

THE GOSPEL OF ISAIAH

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Introduction

With the present number we conclude the series of lessons that have been conducted for the past six months with the story of creation as the basis.--See the book, *The Everlasting Gospel: God's Saving Power in the Things That Are Made*. It is designed to continue them, beginning with the next number, using the book of Isaiah as the basis.

Many companies of believers have been much blessed by the studies of the present lessons in their Sabbath schools, and it is hoped that even greater blessings may be experienced from the study of those which are to follow.

"Everything was done from the beginning, and there is nothing in the universe, physical, intellectual, moral, that is not in the first verse of the first chapter of the first book of the Bible."--Dr. Parker

These are true words. Think then what an unlimited field of study is presented in the whole of the 1st chapter. What a grand thing it would be to have a school with the story of creation as its entire curriculum. It was from such a school that He who spoke as never man spoke (John 7:46) was graduated.--Present Truth, December 22, 1898.

Chapter 1

Isaiah Called to Service

The prophet Isaiah began to see visions concerning Judah and Jerusalem in days of king Uzziah, and his work continued for some sixty years. It was in the last year of Uzziah's life that Isaiah saw the vision which is the subject of the present lesson.

Uzziah was the grandson of Joash. The latter, like his father; died a violent death, as did also his own son Amaziah. Both Amaziah and his son and successor, Uzziah, began to reign in the fear of God, but as the Lord prospered them, their hearts were lifted up. Amaziah worshipped false gods, and Uzziah became so full of pride and self-importance that he even forced his way into the sanctuary with the intention of burning incense. For this he was smitten with leprosy, and obliged to surrender the kingdom to his son Jotham.

Cleansing From Sin

In Isaiah's vision there was revealed to him the Lord upon His throne, exalted high, surrounded by angels and worshipped by the seraphim. As these declared the holiness of the Lord, a sense of his own sinfulness overwhelmed the prophet and he cried, "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)

But God never makes known His holiness with the object of inducing despair in men. High and lifted up as He is, His holiness and power are equalled by His love for men, and He bids them. "Sing unto the Lord, all you saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness." (Psalm 30:4)

In His love, He bestows His holiness freely upon sinful men, hence the infinite measure of His holiness only makes known the fullness of His unspeakable gift. In quick response to the prophet's sense of need, an angel flies to him with a live coal from off the altar, and as it was laid upon Isaiah's mouth, the comforting assurance was given, "Lo, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged." (Isaiah 6:7)

A Throne of Grace

The blasphemous pride of King Uzziah in presumptuously approaching that altar had merited and found swift and awful punishment; but for Isaiah's humble confession of guilt it had no terrors. The sinful and helpless, who can only plead their sad necessity, may come with boldness to the throne of grace, and find there plenteous redemption. The broken and contrite heart may be despised among men, but it is honored in heaven. God has respect unto the lowly. His answer to every confession of wrongdoing is, as it was to Isaiah, "your iniquity is taken away." (Isaiah 6:7)

Whom Shall We Send?

Then follows the next step. Isaiah dwelt among an unclean people. God cared for them as much as He did for Isaiah. Who should go forth and tell them of the cleansing that was so freely given, and so easily obtained? The angels could not do it, for they did not know the defilement and the burden of sin. The messengers must be chosen among men redeemed, and Isaiah, who knew both the disease and the healing, offered himself for the work, saying, "Here am I; send me." (Isaiah 6:8)

A Warning Message

Just as quickly as the cleansing of sin followed upon the confession of it, did the commission to declare the Gospel follow upon the offer of service. "And He said, Go," (Isaiah 6:9)

The words of the message were put into his mouth. It reads like a message full of discouragement at first sight. "Tell this people, Hear indeed, but understand not; and see indeed, but perceive not." (Isaiah 6:9)

The cause also was to be made known. "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." (Acts 28:27; Isaiah 6:10)

Although the words hardly seem like a message of good tidings, they were so in reality for all who would hear, since they made known the flimsy character of the

barrier that kept the people from forgiveness and healing. If only Judah would use their senses, hear with their ears, see with their eyes, and understand with their hearts, the result would be that they "should be converted, and I should heal them." (Acts 28:27)

The Glory of the Lord God did not require great things of His people that they might be saved. If He had asked them to hear without ears, or see without eyes, they might have complained that His conditions were hard, but these faculties had already been given and God simply asked that they should be used.

It was necessary to use their members for the maintenance of their physical life. Food grew around them in abundance, but they needed to see it and gather it with their hands before it could give them life. So all about them, as the seraphs sang, the whole earth was full of the glory of God, or the fullness of the whole earth was His glory. (See Isaiah 6:3, margin of Revised Version)

Had their ears been open to hear what God said to them, by His servants and His works, their eyes been willing to see in the wonders of nature the living presence and continual working of their Creator, they would have gladly recognized in every ministration of earth and sea and air, supplying their wants, that they were made partakers of the Divine life, and thus have been turned from idols to serve the living God.

Like the Beasts that Perish

The same lesson is for us today. The difficulty that hindered Judah then, prevented their children from acknowledging the Messiah, and Paul told the Jews at Rome that the Holy Ghost had spoken truth by Isaiah, when it declared the real nature of the obstacle that kept them from being saved.

Fuller than the beasts that perish, men receive the life of God through the channels by which it is conveyed, caring only for the food and raiment after which the heathen seek, and forgetting that these are added to a far more precious gift, the righteousness of God. "Therefore take no thought, 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 the

kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."
(Matthew 6:31-33)

In the life of God that is bestowed so freely upon men, "filling their hearts with food and gladness," (Acts 14:17) are given "all things that pertain unto life and godliness." (2 Peter 1:3)

But it is true of the multitudes now as it was in the time of Isaiah: "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)

How Long?

The Divine ambition is to see men happy. God's rejoicing is in the welfare of His children, and He desires that men shall acknowledge His love in the abundance of His gifts. If they will not do so, before He allows himself to be finally rejected, and the way of death irrevocably chosen by His creatures, He gives opportunity to learn the value of His gifts by their withdrawal. Some, when the judgments of the Lord are in the earth, will learn righteousness: "When your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." (Isaiah 26:9)

And so, although God does not willingly afflict nor grieve the children of men, (Lamentations 3:33) this is often the only chance of saving them. It was so with Judah. To Isaiah's question, how long it should be before the people should be willing to see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and thus be healed, the reply was given, "Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate." (Isaiah 6:11)

Yet the promise was given that a remnant should return, and that like a tree which has life in its trunk, even though all outer sign of life, in leaves and branches, has disappeared, the holy seed should be the substance of the nation. This seed was not holy by its own merits but would consist of all who should submit themselves to the righteousness of God, and not attempt, in ignorance of God and His righteousness, to establish their own righteousness. (Romans 10:3)

The Gospel of Isaiah

Isaiah had marvellous revelations of God's character. His writings present so much of the work of Christ that they are often spoken of, and truly so, as:

The Gospel according to Isaiah

For this reason, many who are counted wise and learned, but who know not the Scriptures nor the power of God, have declared it impossible that a man living so many hundred years before Christ, could have been so enlightened on the subject of the Saviour's work and teaching. To all such the warning of Isaiah comes, that they should open their eyes and ears, and learn to discern, where they see now only common things and human power, the glory of God filling all the earth. This glory of God, whom the seraphim acclaimed as, "Holy, holy, holy!" (Isaiah 6:3) when seen and received by faith, works in the beholder the fulfillment of the Divine command, "Be holy, for I am holy." (1 Peter 1:16; Leviticus 11:44-45)--Present Truth, October 13, 1898--This article was not part of the series on Isaiah, but is included because it fits well into this collection.--Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons, October 23--Isaiah 6:1-13.

Chapter 2

The Prophetic Setting

Since we begin in this number of the paper some studies in Isaiah, it is fitting that before we begin them we should consider the place which the prophecy of Isaiah occupies in Scripture, its relation to us, and its right to be called the Gospel of Isaiah. This last item, however, will appear from the prophecy itself as we proceed in our study.

In this matter, as with everything else, we must go back to the beginning if we would get the proper understanding of it. We know the fact that in the beginning God gave man dominion over all the earth: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. 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 1:26-28)

It was the presence of God in man that gave him the authority.

It was God working in him "both to will and to do of His good pleasure."
(Philippians 2:13)

And it pleased God to rule the earth through man. Yes, it is true of the first Adam, as well as of the second, that "It pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell," (Colossians 1:19) for he was the son of God. "Which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God." (Luke 3:38)

This is evident from the fact that it is in Christ as Man, the Man Christ Jesus, that all fullness dwells, and that we are made full in Him. "For 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) "Of His fullness have we all received," (John 1:16) "that we may be filled with all the fullness of God." (Ephesians 3:19)

Man rejected the word of the Lord, and thus lost his dominion. In sinning, he lost the crown of glory and honor. But even in announcing to man the consequences of his fall, God made promise of the Seed through whom all things should be restored and in making known to Abraham the fact that the Seed in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed should be his, God made promise to him "that he should be the heir of the world." (Romans 4:13)

Not in Abraham's lifetime, however, was this promise to be fulfilled. "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." (Acts 7:5)

Nevertheless Abraham died in faith, for he well understood that it was only through the resurrection from the dead that he was to receive the inheritance. In making the covenant with him, God had said, "Know of a surety that your seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge; and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come here again; for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." (Genesis 15:13-16)

But when God made promise to Abraham, "[He,] willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: 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 of the hope set before us." (Hebrews 6:17-18)

That oath was this: "By myself have I sworn, says the Lord, for because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son; That in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." (Genesis 22:16-18)

Taking these texts all together, we see that the promise and the oath are for our sakes. We have the same interest in them that Abraham had. In fact the oath was altogether for our sakes. We see also, as already noted, that the promise was to be

fulfilled only through the resurrection; and the resurrection is promised in the words, "your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies." (Genesis 22:17)

The seed is Christ and all who are His: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He said not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to your seed, which is Christ. ... And if you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:16,29)

And, "The last enemy that shall he destroyed is death." (1 Corinthians 15:26)

The promise that God confirmed to Abraham with an oath was that in the fourth generation, after four hundred years, his posterity should come into the land, and possess it. And this meant that Abraham himself should also inherit it, for the posterity cannot come into inheritance before the father does.

