)

But the disciples did not know Him. They had seen His power over the elements, yet since they had never seen the power manifested in that particular manner, they did not think that it could be a real person walking on the water.

They were still superstitious fishermen, and cried out in fear, that it was an apparition, a phantom. The very term that is used to designate the thing seen, condemns their foolish fear; for if it had been really only a phantom, an apparition, a creature of their own imagination, it would have been nothing to fear, since nobody can be injured by that which does not exist. Men in general, however, are more affected by the figments of their own imagination than by that which is real. Most people live in an unreal world.

Jesus however soon brought the disciples to a sense of the real, by saying, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid." (Matthew 14:27)

There is in these words a deeper meaning than appears on the surface as we have them translated. The translation is undoubtedly correct. "It is I;" but in the assurance of His presence there is the revelation of His universal presence; since the words, literally rendered, are: "Be of good cheer; I am; be not afraid."

The Greek words are identical with those used in: "Before Abraham was, I am." (John 8:56)

"I Am." That is His name. Everywhere and always, He is. He is the truth; and when we trace the word truth back to its ultimate root, we find that it signifies "that which is." "[He is] the first and the last, the beginning and the end." (Revelation 22:13) "[He is] the faithful and the true witness." (Revelation 3:14)

Take the words, "I am," as the name of Christ, and add as the complement to the sentence whatever good thing you desire and long for, and you have it. He is all that, and more; for: "[He] is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us." (Ephesians 3:20)

Yes, He is in us with all His Divine power; for: "The Word is near you, in your mouth, and in your heart." (Romans 10:8)

Jesus was in reality just as near the disciples when He was alone on the mountain praying, as when He got into the boat with them. So from this lesson we are to learn that He is always present. There is no trouble, no storm, so great that it frightens Him away.

Peter seized upon the words, "I am," and said, "Lord, if You are, bid me come unto You on the water." (Matthew 14:28)

Jesus said, "Come." (Matthew 14:29)

And in the strength of that word he went; but soon he forgot Jesus, and then he began to sink. He believed the words, "I am," that Jesus said of himself, but he did not continue in them. To us the exhortation is, "As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him: Rooted and built up in Him, and established in the faith." (Colossians 2:6-7)

Peter began to walk by faith in Jesus, but he began to look at the things that were seen, instead of the things that were unseen, and so he sank. The waves were to be seen round about him, and Jesus seemed to be at a distance. He could not see that Jesus was at his side, and round about him closer than the waves, but it was so. The cry, "Lord save me," (Matthew 14:30) found instant answer. Peter had not yet come to Jesus, for he was walking on the water to go to Jesus when he began to sink; but as soon as he cried out in his extreme need, Jesus stretched forth His hand and caught him. The intervening space was nothing, for Jesus was there, even though He seemed to be at a distance.

He who sometimes seems to us to be far off in the heavens, is so near that the shortest prayer uttered in sincerity finds immediate answer in our salvation.

It is worth noting, too, that there was no necessity for Peter to get out of the boat to go to Jesus. In a few minutes at most Jesus would have been in the boat with them; but Peter, with childish impulsiveness, could not wait. We need not lay it all to vanity; nor to the spoiled child's desire to "show off," although there may have been something of that element in the request.

But Peter loved the Lord, and his nature was as simple as that of a child, and his love was ardent and spontaneous. Moreover his request showed confidence in the Lord, and the heart of the Lord as well as the heart of every man, is touched by every

expression of confidence and trust. Jesus says, "Him that comes to me, I will in no wise cast out." (John 6:37)

No matter how mixed may be the motive, the heart of the Lord can never repel any indication of childish confidence. The Lord does not require certificates of good character, or enquire closely into the motives, before He receives anyone, but takes every request, every profession, at its face value; and even though the profession of faith be mingled with pride and self-love, He accepts it, that He may, by coming into closer relationship with the individual, be able to win him to a more sincere and more intelligent faith.