Now we are told that when Moses was born, as the people grew and multiplied in Egypt, "The time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham." (Acts 7:17)

Therefore we know of a surety that when God sent Moses to bring His people out of the house of bondage, the time had come when "The kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven [should] be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom." (Daniel 7:27)

And this is further corroborated by the inspired words of Moses after crossing the Red Sea: "You shall bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of your inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which You have made for You to dwell in, in the sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established. The Lord shall reign for ever and ever." (Exodus 15:17-18)

But although "There failed not anything of any good thing which the Lord had spoken to the house of Israel; all came to pass;" (Joshua 21:45) "[The people] in their hearts turned back again into Egypt." (Acts 7:39) "Yea, they despised the pleasant land, they believed not His word; But murmured in their tents, and hearkened not unto the voice of the Lord." (Psalm 106:24-25) "So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief." (Hebrews 3:19)

Nevertheless, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9)

Therefore, "Again He limits a certain day, saying in David, Today, after so long a time; as it is said, Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." (Hebrews 4:7)

No man has any more time than today; but the Lord promised Abraham that days of repentance should be lengthened out to four hundred years. Even that, however, was slighted, and since it must be that some accept the promise and enter into the promised land, God kept on saying, "Today," even after the expiration of the first time.

It was not until the refusal of the children of Israel to accept the freedom to which the Lord had called them had been marked by their being carried away to Babylon, that God set another time for the deliverance of His people. When they went to Babylon, God told them that in seventy years He would deliver them; and so He did.

Yet they did not get free from Babylon any more than they had from Egypt, and in view of this God again extended the time, marking off a very long period, which is also now in the past.

But before the Babylonian captivity the only time that had ever been set was the four hundred years concerning which God had sworn to Abraham. At any time up to the Babylonian captivity the people might, by repentance and faith, have entered into the promised inheritance.

They were living under exactly the same conditions that we are: they were living in the time of the end, the longest prophetic period having been completed. The only thing that hindered the coming of the Lord and the restoration of all things, was their lack of preparation because of unbelief.

It was in this time of waiting that Isaiah prophesied. His was the message of the everlasting Gospel, saying, "Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His

Judgment is come; and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." (Revelation 14:7)

Therefore since the conditions were the same then as now, and the thing that was impending was the same, it follows that the prophecy of Isaiah is spoken as directly to us as if the prophet were living today, and his words were now uttered for the first time.

There is no portion of the Bible that is more full of the living Gospel, and that is more important to be understood, than the prophecy of Isaiah. A clear grasp of the facts outlined in this article will enable us to appreciate the study of the book at every step.

The times are prophets now;
They preach impending doom;
Let each, repentant, bow,
And saints prepare for home.
We wait for Jesus from the skies;
Soon shall His glories greet our eyes.
--Joseph A. Seiss, A Song of the Blessed Hope, 1878.

--Present Truth, December 29, 1898--Original title: The Call of Abraham. The Time of the Promise.

Chapter 3

Smiting and Healing

"The vision of Isaiah the son of Amos, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem; in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, kings of Judah: Hear, O you heavens; and give ear, O earth, For it is Jehovah that speaks. I have nourished children, and brought them up, And even they have revolted from me. The ox knows his possessor; And the ass the crib of his lord; But Israel knows not me: Neither do my people consider. Ah sinful nation! a people laden with iniquity! A race of evil doers! children degenerate! They have forsaken Jehovah; They have rejected with disdain the Holy One of Israel; They are estranged from Him; they have turned their back upon Him. On what part will you smite again, will you add correction? The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint; From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness therein; It is wound, and bruise, and putrefying sore; It has not been pressed, neither has it been bound; Neither has it been softened with ointment. Your country is desolate, your cities are burnt with fire; Your land, before your eyes strangers devour it; And it is become desolate, as if destroyed by an inundation. And the daughter of Zion is left, as a shed in a vineyard; As a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a city taken by a siege." (Isaiah 1:1-8,Lowth)

Inasmuch as everybody has the Bible in the so-called Authorized Version, and can refer to it at pleasure, and very many have the Revised also, it has been thought best in the present study to give the readers the benefit of another translation. The one chosen has been that of Bishop Lowth, which is without doubt, as a whole, the best English translation of the prophecy of Isaiah.

Accordingly we shall print the text of this, as above, and shall in the notes give the student the benefit of any other translations that serve to make any portion of the text more striking. This statement of the case will serve for the regular reader, so that it will not need to be repeated.

Let everyone who proposes to derive lasting benefit from these studies of the Gospel according to Isaiah, give heed to the following counsel: First of all study the text carefully. How? Read it again and again, taking special pains to find out exactly what it says. Note the dependence of every verse and sentence upon that which precedes.

Nobody in the world can tell you anything that is true concerning the text, that is not found in the text itself; and if you give heed, you can tell what the Lord says as well as anybody; for He uses the language of the common people.

The notes that follow are only designed to fix your attention more sharply on what is contained in the text, and to help you to retain it by associating it with other familiar portions of Scripture. You will see that nothing is introduced that is not contained in the text of the lesson, and will thus learn how rich is the Word of God.

The Lord Speaks

"Hear, O you heavens, and give ear, O earth." (Isaiah 1:2)

Why? Because the Lord has spoken. When the Lord speaks, it is the time for everyone in heaven and earth to keep silence. "The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him." (Habakkuk 2:20) "Job answered the Lord and said, Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer You? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer; yea, twice; but I will proceed no further." (Job 40:3-5)

The importance of keeping still when the Lord speaks cannot be too strongly emphasized.

When one of the great men of earth speaks on a subject of which he is supposed to be master, most people have the good sense to give attention, esteeming it a privilege to be permitted to hear; and even though they do not fully agree with all he says, they are modest about expressing their opinion.

But few have any scruples about answering back when the Lord speaks. Almost everybody considers himself competent to be a critic of the Bible. But if we would always keep silence before the Lord, not even in our inmost hearts uttering a word, but allowing God to give us His thoughts, we should find not only life but sound wisdom as well; for the word of God is life, and: "The Lord gives wisdom; out of His mouth comes knowledge and understanding." (Proverbs 2:6)

But there is a special force in calling upon the heavens and the earth as witnesses when the rebellion of men is mentioned; for they have never transgressed God's will. The earth is obedient to the voice of God, and has been ever since He said, "Let the earth bring forth grass." (Genesis 1:11) "For ever, O Lord, your word is settled in heaven. Your faithfulness is unto all generations; You have established the earth, and it abides. They abide this day according to your ordinances; for all things are your servants." (Psalm 119:89-91)

Two other instances where the Lord calls upon the heavens and the earth to witness the apostasy of the people are: "Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be very desolate, says the Lord. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." (Jeremiah 2:12-13) "Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass: Because I will publish the name of the Lord: ascribe greatness unto our God." (Deuteronomy 32:1-3)

Beasts Wiser Than Children

Now notice the contrast brought to view in Isaiah 1, verses 2 and 3. In the original the contrast is very marked,--children as against dumb brutes. "Children have I made great and exalted, and even they have rebelled against me." (Isaiah 1:2)

So much for children, while the ox and the ass recognize their master. The ox and the ass give more respect to their possessor than children to their Father. What a striking contrast.

Whom do the ox and the ass recognize as their lord and master? The answer is easy; it is the one who feeds them. The ass knows the crib of his lord. He knows where he finds his sustenance. And the beasts show their recognition of their owner by bending their necks to the burden which the master lays upon them. They give service to the one from whom they receive their support.

Does someone say that this does not require very much discernment on the part of the beasts? Then what shall be said of the children whom God has nourished? If the

recognition of a master is so simple a thing that even a beast is not considered as specially worthy of credit for submitting to the hand that feeds him, what language can express the stupidity of men who do not know the Lord, "who gives us richly all things to enjoy?" (1 Timothy 6:17) "[even] life, and breath, and all things." (Acts 17:25)

Remember that man was made to be the lord of the brute, and as such is designed to be infinitely above the brute in knowledge. What excuse can be made for him then, when he is ignorant of that which the slowest witted of beasts know perfectly well?

To know God is the easiest thing in the world. If it were not, there would be some who would have excuse for not knowing Him. But all are "without excuse," (Romans 1:20; 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) for everything reveals Him. One does not need to be a philosopher, in order to know God. All that is required is that one have as much knowledge as an ox or an ass, to recognize the simplest facts. Continually to recognize the One who feeds us, is all that is needful to make one a Christian. One does not need to theorize; the Gospel is not a theory, but a fact. Simply to believe things that are, is all that is wanted. "He that comes to God must believe that He is." (Hebrews 11:6)

And the evidence that He is, is seen in the gift of our daily bread. Everybody can easily see that he does not feed himself. The ox and the ass know that. All our living comes from without ourselves, and we do not make it. Now in order that no one can have any chance to cavil, and say, "How can I know the name of the one who does provide this food?" we may say, "All that you are required to do is to recognize the Creator." "Worship [the One] who made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." (Revelation 14:7)

When we do this, it will be easy to see that the One who gives us life has a right to the management of that life, and our duty is done. "Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach you." (Job 12:1)

Someone may be inclined to say that the portion of Scripture allotted to this lesson is not very comforting, since it is all reproof. Well, it is true that the necessities of the case have forced us to take only a broken fragment of the message, but it is not without comfort, even if it is reproof. It is a reproof addressed to children, and the Lord says, "

My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of His correction; For whom the Lord loves He chastens; even as a father the son in whom he delights." (Proverbs 3:11-12)

The Holy Spirit, whose special office is that of Comforter, is first of all a Reprover of sin. "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) "The commandment is a lamp, and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life." (Proverbs 6:23)

Laden with Iniquity

"Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity." (Isaiah 1:4)

Shall we cringe and cower before the Lord because He addresses us in that manner? Not by any means; for we hear the call of the Saviour: "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." (Matthew 11:28-29)

"Take my yoke upon you," says the Lord. Certainly. The ox and the ass submit to the yoke of the one who feeds them; why should not we? And they bear heavy burdens for their masters; but our Master calls us to come to Him, that He may relieve us of our burdens.

We are "laden with iniquity." Why? Because we have departed from Him. His yoke is easy, and His burden is light. Only when we "have gone away backward" do we find hard labor and heavy burdens. What a blessed service it is, that gives rest from labor!

Sin Punishes

"Why will you be still stricken, that you revolt more and more?" (Isaiah 1:5)

When the ox and the ass are rebellious and refuse to bear the burden placed upon them by their lord, or when they turn aside out of the way, what do they bring upon themselves? The rod of correction, of course. Even so it is with us, when we depart from the way. But bear in mind that the strokes that come are not given arbitrarily. Departing from the way of life is in itself death. So the offense brings its own punishment. "For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord; They would none of my counsel; they despised all my reproof. Therefore they shall eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them." (Proverbs 1:29-32)

They that sin are treasuring up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath: "But after your hardness and impenitent heart treasure up unto yourself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." (Romans 2:5) "His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate." (Psalm 7:16)

Full of Disease

"From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness [in the body because of the sin that has been committed;] but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores." (Isaiah 1:6)

That is the result of refusing to hear the words of the Lord, which "are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh." (Proverbs 4:22)

Nothing is more sure than that there is the closest connection between sin and disease. Disease is only the working of death; and death came into the world with sin. "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)

But for sin, there would be no disease in the world. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." (Romans 10:17)

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

That is, men can live by the words of the Lord. It is a fact that we have no life except that which the Lord gives us. This everybody must admit. And it is also a fact that the Lord's life is perfect and eternal. There is no life but the life of the Lord, therefore the life which the Lord gives us is a perfect life.

Then is it not, to say the least, as easy for the Lord to give us perfect health as to have us suffering from all manner of disease? Certainly, and far easier; for the Lord cannot give us any other life than that which is perfect. Why then do we suffer disease? Simply because "[we] have all gone out of the way," (Romans 3:12) and have departed from the Lord. We have rejected His words, which are Spirit and life. It is not the Lord who sends us disease, but disease comes as the result of rejecting or neglecting the word of the Lord. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." (Hosea 4:6)

Read Psalm 38:1-8 to find a parallel to Isaiah 1:4-6. "O Lord, rebuke me not in your wrath: neither chasten me in your hot displeasure. For your arrows stick fast in me, and your hand presses me sore. There is no soundness in my flesh because of your anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. For my iniquities are gone over my head: as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness. I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease: and there is nosoundness in my flesh. I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart." (Psalm 38:1-8)

Notice how often in the Bible disease of body is named as a result of departing from the Lord. When men shall have wholly rejected the Spirit and Word of the Lord, the first manifestation of it will be a plague of "a noisome and grievous sore" (Revelation 16:2) upon them. And the plague that appears in the body of a man, will be only the working out of "the plague of his own heart." (1 Kings 8:38)

Read Luke 7:50 and 8:48, noting the margin of the Revision: "And He said unto the woman, Your faith has saved you; go in peace." (Luke 7:50,RV) "And He said unto her, Daughter, your faith has made you whole [margin: "saved you"]; go in peace." (Luke 8:48,RV,margin)

There we see that Jesus used the same words to the one whose sins He forgives as to the one whom He healed of a grievous disease. "Your faith has saved you," is the

same as "Your faith has made you whole." Salvation is simply the work of making whole.

When Jesus on the Sabbath day healed the lame man at the pool of Bethesda, He made him "whole." Afterward when He found the man in the temple, He said to him, "Behold, you are made whole; sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you." (John 5:14)

This shows us that:

1. The man's disease had been the result of personal sin;
2. Jesus in healing his disease had saved him from the sin, even as He did the paralytic. (See Matthew 9:2-6)

"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) "From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it." (Isaiah 1:6)

That is our condition apart from the Lord. But when the lame man at the gate Beautiful was healed by the name of Jesus of Nazareth, Peter said to the people who gathered round, "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)

That man was not only healed in body, but saved as to his soul, for all the prophets gave witness "that through His name whosoever believes in Him shall receive remission of sins." (Acts 10:43)

Moreover when Peter talked of the case the next day before the judges, he declared that the man stood there whole in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, in whom alone there is salvation, thus identifying the healing of the body with salvation.

One thing more we must not omit in the consideration of this lesson. Note the horrible condition brought to view in Isaiah 1:56. Remember that disease is but the outward physical manifestation of sin. It is not always the result of our own personal

sin, but that makes no difference; if we are not responsible for it, we may be sure that God will save us from it, since He saves us from the result of our rebellion.

The fact which we wish to keep in mind is that disease is but the working of death, which is the fruit of sin. Now a body that is full of wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores is not by any means a pleasant object to look at. It is, indeed, most disgusting. Now remember that, no matter how fair one's person may be to the sight of man, if the heart is corrupt that person looks to God just as he would to us if covered with loathsome ulcers. "The Lord sees not as man sees; for man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7)

Remember also that this fearful condition of body is but the result of departing from the Lord and lading ourselves with iniquity. Then read the blessed Gospel according to Isaiah: "Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. ... But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. 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 53:4-6)

If we are laden with iniquity, and covered with sores and bruises, we but share the lot of the Lord. We put it that way, although the fact is that He shares our lot. He takes our burden of sin and our sicknesses. What for? In order that we may be freed from it all.

His sores heal our sores. How so? Because His sores are our sores. "What? are the sores that He has my sores?"

Yes, certainly. "Why, then I do not have them anymore."

No; they are all upon Him. Let Him keep them then, for: "He will swallow up death in victory." (Isaiah 25:8)

Wonderful Physician, who heals our diseases by His own; but so it is, and so let it be.--Present Truth, December 29, 1898--Isaiah 1:1-9.

Chapter 4

The Great Case at Law

"Had not Jehovah God of Hosts left us a remnant, We had soon become as Sodom; We had been like unto Gomorrah. Hear the word of Jehovah, O you princes of Sodom! Give ear to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah! What have I to do with the multitude of your sacrifices? says Jehovah; I am cloyed with the burnt-offerings of rams, And the fat of fed beasts; And in the blood of bullocks, and of lambs, and of goats, I have no delight. When you come to appear before me, Who has required this at your hands? Tread my courts no more; bring no more vain oblation; Incense! It is an abomination unto me. The new moon, and the Sabbath, and the assembly proclaimed. I cannot endure; the fast, and the day of restraint. Your months and your solemnities, my soul hates; They are a burden upon me; I am weary of hearing them. When you spread forth your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; Even when you multiply prayer; I will not hear; For your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove far away the evil of your doings from before my eyes; Cease to do evil; learn to do well; Seek judgment; amend that which is corrupted; Do justice to the fatherless; defend the cause of the widow. Come on now, and let us plead together, says Jehovah; Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; Though they be red like crimson, they shall be like wool. If you shall be willing and obedient, You shall feed on the good of the land; But if you refuse, and be rebellious, You shall be food for the sword of the enemy; For the mouth of Jehovah has pronounced it." (Isaiah 1:9-20,Lowth)

Whoever would get the full benefit of these verses must not fail to read them in connection with the verses that precede, which were quoted in the last week's lesson. In studying these it will be necessary to make frequent reference to them.

The Remnant

"Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah." (Isaiah 1:9)

They were utterly destroyed. But, "Though the number of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved." (Romans 9:27)

Because it is written, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible 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." (Malachi 4:5-6)

Or, as the words really signify, "lest I come and smite the earth with utter destruction." Thus we see that this prophecy of Isaiah, which we are studying, has special reference to the last days. The remnant is the last, and the words describe the condition just before the coming of the Lord, when iniquity will abound, and the love of many will wax cold: "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." (Matthew 24:12)

When faith will be so scarce in the earth that one must enquire for it: "Nevertheless when the Son of man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8)

And when even the professed church will be very like the heathen. Compare the following: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." (2 Timothy 3:1-5) "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." (Romans 1:28-32)

So full of wickedness does the church become, that the Lord addresses it as Sodom and Gomorrah. "Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah." (Isaiah 1:10)

Let the reader pay special heed to this fact, for it is not cited for the purpose of accusation, but of emphasizing the mercy of God, of which we come to speak.

Vain Worship

Compare Isaiah 1:11-15 with Amos 5:21-24: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? says the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When you come to appear before me, who has required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when you spread forth your hands, I will hide my eyes from you: yea, when you make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood." (Isaiah 1:11-15) "I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though you offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take away from me the noise of your songs; for I will not hear the melody of your viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream." (Amos 5:21-24)

Although we are exhorted not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, religion does not by any means consist in going to meeting. There are times when all religious services are an abomination to the Lord. Singing is called noise, and prayer is disgusting to Him.

Yet let no one think that this means that there is ever a time when the Lord refuses to listen to a sinner's plea for pardon, on the ground that he is too sinful to be forgiven. Far from it; this portion of Scripture which we are studying teaches us exactly the opposite.

But the Lord cannot be deceived with honied phrases that mean nothing. Flattery does not tickle His ear. The double-minded man--who does not know his own mind, but the one who wants the evil even while asking the good--receives nothing from the Lord. Hypocrisy is detestable.

The self-righteous Pharisees, whose lives were outwardly models of propriety, but who were hypocrites, were objects of the Lord's most scathing rebukes, while He most tenderly drew to himself the publicans and harlots, whose lives were one mass of guilt, and who sincerely longed for something better.

Useless Prayers

"When you spread forth your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; yea, when you make many prayers, I will not hear." (Isaiah 1:15)

What a terrible statement that is! Yet it need not discourage a single soul. Not one who asks pardon of the Lord will ever be turned away. The Lord calls all to come, and He says, "Him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out." (John 6:37) "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Revelation 22:17)

But the Lord does not like to look upon blood, that is, upon bloody deeds; and when men stretch out their bloody hands to Him, offering Him wickedness as if it were righteousness, He cannot but turn away His eyes. That is not real praying, but simply the making of prayers.

To "say a prayer" is vastly different from praying. One man may say a prayer that somebody else has prepared for him, and put into his mouth, or which he himself has devised and learned so that he can repeat it from memory, but that is not praying. Nobody in the world is so ignorant that he does not know how to pray acceptably to the Lord. The man who depends upon somebody else to make a prayer for him, would not be praying if he should repeat it a thousand times a day.