He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the dimly burning wick. "A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench: He shall bring forth judgment unto truth." (Isaiah 42:3; see also Matthew 12:20) What an incentive to confidence in God, that He has accepted us in the Beloved, even though we have been unworthy, and what an admonition concerning the tenderness which we should manifest toward the weak in faith, we find in this lesson. "Wherefore did you doubt?" (Matthew 14:31)

The meaning of the word doubt is, "to waver, to hesitate." "Faith ... works by love," (Galatians 5:6) "[and] perfect love casts out fear." (1 John 4:18)

Faith means confidence and boldness. The believing man does not fear. "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid." (Isaiah 12:2) "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea. Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." (Psalm 46:1-3)

We need not say, "If He is," but, since God is, we can do all things in Him. If we know that we are walking in Him, we can walk with boldness and our steps may be as firm on the raging billows as on the solid rock.

But we must not forget, nor be frightened by appearances. We must "hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." (Hebrews 3:14)

God is; His name and all His fullness is in Christ, in whom all things are, and: "As He is, so are we in this world." (1 John 4:17)

His existence is ours, so that all that He is, we may be. Therefore be not faithless, but believing, for: "He is faithful that promised." (Hebrews 10:23)--Present Truth, June 21, 1900--Timeline: IV-39 (Jesus Walks on the Lake)--Matthew 14:22-33.

Chapter 216

Wherefore Did You Doubt?

The Bible sets forth Jesus as: "Upholding all things by the word of His power." (Hebrews 1:3)

That word not only has power to uphold, but "is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." (Acts 20:32)

An instance of the upholding power of Christ's word is given in: "And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spoke unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered Him and said, Lord, if it be You, bid me come unto You on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O You of little faith, wherefore did You doubt? And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased." (Matthew 14:25-32)

The disciples were on the raging sea, when they were astonished by the appearance of Jesus walking on the water. When Jesus reassured them with, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid," (Matthew 14:27)

Peter said, "Lord, if it be You, bid me come unto You on the water. And He said unto him, Come." (Matthew 14:28-29)

Peter at once responded to the word "Come," and "walked on the water to go to Jesus." (Matthew 14:29)

Some might hastily suppose that it was the water that held Peter up; but a little reflection will show that it was not so. It is contrary to nature for water to hold a man up; and, moreover, we read that when Peter "saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning tosink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me." (Matthew 14:30)

Jesus caught him, saying, "O you of little faith, wherefore did you doubt?" (Matthew 14:31)

If it had been the water that was supporting him, he would not have begun to sink; for the water was just the same where he sunk as it was where he walked. So when we remember the words of Jesus, "Wherefore did you doubt?" (Matthew 14:31) we know that when Peter walked on the water, it was the word of Jesus that supported him. It was the word "Come" that brought him, and it was only when he distrusted that word that he began to go down.

The same word that held Peter on the top of the water, can hold a man up in the air. Elijah and Elisha were at one time walking along together when Elijah began to rise in the air. Why was it? Because the Lord had said to Elijah, "Come;" and since the prophet had always obeyed the word of the Lord, he obeyed that one also.

We read that: "By faith Enoch was translated." (Hebrews 11:5)

But, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:17)

So it was the word of the Lord that took Enoch as well as Elijah through the air to meet the Lord. But they were only forerunners of those who, being alive when the Lord descends "from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise," (1 Thessalonians 4:16) they shall be "caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." (1 Thessalonians 4:17)

What is it that will support those favored ones, and hold them up in the air? The same word that upheld Peter on the water. The Lord will say, "Come, you blessed of my Father." (Matthew 25:34)

Those who have been accustomed to obey the word of the Lord, will respond at once, and will be taken; while those who have not obeyed every word of the Lord, will not obey that one, and will be left.

Those who have neglected to take the word of the Lord as applying to them personally, will not accept that word, "Come," as applying to them. Only those who

recognize that every time the Lord speaks, He speaks to them, will be able to take that word to themselves.

The waiting ones will be those who have lived on the word of the Lord, so that at the word "Come," they will, as the most natural thing in the world, go to meet the Lord. Happy are they who know the sustaining power of the word, and to take it unto themselves.--Present Truth, January 23, 1896--Timeline: IV-39 (Jesus Walks on the Lake) --Matthew 14:25-32.