Prayer is simply the asking for what one wants. Prayer to God must of course be the asking for goodness, since He has nothing else to give. Now if a person wants a thing, he knows that he wants it, and then it is as simple a thing to ask for it, as it is for a child to ask for a piece of bread when it is hungry. No one who is hungry needs to have somebody tell him how to ask for something to eat; even so whoever hungers and thirsts after righteousness knows how to ask for it successfully better than anybody can tell him.

No true parent ever refuses to give his child food when it is hungry; but there is not another in the world who would not very often let a child's request for food go unheeded if it were in the habit of coming to her many times a day, regardless of whether it were hungry or not, and formally reciting to her a request for something to eat. She would regard the condition of its stomach, rather than its words.

Verse 12 is thus rendered in the Danish and Swedish: "When you come to be seen before my face, who has required this of you, that you should trample upon my courts?" (Isaiah 1:12)

The last part of the 13th verse is by these and other versions rendered, "I cannot endure unrighteousness and a festival." (Isaiah 1:13)

Thus does the Lord make emphatic His desire for sincerity. The man who would cover his sins with a cloak of piety, multiplying religious forms in order to divert attention from his wicked deeds is loathsome to the Lord, while the vilest sinner who desires freedom from his wicked ways, is the object of the Lord's tenderest love.

Sacrifices of Righteousness

"Bring no more vain oblations." (Isaiah 1:13)

Vanity is emptiness. A vain oblation is an offering which contains nothing. Here we learn that the Lord has no delight in empty forms and ceremonies. In the true worship of God there is no place for the doing of a thing merely to represent something else. God desires the thing itself.

When David had committed a grievous sin, he knew that an offering would not please the Lord: "You desire not sacrifice; else would I give it; You delight not in burnt offering." (Psalm 51:16) "To obey is better than sacrifice." (1 Samuel 15:22)

When a man has sinned, God does not wish him to come before Him with something as a substitute for righteousness, but with righteousness itself. "Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord." (Psalm 4:5)

Put your trust in the Lord, who provides the righteousness which we need, so that none need come before Him empty. "Then shall You be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness." (Psalm 51:19)

Wash and Be Clean

"Wash, make yourself clean." (Isaiah 1:16)

To whom is this said? To those who are as bad as they can be. To a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that are corrupters. It is spoken to those who are so full of the loathsome leprosy of sin, that from the sole of the foot even to the head there is nothing in them but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores. Even such may be "as white as snow." (Isaiah 1:18)

Of the reality of this cleansing we have ample evidence in the Scriptures. Naaman the Syrian was a leper. He went to the prophet Elisha, who, as the servant of the Lord, spoke the word of the Lord to him, saying, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall come again to you, and you shall be clean." (2 Kings 5:10)

He said, in short, just what we have in the text we are studying, "Wash, and be clean." (2 Kings 5:13)

Naaman, after a little sulking, did as he was commanded, "And his flesh came again as the flesh of a little child, and he was clean." (2 Kings 5:14)

Was it the water of the Jordan that effected the cure? Was it true that the water of the Jordan was so much better than the waters of the rivers of Damascus? Certainly not; that which cleansed him was the word of the Lord, which he listened to. The prophet did not tell him to cleanse himself, nor did he expect him to, but he gave him the word of the Lord, and that made the leper clean. In that case we see the cleansing power of the word of the Lord.

But the case is not yet complete. There came a man "full of leprosy" and said to Jesus, "Lord, if You will, You can make me clean." (Matthew 8:2)

Jesus instantly said, "I will; be clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed."
(Matthew 8:3)

The same thing was done for this man that was done for Naaman, only in this case no visible means was used. If we had only the story of Naaman, then we might think that the water was what did the cleansing; and if we had only the case of the man who came to Jesus, then we should lose the impressive lesson taught in the first instance. But the two taken together teach us that the Lord cleanses us by "a water bath in the word," for so Ephesians 5:26 is properly translated in many versions. "Now are you clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." (John 15:3)

We are full of the uncleanness of sin, and the Lord says to us, just as He did to the man full of the uncleanness of leprosy, "Be clean." Did the Lord expect that the leper was to go away and cure himself? Certainly not; He knew that it was impossible. What had the man to do? Only to accept the word of the Lord. In his case the faith was already present, while the proud officer Naaman was required to give evidence that he did accept the word in humility; but both were cleansed in exactly the same way--by the word of the Lord.

The word of the Lord is healing medicine. The words of the Lord "are life unto those that find them, and medicine to all their flesh." (Proverbs 4:22,margin) "His commandment is life everlasting." (John 12:50)

God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass ... and it was so." (Genesis 1:11)

He said "Be light;" and instantly light was. Jesus said to the leper, "Be clean;" and immediately he was clean. So He says to us, "Wash; make yourself clean;" and if we are not too proud to accept the word, we are instantly clean. It matters not how sinful we are; the greater our need, the greater our recommendation to the mercy of the Lord. He pardons our iniquity just because it is great. "For your name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity; for it is great." (Psalm 25:11)

A Case in Court

"Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord." (Isaiah 1:18)

Pay particular attention to this verse as it is given in the translation at the head of this study: "Come on now, and let us plead together, says Jehovah."

This is the language of the courts, and is in harmony with the German, Swedish, and Danish translations, which have it, "Come now, and let us go into court together, says the Lord."

This is a strictly literal rendering of the Hebrew. The expression is the same as in Job 23:7, where we have unmistakably a court scene. "Oh that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come even to His seat! I would order my cause before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments. I would know the words which He would answer me, and understand what He would say unto me. Will He plead against me with His great power? No; but He would put strength in me. There the righteous might dispute with Him; so should I be delivered for ever from my judge." (Job 23:3-7)

In no place in the Bible is the Hebrew word that occurs here used in the sense that is ordinarily conveyed by the word "reason," and in no other place than this is it so rendered in our version. It occurs in: "Set it here before my brethren and your brethren, that they may judge between us both," (Genesis 31:37)

Here the idea of a decision of a case at law is clearly indicated. The idea that a trial in court is in progress is indicated in the very first verse of the prophecy: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth." (Isaiah 1:1)

The call is for "Silence in the court;" for a great case is on, which involves the whole universe. This thought, introduced in the very beginning of the prophecy of Isaiah is very prominent throughout, and we shall have frequent occasion to refer to it, so that it is worthwhile to give it a little special study now. When we have once grasped the thought, we shall see that it appears throughout the whole Bible.

Two texts set the whole matter briefly before us. In Psalm 51 we read: "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)

Turn now to Romans 3, where we have this verse quoted thus: "Let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That You might be justified in your sayings, and might overcome when You are judged." (Romans 3:4)

In the first instance we have God as the Judge, and in the second we have Him as the one judged, yet winning His case. The same Spirit that inspired the words in the first place, also inspired the quotation, so that both expressions must mean the same thing. Therefore we learn that when God judges the world, He is at the same time judged.

That is to say, the Judgment is simply the summing up of a case that has been pending since sin entered the universe of God. God has been declared to be unjust, not only by Satan, but by everyone who has committed sin. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)

Therefore everyone who justifies himself, thereby declares that God is wrong; and whoever refuses to acknowledge himself to be a sinner, thereby justifies himself. But every man is unlike God. Therefore if men were right, that would prove God to be in the wrong.

Everybody who refuses to confess his sins, by that very refusal charges God with being unjust. And the same thing is done by those who acknowledge themselves to be sinners, but who doubt God's willingness to forgive.

It is evident that if God could be convicted of one act of injustice, He could not judge the world. In order that rebellion shall be put down for ever, never more to have any possibility of arising, every creature in the universe must see and acknowledge the righteousness of God. Few of the inhabitants of this world do that now; but the Judgment is to make it plain. The great Judgment is not for the purpose of enabling God to judge of the character of men, but to cause all men to see the true character of God.

Men are now taking sides for and against Him. The time will come when every secret thing will be brought to light. Then all will see that God has always been true and good. Every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess. But it will be too late for those who have waited until then; they have taken sides against the Lord, and when He wins His case, they necessarily lose.

On the other hand, those who now put themselves on the side of the Lord, declaring that His way is right, which means that theirs is wrong, and who maintain their loyalty to Him against opposition, and even when they cannot explain some of His acts, will of course share in His triumph.

The details of this great case, the matter of witnesses, etc., will come in later on in our study; what we wish to keep before our minds is that the great question at issue is the character of God. He has infinitely more at stake than any man can possibly have.

This is our strong consolation. God's righteousness is revealed in the forgiveness of sin. "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)

Whoever declares that God will not forgive sins, no matter whose, charges Him with being unjust. He forgives by His righteousness, His justice, and when we confess our sins, we become partakers of His righteousness. This assures our standing in the Judgment. Now God challenges us to try the case in court, and calls upon heaven and earth to act as jury, to see if there is a single case of acknowledged sin that He does not forgive. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as white as snow." (Isaiah 1:18)

This is His case. He stakes His life upon that. That is the thing upon which He bases His claim to righteousness, and His right to judge the world. If God is willing to risk His case upon that claim, cannot we? Our life stands with His if we do.

We will trust Him, believing that His character will stand every test. Indeed, that is the only sensible thing to do; for if it were possible that we could prove Him unjust, we should gain nothing, since that would mean the end of His Government, so with that would go our lives and the life of all creatures.

So we see that it is the height of folly to try to pick flaws in God's character. It is like a man trying to saw off the limb upon which he is sitting over an abyss. But no fault can be found in God. "There is no unrighteousness in Him." (Psalm 92:15) "Trust in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." (Isaiah 26:4)

This call to come and be forgiven is to those who are as bad as they can possibly be. Every sin has produced its sore, and the result is that there is not a sound spot in the whole body. There is not a spot on which a stroke of correction could be laid, if sin were to be increased. To such ones He calls, in order that all may have hope, and may come with confidence.

With what boldness we may come! How it enlarges our view of the Gospel, and lifts the whole subject to a plane infinitely beyond the mere selfish inquiry, "Is it possible for me to be saved?"

It is God's case, not ours. He must forgive, or lose His life; for He gave His life for the express purpose of cleansing sins, and if He should not do it the life would be thrown away. Let us then come boldly to the throne of grace, fully assured that we shall obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.--Present Truth, January 5, 1899--
Isaiah 1:9-20.