Chapter 217

Come

"And Peter answered Him and said, Lord, if it be You, bid me come unto You on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out ofthe ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus." (Matthew 14:28-29)

The greatest use that is made of the incident of which this is a partial record, is to moralize over Peter's subsequent failure. It is well to learn from it to look steadfastly to Jesus instead of to self and the dangers around us; but there is more than this that may be learned from the narrative.

In the first place, however, let us guard against the idea that it was pride or vainglory that prompted Peter's request that he might come to Jesus on the water. The request was evidently the impulse of Peter's warm heart.

It was quite natural that a feeling of vainglory might come over him when he found himself walking on the waves as on the solid earth; but there was no time for selfish calculation in the instant that Jesus was revealed to His disciples; and selfish calculation was not a part of Peter's disposition.

There was no real need for Peter to go to Jesus on the water. There was no material object to be gained by it. He wanted to be with the Lord, it is true; but the Lord was coming direct to the boat, and Peter could have been with Him in a minute or two at the most, by sitting still in the boat.

Yet it was not foolhardiness on the part of Peter, and the Lord did not reprove him for desiring to come. Why not?

Did you ever see a man coming home from his work in the evening, and then see a little way down the road a little form rush out of the gate and run to meet him? The child saw its father coming, and could not wait for him, but must run to meet him on the way. Would you try to reason with that child, and tell him that his action was wholly unnecessary? That the father could be with him in a moment if he could only wait? And

would you expect the father to reprove the child for his impatience to get with him? The child's eagerness is most refreshing to the weary father.

If you know anything about such a scene as this, and can appreciate it, then you can understand Peter's request to be allowed to meet Jesus, and why the Lord said, "Come." Peter's ardent love, that was impatient of delay, was most grateful to the Master.

What if there was no real need of Peter's coming? Love does not take account of such things. Such love as Peter's must not be discouraged by the slightest rebuff and the Lord on His part was too desirous of winning the confiding love of His children to say, "Nay," when one of them said, "Let me come."

With what fresh delight we can now read the gracious invitation. "Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

And how forcible are those other words, "Him that comes to me, I will in no wise cast out." (John 6:37)

So I am glad that the loving Lord said to Peter, "Come," and that there was power in that word to bring him, at a time when it was not specially necessary that he should come: for now I know that much more will He gladly receive me when I fly to Him for refuge from the sins that beset me.

The invitation has been given. His arms are stretched out for us; as soon as His love awakens a response in our own hearts, and we wish to be with Him, we are there, for His love draws us. "[Nothing can] separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:39)--Present Truth, January 10, 1895--Original title: Front Page--Timeline: IV-39 (Jesus Walks on the Lake)--Matthew 14:28-29.

Chapter 218

Wearing the Healing Garment

We read in Matthew 14:34-36 that Jesus, after feeding the five thousand in the desert place, crossed over the sea, and came into the land of Gennesaret,

"And when the men of that place had knowledge of Him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto Him all that were diseased, And besought Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment; and as many as touched were made perfectly whole." (Matthew 14:35-36)

That was not the only instance of healing by the touch of Christ's garment. When we read the record we cannot help exclaiming, if that was the result of only touching the hem of His garment, what must be the effect of putting on the Lord Jesus Christ? We are exhorted thus: "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof." (Romans 13:14)

Now we know that: "The Lord is that Spirit," (2 Corinthians 3:17) and that: "If we walk in the Spirit we shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." (Galatians 5:16)

Must it not be then, that He who has such "power over all flesh," (John 17:2) that He can save from all its lusts, can at the same time give complete deliverance from all its infirmities? Truly He will, if we but receive Him in intelligent faith; for He who forgives all iniquities also heals all diseases. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases." (Psalm 103:2-3)

It was well with those who only touched the hem of His garment; but let us not be content with that; let us be clothed with himself, His humility, His righteousness, assured that He will do for us "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." (Ephesians 3:20)

For every believing soul there is health and strength such as no one has ever yet dreamed of.--Present Truth, October 2, 1902--Original title: Back Page--Timeline: IV-39 (Jesus Walks on the Lake)--Matthew 14:34-36.

Chapter 219

The Miracle of the Harvest

Whoever plants a seed beneath the sod,
And waits to see it push away the clod,
He trusts in God.
--Edward Bulwer Lytton, Poem: The Kingdom of God.