Chapter 5

Regeneration or Destruction

"How is the faithful city become a harlot! She that was full of judgment, righteousness dwelt in her; But now murderers! Your silver is become dross; your wine is mixed with water. Your princes are rebellious, associates of robbers; Everyone of them loves a gift, and seeks rewards; To the fatherless they administer not justice; And the cause of the widow comes not before them. Wherefore says the Lord Jehovah, God of Hosts, the Mighty One of Israel; Aha! I will be eased of my adversaries; I will be avenged of my enemies. And I will bring again my hand over you, And I will purge in the furnace your dross; And I will remove all your alloy. And I will restore your judges, as at the first; And your counselors, as at the beginning; And after this your name shall be called The city of righteousness, the faithful metropolis. Sion shall be redeemed in judgment And her captives in righteousness; But destruction shall fall at once on the revolters and sinners; And they that forsake Jehovah shall be consumed. For you shall be ashamed of the ilexes, (Oak trees) which you have desired, And you shall blush for the gardens which you have chosen: When you shall be as an ilex, whose leaves are blasted; And as a garden, wherein is no water. And the strong shall become tow, and his work a spark of fire; And they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them." (Isaiah 1:21-31)

Study the two sections of the 1st chapter, which we have already studied, in connection with this one, and see how the whole chapter overflows with rich, Gospel truth. There is no halfway dealing; the condition of the people addressed is the worst possible, and the salvation offered is full and complete.

One caution should be given here, which it will be well to observe in all Bible study. It is this: Don't waste time over what you do not understand. You will never learn anything by arguing and questioning and speculating over obscure or difficult texts. Some may think that this is strange; but it is true. No man can by searching find out God. He must reveal himself, and He will do it as fast as we are able to see Him. The Bible must make itself clear.

So we must always arrive at the meaning of that which is hidden, through that which at once reveals itself to our gaze. Never guess; never speculate. We believe, not

argue nor theorize, our way to an understanding of God's Word. Meditate upon, but do not talk about, what you do not understand.

So in the study of this chapter, and this book, do not take precious time from the consideration of clearly revealed Gospel truths, for empty wondering and guesses as to the meaning of something that is obscure. It is all good, but you can profit only by what you understand.

There are truths enough that lie near the surface of the prophecy of Isaiah to keep us employed for many months. When we have gathered up these, we shall find that many of the things that were before concealed were simply second layer, and are brought to light by taking up the first.

The Blessing of Conviction

Verses 4-7 should always be read in connection with verses 16-18. Perhaps no portion of Scripture is quoted oftener than: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." (Isaiah 1:18)

Yet emphatic and comprehensive as it is, much of the force of it is lost because the fact is not considered that these words are addressed to the very same people that are described in verses 4-7 as so full of the sores of sin that there is not room for any more: "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. Why should you be stricken any more? you will 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 putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers." (Isaiah 1:4-7)

What a blessed thing it is that the Lord so strongly sets forth the heinousness of our sins! If He did not set our case before us in its very worst phase, we might think that the offer of salvation did not reach us; but when He expressly makes it known that His

salvation is for people who are as bad as they possibly can be, there is no room for doubt or discouragement.

The Cause of Destruction

From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. "Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah." (Isaiah 1:6-9)

Think how accurately these verses describe the condition of men and of the earth after probation has closed, and the plagues of God's wrath are poured out. Compare them with Revelation 16:1-2; Zephaniah 1:2-18; Joel 1:15-20. Mind, the statement is not made that Isaiah 1:6-9 is a description of that time of trouble, but that the condition described is very similar.

Now the closing of probation does not make any change in the characters of men. The character of the wicked will not be different after that time from what it has been before. He that is unjust and filthy remains so, that is all. "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)

The only difference is that at the close of probation their choice of evil is irrevocably fixed. That is what makes their probation end--they will no longer listen to the Gospel. They could be saved if they were willing to be saved. "If you be willing." (Isaiah 1:19)

So we see that men who are as bad as the wickedest men who will be destroyed when the Lord comes, may be saved. The reason, and the only reason, why any will be lost, is not that they are too wicked to be forgiven and saved, but that they do not wish to be saved. It is not the guilt of sin, but the love of sin, that shuts men out of the

Kingdom; for if men will cease to love sin, the guilt of it, however deep, will be taken away.

A Question of Eating

"If you be willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be eaten by the sword." (Isaiah 1:19)

The force of this is weakened in our version by the rendering "devour" in the second instance, although the word is the same in both verses. Eat or be eaten. Eat what? "Eat that which is good. And what is good?" (Isaiah 55:2) "O taste and see that the Lord is good." (Psalm 34:8) "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. ... For my flesh is true meat, and my blood is true drink. ... Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you have no life in you." (John 6:35,55,53)

If one eats only the body of Christ, he eats to live; but whoever eats that which is not the body of Christ (and it can be eaten only by faith), that which he eats consumes him, instead of building him up. He is devoured by that which he feeds upon.

"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)

Here is the choice:

1. Eat the flesh of Christ, and abide forever; or,
2. Eat that which is not bread, and be consumed by it.

Degeneration and Regeneration

"How is the faithful city become a harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. Your silver is become dross, your wine mixed with water: Your princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: everyone loves gifts, and follows after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither does the cause of the widow come unto them." (Isaiah 1:21-23)

These verses present a picture of degeneration. Adultery is the one word that covers the whole. Everything has become adulterated. Faithfulness and purity have been crowded out. The one sin that God's people commit is adultery. The Lord is the husband of His people: "Turn, O backsliding children, says the Lord; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion." (Jeremiah 3:14) "Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they broke, although I was a husband unto them, says the Lord." (Jeremiah 31:32) "Wherefore, my brethren, you also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that you should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." (Romans 7:4) "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. " (2 Corinthians 11:2) "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." (Ephesians 5:31-32)

His people are one flesh in Him. Departure from Him to any degree is adultery; so that whatever sin anyone commits, it is adultery--the allowing of another to take the place that should be filled with Christ. This adulteration--the substitution of the false for the true may go on until the faithful city becomes a harlot, and that which once was pure metal, only dross.

But there is a remedy for all this. "God has not cast off His people which He foreknew." (Romans 11:2)

Nay, "For the Lord will not cast off forever." (Lamentations 3:31)

Never will He turn away. "If we believe not, yet He abides faithful." (2 Timothy 2:13)

So He says: "Return backsliding Israel, says the Lord; and I will not cause my anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, says the Lord, and I will not keep anger forever. Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against the Lord your God, and have scattered your ways to the strangers under every green tree, and you have not obeyed my voice, says the Lord." (Jeremiah 3:12-13)

Only confess the sin, and it is forgiven, purged, for: "Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness." (Isaiah 1:27) "My God shall supply all your need, according to His riches in glory." (Philippians 4:19)

The Lord regenerates us by supplying that which we lack. His own righteousness and faithfulness are given to redeem us from sin.

Practical Piety

Notice that one of the gravest charges against the wicked is that: "They judge not the fatherless, neither does the cause of the widow come unto them." (Isaiah 1:23)

Also in the exhortation to put away evil, the only things specified under the head of well-doing are: "Relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." (Isaiah 1:17)

Christianity is not a mere sentiment or emotion; it consists in deeds. Not that by any amount of deeds we can earn the favor of God, but that these good deeds are the manifestation of the life of Christ within. "[He] went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him." (Acts 10:38)

Kindness is the characteristic of God, for: "God is love. ... Everyone that loves, is born of God, and knows God." (1 John 4:8,7)

And remember that it is not sermons about doing good, but the actual doing, that constitutes Christianity.

Complete Restoration

When God made man in the beginning, he, as well as everything else, was "very good." Christ is the Beginning, and all who are in Him find restoration. The adulteration will be removed, and the fine gold will be restored. We are "made full" in Him. "Your hands have made me and fashioned me." (Psalm 119:73)

We have greatly degenerated from the original model; but God has promised to bring His hand upon us again, so that we may be new creatures, bearing again the impress of God.

Utter Destruction

Just as surely as there will be complete restoration, will there be utter destruction. Indeed, the promise of the restoration of the original perfection necessarily includes the destruction of those who cling to the evil. Mercy rejected means wrath. It cannot be otherwise.

So none should presume upon the mercy of God, to continue in sin, that grace may abound. (Romans 6:1,2; Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid) The greater the mercy offered, the greater the disaster that follows its rejection. Thus it is that men will suffer the wrath of God, whose "mercy endures for ever." (Psalm 136:1)

The destruction of the wicked is simply the natural fruit of their own ways. There is nothing forced or arbitrary about it. "Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap." (Galatians 6:7)

When the plagues begin to appear at the close of probation, in the form of grievous sores in the bodies of men, it is only the breaking out of the corruption within. When men eat and drink death,--and they do this when they do not feed on Christ, the life,--it is but natural that the poison should permeate them, until they become bodies of death. And the fact that the first plague for sin is disease, emphasizes the fact that righteousness is health. The keeping of God's law means physical health as well as moral purity.

See how strongly the destruction of the wicked is put: "You shall be as an oak whose leaf fades, and as a garden that has no water." (Isaiah 1:30)

Such a condition is but a preparation for fire. But that is not all. "The strong shall become tow, (Tow: the coarse and broken part of flax or hemp prepared for spinning; a bundle of untwisted natural or man-made fibers) and his work a spark of fire." (Isaiah 1:31)

Everyone knows how inflammable a substance tow is; let fire come near it, and it is gone in a flash. Now think of tow which generates fire? What hope of salvation is there for it? Absolutely none.

The wicked prepare their own destruction; their own works consume them. The destruction is certain, and God is clear; for bear in mind that this is only the fate of those that forsake the Lord. They only will be consumed. Whoever hearkens to the Lord "shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil." (Proverbs 1:33)--Present Truth, January 12, 1899--Isaiah 1:21-31.

Chapter 6

The Gospel of Isaiah

It has already been pointed out that the Gospel as given through the prophet Isaiah was for the people who lived in the time of the promise, a time when the work of the Gospel could be closed up and the King of glory come, if the people would only receive the message.

So it is emphatically a message for the present time when: "The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hastes greatly." (Zephaniah 1:14)

It is also clear that in this 1st chapter of Isaiah a complete view of the Gospel work is presented, reaching to the full restoration through judgment and righteousness, in the experience of those who accept it, or the destruction of those who reject it, and thus "forsake the Lord." (Isaiah 1:28)

So the work to be done just before the Lord comes will be set forth in this chapter, and the people who are doing the closing work will be carrying out the principles which are here laid down. Let us therefore study some of these principles.

A Question of Food

"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord has spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." (Isaiah 1:2)

The Lord calls upon heaven and earth to listen while He presents His case concerning His children. He says that He has nourished them, but they have turned against Him. "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)

Even the beasts of burden recognize their owner and expect to serve those who feed them, but His children do not so.

It is no mere accident that the food question is mentioned here. It was through yielding to the temptation of Satan over this very question that sin came into the world

in the first place. It was over this same matter that the children of Israel murmured in the wilderness. "And they tempted God in their hearts by asking meat for their lust. Yea, they spoke against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" (Psalm 78:18-19)

Satan attempted to overthrow Jesus in the wilderness on this same question. "And when the tempter came to Him, he said, If you be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:3-4)

We may therefore be sure that in the closing work of the Gospel God's people will be tested to show that the victory which was gained over this question by Jesus has been fully appropriated through faith by His followers.

Study anew the question of healthful living, of eating what the Lord has given for food with a constant recognition of what He gives in such food, and see that it is not a matter of chance that it is now coming into such prominence. Observe that the closing message must deal with this matter.

Compare the following: "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." (Revelation 14:6-7) "Sirs, why do you these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that you should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: 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 14:15-17) "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwells not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed any thing, seeing He gives to all life, and breath, and all things." (Acts 17:24-25)

Note what is involved in the recognition of God as the Creator.

Read: "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. 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. Neither be idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." (1 Corinthians 10:1-11)

These things "are written for our admonition," because the same test will be experienced by those "upon whom the ends of the world are come."

The Snare of Ritualism

"Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? says the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When you come to appear before me, who has required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when you spread forth your hands, I will hide my eyes from you: yea, when you make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood." (Isaiah 1:10-15)

From verses 10-15 we learn that in the very time of the promise the professed people of God were depending upon the forms of worship to commend them to God while their lives were full of evil. This is but one phase of the same old effort to put self in the place of God.

The Lord's rebuke upon such mockery is intended to save the people from depending upon that which will fail them when the test comes. "Thus says the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good comes; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusts in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreads out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat comes, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." (Jeremiah 17:5-8)

There is nothing arbitrary in these statements. The simple consequences of man's own choice are presented. Every offering, every form of service, in which the righteousness of Christ is lacking, is a vain oblation, and empty form. It is no more acceptable than was the offering of Cain.

But these principles must be emphasized in the closing work. The falling away and the mystery of iniquity reach their climax in the final struggle of the great controversy when the professed church and the world have united against God and His truth. "Babylon is fallen, is fallen." (Isaiah 21:9) "Babylon is fallen, is fallen. And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb." (Revelation 14:8-10)

The warning against the worship of the beast and his image is just as much a part of the closing message as is the instruction to worship God. It is again the time of the promise, and so now we see a professed religion of forms and ceremonies substituted for the reality of the life that cleanses from sin.

But this is not a question simply of some church. It is a matter of individual experience, and the only safeguard against it is in an individual acceptance of the life of God in Christ: "Receive the Holy Ghost." (John 20:22)

Christian Help Work

The spirit of the Gospel is to help the poor and the unfortunate. This is shown in the whole work of Christ for us. Those who are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," (Revelation 3:17) are the very ones whom He came to help. He came to a fatherless family to be "the Everlasting Father" (Isaiah 9:6) to them, the second Adam. "[He] gave himself for us." (Titus 2:14)

The spirit of Satan and of the world is selfish, to think only of oneself. In the closing days this spirit will be most fully revealed by those who have refused the blessings of the Gospel, and this will open the way and create a demand as it were for helping those who are thus brought into distress.

So in the closing work of the Gospel, just before the people of God are to hear the invitation, "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom," (Matthew 25:34) they will call "the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind," (Luke 14:13) to share with them in things temporal and things spiritual. And so the instruction to "relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow," (Isaiah 1:17) will be carried out by those who are giving the last message of mercy, and by this work it will be shown that it is a message of mercy. "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)

Note that the definition of religion given here shows that it is not an abstract quality, but a principle which manifests itself in life, and determines our relationship to the unfortunate. That the poor, who are really the children of God, can do Christian Help Work is shown from the fact that Jesus helped others, although He had not where to lay His head.

And giving from their scanty funds was so common that this came to the mind of the disciples as the probable reason why Judas left them on the night of the betrayal. "And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That you do, do quickly. Now no man at the table knew for what intent He spoke this unto him. For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor." (John 13:27-29)

Peter had no money, but he bestowed an inestimable gift upon the lame man: "Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." (Acts 3:6)

God makes believers sufficient to be ministers of His own life. "And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; Who also has made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter kills, but the spirit gives life." (2 Corinthians 3:4-6)--Present Truth, January 19, 1899--Isaiah 1:2-28.

Chapter 7

A Gospel Epitome

In our study of the 1st chapter of Isaiah it has been necessary to divide into three lessons what is really one connected lesson, and so it will be profitable to consider the whole chapter together.

As the whole text has already been printed, as translated by Lowth, we shall for the sake of the space omit it here and refer the reader to the three preceding numbers of this paper, or to his Bible, or better still to his own knowledge of the chapter from a previous study.

Of course the only thing to be studied in the Scripture is the Gospel of Christ the Saviour, the Gospel of abundant life, (John 10:10; The thief comes not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly) imparted to us through our faith. (John 20:30-31; 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) But the character of God is inseparable from the power of His life, and so the Gospel is the Gospel of His character, freely given to man in the gift of His Son Jesus, "the Lord our Righteousness." (Jeremiah 23:6)

And the need of such a Gospel arises from the fact of man's unlikeness to God, even though originally made in His image, for all now lack His glory (character) through sin; (Romans 3:23; For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God) and so the picture is complete only when we see:

- Man's lost and pitiable condition through his rebellion against God the Father,
- His utter inability to save himself by his own works,
- God's power and willingness to save even the vilest, and
- The results of accepting or rejecting this offered salvation.

Such a complete picture is presented in this 1st chapter of Isaiah.

Man's Lost Condition

The Lord's own description of the condition of every man who has departed from Him is given in verses 4-6, and what a pitiable condition is here presented! "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. Why should you be stricken any more? you will 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 putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." (Isaiah 1:4-6)

There is absolutely no soundness, nothing from which goodness can ever be developed. It is a case entirely without hope, unless a restoring power can be found outside of itself. The cause of this distressing experience is found in verse 2: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord has spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." (Isaiah 1:2)

It is rebellion; and the rebellion of children against a Father who has nourished and brought them up. And here it is shown that man, who was created in the image of God, to have dominion "over the cattle," (Genesis 1:26) has through his sin lost his place of power and become more brutish than the beast of the field. For the children treat their Father with less consideration than the ox and ass treat their owner. Thus has the head become the tail, and thus is God's glory trailed in the very dust before the face of all the universe.

And how clearly it appears that this course of rebellion against God has brought in its train the most terrible misery to man and a destroying curse upon the earth. Wounds, bruises and sores cover the man from head to foot, while his country is desolate, his cities are burned, and strangers devour his land. The foes within and the foes without have both gained a complete victory over him, and were it not for the wonderful mercy of the long-suffering, though powerful "Lord of hosts," powerful to save, not even a remnant could be saved from such depths of woe.

How wondrously are the mercy and the saving grace of God revealed in His own statement of the consequences of man's rebellion! How tender and strong is the love which comes to the rescue of the lost one whose condition is so repulsive! But, "God is love," (1 John 4:8) and man's need is his strongest plea, and the life which heals and saves is freely given by the Great Physician, "Who gave himself for our sins." (Galatians 1:4)

His Utter Inability to Save Himself

The deceitfulness of sin and the perversity of the human heart are revealed in the way in which the Lord's provision to save us from sin is turned, by the suggestion of Satan, into an excuse for continuing in sin with the utmost complacency. Repentance for sin and faith in the efficacy of His blood (life) who has "appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself,--shown by offerings made with" (Hebrews 9:26) "a broken and a contrite heart," (Psalm 51:17) which thus become "the sacrifices of righteousness," (Psalm 51:19) will bring pardon and cleansing from the sin, which means salvation from sinning. But a multitude of sacrifices, which are mere "vain oblations," (Isaiah 1:13) and many prayers made with outstretched hands which are "full of blood," (Isaiah 1:15) are simply sin added to sin under the guise of religion, as are all our efforts at saving ourselves apart from the grace of Christ. This is only to add to the burden which we have already brought upon the Lord's life, and so He becomes "weary to bear them." (Isaiah 1:14)

Thus is again emphasized how great is our need of Divine deliverance, as it appears that even the forms of worship provided by the Lord himself become an expression of deeper degradation when attempted by us as works of righteousness. Satan, who desired power for selfish purposes, God's power without His character, often seeks to satisfy our sins of need by a multiplication of forms without the life, which when present will find expression for itself.

Where sin abounded, there grace did much more abound, but not that we should continue in sin. God's salvation is from sin, not in sin. The blood upon the hands shows the need, not of making many Pharisaical prayers, but of applying to the heart the blood that cleanses from all sin.

God's Willingness to Save the Vilest

And so we come to the central thought of the chapter, God's willingness and ability to cleanse from the deepest stains of sin. But this He does by virtue of what He himself is, by the power of His own character. And so in every commandment of His, which the saved sinner knows as "life everlasting," (John 12:50) He is simply offering to us the assurance of His own character through "[His] exceeding great and precious promises." (2 Peter 1:4)

For when He tells us to "relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead the cause of the widow," (Isaiah 1:17) He is holding out to us the gift of His own life, that life which finds expression in doing the same things for us. For is it not His delight to let the oppressed go free? And, "A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in His holy habitation." (Psalm 68:5)

All that God is He desires to share with His children, and the most wonderful thing about the inheritance is that we may become "heirs of God [himself]," (Romans 8:17) temples for His own indwelling. And although the temple has become defiled, yea even "a den of thieves," (Matthew 21:13) yet shall the sanctuary be cleansed." (Daniel 8:14)

Hear the Lord's Word: "I am merciful, says the Lord, and will not keep anger for ever. Only acknowledge your iniquity." (Jeremiah 3:12-13) "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)

Father, I have wandered from Thee,
Often has my heart gone astray;
Crimson do my sins seem to me--
Water cannot wash them away.
Jesus, to the fountain of Thine,
Leaning on Thy promise, I go;
Cleansed me by Thy washing divine,
And I shall be whiter than snow.
--Eden R. Latta, Hymn: Blessed Be the Fountain, 1875.