Not consciously, perhaps, but yet he is reckoning on the operation of that Word of which the seed is the embodiment,

"Let the earth bring forth grass, herbs and fruit trees, each after its kind." (Genesis 1:11)

So the laborer who upturns the soil and prepares the earth for the reception of the seed, the farmer who casts the seed upon the ground, is, whether or not he recognizes and realizes the dignity of his calling, "[a] laborer together with God." (1 Corinthians 3:9)

This he virtually acknowledges when, having cast the seed into the earth, without further thought or care he sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed springs and grows up, "he knows not how." (Mark 4:27)

He can do nothing, yet he waits in confident expectation of the harvest. Those "laws of nature" which he trusts to multiply the seed and produce the harvest are but the Word of life working out its own fulfillment. Therefore, though he may not know it, he is really relying upon the Word of God, which not only bids the earth bring forth, but also declares that: "While the earth remains ... seed-time and harvest shall not cease." (Genesis 8:22)

Of the works of Jesus it has been truly said that "His miracles were parables."--A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke, Alfred Plummer, 1896, Section IV, par. 43. Not only did they meet and satisfy the need of those for whose immediate benefit they were wrought, but they were also demonstrations of eternal truth.

Thus, in the feeding of the five thousand, we have the demonstration of the truth and the facts that underlie the yearly miracle of the harvest,--the annual multiplication of the bread for the feeding of the multitude.

By doing immediately, before the eyes of the people, what He does constantly by a slower process, through the operations of nature, He taught them and us that it is by His personal working that the seed is multiplied, the yearly harvest given, and the world's hunger satisfied.

Yet even in this instance He did not dispense with human cooperation. He took the small store of loaves that the disciples brought to Him, just as He takes and uses the small quantity of seed that the farmer casts into the ground; and when He had multiplied it, the disciples took what He had produced and conveyed it to the people,--which is all that the farmer is doing when he gathers in his crops and disposes of them to the people.

"That You give them they gather." (Psalm 104:28)

That man needs to be constantly reminded of this fact is seen from the Lord's lament over His people in the 1st chapter of Isaiah: "The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib," (Isaiah 1:3)--even the animals know the hand that feeds them,--"but my people do not consider." (Isaiah 1:3)

Therefore He said of them again: "She did not know that I gave her corn and wine and oil." (Hosea 2:8) "Stand still, and consider the wondrous works God." (Job 37:14)

And learn that He is the One from whom every good and perfect gift comes down. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." (James 1:17)

But another and deeper lesson, yet so simple and unmistakable, was taught in the feeding of the five thousand, that henceforth men might more clearly discern it, not in the yearly harvest only, but in all that their eyes can see and their hands handle.

Whence came the bread that in the hands of Jesus grew before the eyes of the astonished multitude, and conveyed life to their frames? The life in it was identical with

the life contained in every seed, in every grain, in every loaf made from the grain,-the life of Him who alone is "the Life." (John 14:6)

He was feeding them with His own life, but no more so on that occasion than in all the lives before and after.

In order to convey His life to the people, so that they might feed upon Him, Christ clothed it with the visible form of bread. Thus the bread became His body, the life proceeding from Him, which took this shape that could be seen and handled and eaten by the people.

Yet this bread was no different in this respect from that upon which these same people were accustomed to feed, as proved by the words of Christ when He took the bread at the Passover supper and said of it, "This is my body." (Matthew 26:26)

All life proceeds from God, and all the varied forms in the earth are the body with which He has clothed himself that the life may be manifested and we may see it, and feed upon Him. To His life in all things, "God gives a body as it has pleased Him," (1 Corinthians 15:38) even as He gives "to every seed his own body." (1 Corinthians 15:38)

Yet how few "discern the Lord's body," (1 Corinthians 11:29) and how few behold their God in all the things in which He is revealing himself. Even those whom He fed with His body in the desert did not all discern it; for among them were those who shortly afterwards questioned, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" (John 6:52)

All through the summer months the personal presence of God, His everlasting power and divinity, has been working in the waving fields of grain, preparing for His life "a body as it has pleased Him," even as He gave it visible form to feed the people in the desert.