And so complete is the cleansing and the restoration that even though the faithful city had become a harlot, and its princes rebellious and the companions of thieves, wholly given up to the work of the thief, (John 10:10; The thief comes not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy) yet shall it again be called: "The city of righteousness, the faithful city." (Isaiah 1:26)

Thus are we encouraged to believe that: "There is forgiveness with the Lord that He may be feared," (Psalm 130:4) and that there is help for everyone of us. He redeems by His own righteousness, a free gift to be received through faith. There is no sin so heinous from which we may not be justified by faith, that faith which works by love, the only faith there is. The unpardonable sin is the sin which refuses to be pardoned. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:1) "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in 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 Result of Accepting or Rejecting

This is the glorious result of accepting the Gospel of Life, the Gospel of the gift of God's own character through faith in Christ! And now the chapter closes by stating the inevitable result of refusing the same Gospel life. "They that forsake the Lord shall be consumed." (Isaiah 1:28) "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life; and he that believes not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him." (John 3:36) "He that has the Son has life; and he that has not the Son of God has not life." (1 John 5:12) "An oak whose leaf fades, [and] a garden that has no water." (Isaiah 1:30)

These are types of the man who refuses the water of life. "Blessed is the man that trusts in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters ... her leaf shall be green." (Jeremiah 17:8-9) "The ungodly are not so." (Psalm 1:4)

And so the dry oak and the parched garden are ready for the great conflagration when "the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." (2 Peter 3:10)

But this is "The day of the Lord, [when He] will come as a thief in the night." (2 Peter 3:10)

And so this chapter takes us from the first cause of sin, through its most loathsome manifestation, through the offers of Divine mercy, to the sure results of the acceptance or rejection of the Gospel of God's own life through Christ. And thus is the Gospel preached and to us as well as unto them.--Present Truth, January 19, 1899--Isaiah 1:4-30.

Chapter 8

God Alone is Great

"Verily You have abandoned your people, the house of Jacob; Because they are filled with diviners from the East; And with soothsayers like the Philistines; And they multiply a spurious brood of strange children. And his land is filled with silver and gold; And there is no end to his treasures; And his land is filled with horses; Neither is there any end to his chariots. And his land is filled with idols; He bows himself down to the work of his hands; To that which his fingers have made; Therefore shall the mean man be bowed down, and the mighty man shall be humbled; And you will not forgive them. Go into the rock, and hide yourself in the dust; From the fear of Jehovah, and from the glory of His majesty, When He arises to strike the world with terror. The lofty eyes of men shall be humbled; The height of mortals shall bow down; And Jehovah alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of Jehovah God of hosts is against every thing great and lofty; And against every thing that is exalted, and it shall be humbled. Even against all the cedars of Lebanon, the high and the exalted; And against all the oaks of Bashan; And against all the mountains, the high ones; And against all the hills, the exalted ones; And against every tower, high raised; And against every mount, strongly fortified. And against all the ships of Tarshish; And against every lovely work of art. And the pride of man shall bow down; And the height of mortals shall be humbled; And Jehovah alone shall be exalted in that day: And the idols shall totally disappear. And they shall go into caverns of rocks, and into holes of the dust; From the fear of Jehovah and from the glory of His majesty, When He arises to strike the earth with terror. In that day shall a man cast away his idols of silver, And his idols of gold, which they have made to worship; To the moles and to the bats; To go into the caves of the rocks, and into the clefts of the craggy rocks; From the fear of Jehovah, and from the glory of His majesty, When He arises to strike the earth with terror. Trust no more in man, whose breath is in his nostrils; For of what account is he to be made?" (Isaiah 2:6-22,Lowth)

In verse 6 there is nothing in the original text to indicate with what the people are filled from the East. The text, literally rendered, reads, "because they are filled from the East." This is indicated in the Revised Version, as well as in our common version.

Filled with Idols

That with which they are filled is not limited to diviners or any other one thing. The idea is that whatever the people have comes from the East. The expression that is used, however, is the ordinary Hebrew idiom to express comparison, so that it might be read, "because they are filled more than the East," which is still more emphatic. In the East idolatry has been practiced the longest of any place on earth. "They are ... soothsayers, like the Philistines." (Isaiah 2:6)

The Philistines were people of Canaan, whom God commanded to be cast out for their abominations, among which was witchcraft--pretended communication with the dead. The word rendered "soothsayer" is from the word meaning "cloud," indicating that those who practice that art act secretly, under cover. "They please themselves with the children of strangers." (Isaiah 2:6)

Literally, "they strike hands with the children of strangers."

The people of Israel were forbidden to make any league with the people of the land. They were to be separate from all the people on earth. "For wherein shall it be known here that I and your people have found grace in your sight? is it not in that You go with us? so shall we be separated, I and your people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth." (Exodus 33:16)

They were not to be reckoned among the nations, nor to be like them. "Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations." (Numbers 23:9)

They were to depend on the Lord alone for defense, consequently they did not need any alliance with other people, however numerous.

God's people must not enter into any covenant, except with Him. To form any alliance in partnerships, or to be in any way whatever entangled or identified in interests with other people, is to be false to God. It is those who are "rich and increased with goods," (Revelation 3:17) who are spewed out of the Lord's mouth. "He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent empty away." (Luke 1:53)

Note the place whence real fullness comes. In Christ all fullness dwells: "For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." (Colossians 1:19)

And we are "made full" in Him: "And in Him you are made full, who is the head of all principality and power." (Colossians 2:10,RV)

He says, "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." (Psalm 81:10)

But when the fullness that people have is not from Him, it is really nothing but emptiness; they are puffed up, not filled. "Their land is also full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made." (Isaiah 2:8)

What a terrible fall from the high place for which God created man. "You have made him but little lower than God, and crowned him with glory and honor. You made him to have dominion over the works of your hands; You have put all things under his feet." (Psalm 8:5-6,RV)

Yet, "What is man?" (Psalm 144:3) "At his best state [he] is altogether vanity." (Psalm 39:5)

Of himself he is nothing at all; but with God dwelling in him in all His fullness, He is lord of the works of God's hands. And from this high estate men have fallen so low as to worship--acknowledge themselves inferior to--the works of their own hands. From having dominion over the work of God's fingers, they abase themselves before the works of their own fingers! Could a fall ever be greater? That is what idolatry is.

But all idolaters do not set up images of wood or stone or some metal in a temple, and fall down before them. It is not necessary that one should do obeisance to a carved image, in order to be an idolater. All that is necessary to constitute one an idolater is that he worship his own works.

Now people worship that in which they put their trust for salvation. Whoever therefore depends upon anything that he has done, as a means of salvation, is an idolater. Then have you never seen idolaters? Do you not know any? Would you need to go out of your own house to find one? Notice that just before the statement that their

land is full of idols, we read: "Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures." (Isaiah 2:7)

Is there any land to which that would apply more truly than to this? Does it make any difference whether the silver and gold that men worship be made into an image, or simply bear the stamp of the Government? There is no land on earth that is not full of idols.

The Gospel and the Day of Judgment

Then let us say these words to the Lord: "Take away iniquity, and receive us graciously. ... Asshur shall not say to us; we will not ride upon horses; neither will we say any more to the wood of our hands, You are our gods; for in You the fatherless finds mercy." (Hosea 14:2-3)

Of all who thus acknowledge their sin, God says: "I will heal their backsliding; I will love them freely." (Hosea 14:4)

God is no respecter of persons; therefore "the mean man"--the man of low degree--and "the mighty man"--the hero in the world's estimation--shall alike be bowed down and humbled, if they persist in exalting themselves above God. "For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon everyone that is proud and lofty, and upon everyone that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low. ... The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." (Isaiah 2:12,11)

The Judgment will reveal everything just as it is, and then it will be seen that God alone is great. None of the men of the earth who claim to be great will be able to make their claim good in that day. That will be a terrible day. "The kings of the earth, and the great men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman" (Revelation 6:15) "shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats; To go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake terribly the earth," (Isaiah 2:20-21) and shall say to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that

sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, For the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" (Revelation 6:16-17)

Yet to behold that same face will be the reward and the highest delight of those who have been humble before God. "As for me, I will behold your face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with your likeness." (Psalm 17:15) "And they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads." (Revelation 22:4)

The Gospel is now seeking to prepare men for that great and terrible day. "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; Casting down imaginations, and every high things that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." (2 Corinthians 10:4-5)

The Gospel does the very thing that the great day of God does, only it is better to submit to the process now, willingly, than to wait till then. God only is "high and lifted up." (Isaiah 6:1)

He has not exalted himself at the expense of others, as men do; but He cannot be other than He is. The Creator is by the very nature of things infinitely greater than all created things. Only by His greatness can anything exist; and whoever gladly recognizes and acknowledges that greatness, is by it exalted.

When men exalt themselves, everything is reversed and in disorder. It is necessary that God's rightful place in the universe should be recognized; otherwise confusion would always reign. The Gospel is working to this end, and the great day of the Lord will complete the work, by the destruction of those whose high pretensions have made them ignore God. They will simply be left to the full trial of their claims, and as a consequence will "be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passes away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind, and as the smoke out of the chimney." (Hosea 13:3)

When put to the test of trying to exist separate from God, they will be "found wanting." (Daniel 5:27)

Like the idols which they have made, they will simply "pass away," (James 1:10; Psalm 58:8) because when the support of God, which they have despised and rejected, is withdrawn, there is nothing left. The conclusion of the matter is, "Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?" (Isaiah 2:22) "Cursed be the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the Lord." (Jeremiah 17:5)

This is not a curse put upon those who trust in men,--in themselves,--as a punishment. It is not at all because they have offended the dignity of God: God is not a man, that He should feel offended because His rank is not recognized; He is meek and lowly in heart. The curse is simply a statement of fact.