Let us then as we partake of that which His bounty has provided, "eat in faith," (Romans 14:23) "discerning the Lord's body." (1 Corinthians 11:29)

Thus will it be to us indeed, "spiritual meat." (1 Corinthians 10:3) "The bread of God is He that comes down from heaven, and gives life unto the world." (John 6:33)--

Present Truth, September 7, 1899--Timeline: IV-40 (Sermon on the Bread of Life)--John 6:33-52.

Chapter 220

Feeding Upon Christ

A friend asks what is meant by eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ, and wishes to know if it has any connection with the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper. In reply we would say that it evidently has the closest connection. Christ said: "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoso eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, has eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, dwells in me, and I in him." (John 6:53-56)

Now it is evident that no man can literally eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ, and this caused the unbelieving to choose to stumble. But Christ meant that by faith we should appropriate Him to ourselves, and thus live godly lives for Him, just as one lives physically by what he eats. Says Paul: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20)

So Christ continues: "As the living Father has sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eats me, even he shall live by me." (John 6:57)

It is by faith that we have that close communion with Christ which enables us to live as He himself would live; for "The just shall live by faith." (Romans 1:17)

The Lord's Supper is the visible manifestation of this faith which thus appropriates Christ. When Christ broke bread, He said, "This is my body, which is broken for you." (1 Corinthians 11:24)

Then He took the cup and said, "This cup is the new testament in my blood: for, as oft as you drink it, in remembrance of me." (1 Corinthians 11:25)

And Paul immediately adds: "For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup you do show the Lord's death." (1 Corinthians 11:26)

It is in the death of Christ, and our death and burial with Him, that we are united to Him. It is only in His broken body that we partake. And in partaking of the bread and the wine of the Lord's Supper, we are fulfilling John 6:53-57 as literally as it is possible for us to fulfill it.

Of course this is true only so far as the Lord's Supper is partaken of understandingly, and not as a mere form. He who partakes of it as a mere matter of form, not discerning with the eye of faith, the Lord's body, "eats and drinks damnation to himself." (1 Corinthians 11:29)

Such a person does not eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ, but eats and drinks simply bread and wine, and of course does not comply with the divine command.

Let no one, however, imagine that Christ's words in John 6:53-57 can be fulfilled only when the Lord's Supper is eaten. If the Christian is to live by Christ, and he can live in no other way, he must continually feed on Christ. A man cannot live a year, a month, or even a week without spiritual food anymore than he can live and grow physically without daily partaking of literal food.

The true Christian abides in Christ, and Christ abides in him; there is daily and hourly communion. He does not receive Christ on fixed or varying occasions, but Christ dwells in him; and so when he partakes of the Lord's Supper, he indicates outwardly that union which always exists, and by that act his union by faith is strengthened.

And thus living by Christ who lives by the Father, the Christian becomes "filled with all the fullness of God." (Ephesians 3:19)--Signs of the Times, September 2, 1886--Timeline: IV-40 (Sermon on the Bread of Life)--John 6:53-57.

Chapter 221

Obedience Better Than Sacrifice

An instance of the advantage of using the Revised Version of the Bible may be found in Mark 7:11-12, which is quoted in an article on another page of this number. Many people have read, "You say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever you might be profited by me; he shall be free. And you suffer him no more to do aught for his father or his mother." (Mark 7:11-12)

And have been puzzled by the inverted construction. But when we read the Revisions, all is clear: "You say, if a man shall say to his father or his mother, That wherewith you might have been profited by me is Corban, that is to say, Given to God; You no longer suffer him to do aught for his father or his mother." (Mark 7:11-12)

Now the meaning is clear. "Corban" is a Hebrew word meaning an offering, an oblation; and the Rabbis taught that if a man took the money that should have been used for the support of his parents, and devoted it to the temple service, it was a pious act, and he was free from any responsibility for them.

But Christ did not so regard it. The commandment says, "Honor your father and your mother." (Exodus 20:12)

And through His prophet the Lord has said, "To obey is better than sacrifice." (1 Samuel 15:22)

Sacrifice in unrighteousness is an abomination; and no amount of "work for the Lord" is a substitute for doing the simple duties of life.--Present Truth, January 30, 1902--Timeline: IV-42 (Contention about Tradition / Ceremonial)--Mark 7:11-12.