Suppose a man suspends himself over the bottomless pit, on nothing; what else but his utter destruction can result? Man is nothing, and whoever trusts in man, even in himself, must inevitably come to nothing. The Judgment will do nothing more than reveal things as they are, and leave every man to the result of his own choice, and God will be clear from the blood of the wicked who are destroyed. "And the strong shall be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark, and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them." (Isaiah 1:31)

The lesson that we should not fail to learn, is the power of the Gospel. Its power is equal to the power manifested in the great and terrible day of the Lord. God's power to save--to make something for eternity out of men who are nothing--is the mighty power that will shake the heavens and the earth.

When the Lord comes, it is to save His people. The prophet Habakkuk saw a vision of God going forth for the salvation of His people, and: "His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise. And His brightness was as the light; He had bright beams coming out of His side; 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. ... The sun and moon stood still in their habitation." (Habakkuk 3:3-6,11)

All that power is even now exerted to save people, and will save them, if they but trust it. Only two things are necessary for anybody to know, namely, that:

Man is nothing, and God everything

He who has learned this, has eternity with all its riches and wisdom in his grasp.--
Present Truth, January 26, 1899--Isaiah 2:6-22.

Chapter 9

Saved and Sent

"In the year in which King Uzziah died, I saw Jehovah sitting on a throne high and lofty; And the train of His robe filled the temple. Above Him stood the seraphim; Each of them had six wings; With two of them he covered his face, With two of them he covered his feet, And two of them he used in flying. And they cried alternately, and said: Holy, holy, holy Jehovah God of Hosts! The whole earth is filled with His glory. And the pillars of the vestibule were shaken with the voice of their cry; And the temple was filled with smoke. And I said, Alas for me! I am struck dumb; For I am a man of polluted lips; And in the midst of a people of unclean lips do I dwell; For my eyes have seen the King, Jehovah God of Hosts. And one of the seraphim came flying unto me; And in his hand was a burning coal, Which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar. And he touched my mouth, and said: Lo! this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is removed, and your sin is expiated. And I heard the voice of Jehovah, saying, Whom shall I send; and who will go for us? And I said, Behold, Here am I; send me. And He said: Go, and say you to this people, Hear you indeed, but understand not; See you indeed, but perceive not; Make gross the heart of this people; Make their ears dull, and close up their eyes; Lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears. And understand with their hearts, and be converted; And I should heal them. And I said: How long, Jehovah? And He said: Until cities be laid waste, so that there be no inhabitant; And houses, so that there be no man; And the land be left utterly desolate. Until Jehovah remove man far away; And there be many a deserted woman in the midst of the land. And though there be a tenth part remaining in it, Even this shall undergo a repeated destruction; Yet, as the ilex, and the oak, though cut down, has its stock remaining, A holy seed shall be the stock of the nation." (Isaiah 6:1-13,Lowth)

The Glory of the Lord

"I saw Jehovah." Compare John 12:37-41 with verses 9 and 10 of this chapter, and it will be seen that it was Christ whom Isaiah saw in His glory. "But though He had done so many signs before them, yet they believed not on Him: That the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For this cause they could not believe, for that Isaiah said again, He has blinded their eyes, and He hardened their heart; Lest

they should see with their eyes, and perceive with their heart, And should turn, And I should heal them. These things said Isaiah, because he saw His glory; and he spoke of Him." (John 12:37-41)

From this we learn something of the wondrous glory of our Redeemer, and what He gave up for the sake of saving us. He is the effulgence of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person. "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." (Hebrews 1:1-2)

The glory which He had with the Father before the world began is His now, (John 17:5; And now, Father, glorify me with your own self with the glory which I had with You before the world was) and He gives it to us, for we shall be "glorified together." (Romans 8:17) "His train filled the temple." (Isaiah 6:1)

The word rendered "train" is the same that in Jeremiah 13:22, 26, and other places is translated "skirts," and in Exodus 28:33-34; 39:24-26, is translated "hem." The hem or skirt of His garment filled the temple. What is this garment? Here is the answer: "O Lord my God, You are very great; You are clothed with honor and majesty. Who cover yourself with light as with a garment; who stretch out the heavens like a curtain." (Psalm 104:1-2)

The light and glory of the Lord is His clothing; His train, that filled the temple, was His glory. "The whole earth is full of your glory." (Isaiah 6:3)

That is, the garment with which the Lord covers himself is the fullness of the earth. Not only the temple in heaven, but the whole earth is filled with the hem of His garment. Now remember that when Jesus was here in the flesh, all that was needed for the healing of a poor, afflicted woman was that she should "touch the hem of His garment." (Matthew 14:36)

So wherever we are, we are to reach of the hem of that garment which brings life and health and salvation.

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 Greenleaf Whittier, Hymn: Immortal Love, Forever Full.

"The fullness of the whole earth is His glory." (Isaiah 6:3,RV)

This, as may be seen from the margin of the Revision, is the literal rendering of the Hebrew. Wherever in the earth we see fullness, revealing itself in the multiplied forms of life, it is the glory of the Lord.

Remembering now that in even the hem of His garment there is healing, what can this teach us except that God expects all to be healed, to be whole-holy. He has provided liberally to this end. All that is needed is that we come into conscious touch with Him by intelligent faith.

Jesus Christ came that we might have life, and that we might have it in abundance: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." (John 10:10) "The life is the light of men." (John 1:4)

If we would but see the life, as it is all about us, and allow ourselves to be controlled by it, sickness would become a thing of the past, for eternal freshness is the characteristic of the life.

To speak plainly, if we recognize that what are called "the laws of nature" are but the manifestations of the life of God, and let these laws rule in us, we shall find the life of Jesus manifested even in "our mortal flesh," (2 Corinthians 4:11) and that will mean victory over disease as well as over sin.

Seraphim

"Above it stood the seraphim." (Isaiah 6:2)

Or, "Above Him stood the seraphim."

The Hebrew does not distinguish between masculine and neuter. In this case it amounts to the same thing, for above the throne would be above the Lord.

The word "seraphim" means "burning ones." The difference, if any, between them and cherubim, is not revealed; but we read in Ezekiel 28:14 about the "anointed cherub that covers;" and on the cover to the ark in the tabernacle of Moses were figures of cherubim overshadowing the glory of the Lord.

Each seraph covered his face with two of his wings, as unable or unworthy to look directly upon God. Yet the redeemed saints "shall see His face." (Revelation 22:4)

Oh, marvelous privilege accorded to the sons of Adam! To be on such terms of intimacy with the God of hosts as is not permitted even to the highest of the unfallen angels. And to show the special favor granted to humble followers of Christ even now, He says, "In heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 18:10)

This shows that there is a difference, and that the angels who are specially commissioned to guard the faithful of earth, have access to the Father to a degree that others do not. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace." (Hebrews 4:16) "One thing have I desired of the Lord; that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life; to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple." (Psalm 27:4)

Forgiveness of Sin

"Woe is me! for I am undone [cut off, struck dumb]; because I, a man of unclean lips, have seen the King, and the Lord of hosts." (Isaiah 6:5)

It was the sight of the Lord that made Isaiah conscious of his own imperfection. Job said, "now my eye sees You. Wherefore I abhor myself." (Job 42:5-6)

The sight of the Lord makes known the presence of sin, and either removes the sin, or destroys the sinner, according to the circumstances under which He is seen.

"This has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged."
(Isaiah 6:7)

It is fire from the altar, which, when cast on the earth, works destruction. The same fire that cleanses those who confess their sins, consumes those who cling to them. The saints of God, having been tried in the fire, as gold, and having had all the alloy of sin purged away by it, can dwell amid everlasting burnings which will consume the wicked like chaff. "But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appears? for He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." (Malachi 3:2-3) "The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness has surprised the hypocrites. 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." (Isaiah 33:14-15)

Mark how quickly Isaiah's sins were removed. All he did was to acknowledge that he was a sinner. As soon as he said, "I am a man of unclean lips," the angel touched him with the coal from God's altar, saying, "Your iniquity is taken away." "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)

Only acknowledge your sin, and you may know that it is gone. Some sincere souls say: "I have confessed all the sins I know of, and I am resolved not to stop until I have discovered every sin in my character, and have confessed it; so that I may be forgiven."

Why, you could not nearly enumerate all your sins in a lifetime. They are more than can be numbered. Isaiah did the whole thing at once: "I am a man of unclean lips," which meant that he was unclean in heart. The publican said: "God be merciful to me, a sinner," (Luke 18:13) and went to his house justified. Be assured that if you acknowledge yourself to be a sinner, you are forgiven.

Saved to Serve

God saves men only for service. The object of our cleansing is not merely that we may escape destruction, but that we may be messengers of salvation. As soon as the Lord had cleansed Isaiah from sin, He called out, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" (Isaiah 6:8)

It was a general question, yet intended specially for the ears of Isaiah. And the prophet heard, and immediately responded, "Here am I; send me." (Isaiah 6:8)

God reconciles us to himself by Christ, and puts the word of reconciliation in us, that we, in the place of Christ, may be agents for reconciling others. "And all things are of God, who has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and has committed unto us the word of reconciliation. 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 5:18-20)

He says, "Come!" (Matthew 11:28; Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest) and then to all who heed the call, He says, "Go!" (Mark 16:15; And He said unto them, Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.)

The Lord has said that there will be but few saved. So He fortified Isaiah against discouragement, by letting him know at the outset what the result of his message would be. He was to carry a message whose effect would be to harden hearts, and make people blind and deaf to the truth.

Look at John 12:37, and you will see what sort of a message it is that hardens men's hearts: "Though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him." (John 12:37)

Yet the miracles were done and recorded solely for the purpose of enabling people to believe on Jesus, and to obtain life through His name. "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)

And some did believe. Thus we see that it is the tender mercy of God that hardens men. "Let favor be shown to the wicked, yet will he not learn uprightness." (Isaiah 26:10)

But God is clear. How can any soul hold God responsible for his unbelief, when it was the goodness of God, which leads men to repentance, that hardened him?

A Message for the Latter Days

How long is this commission to Isaiah to be in force? Until the end of the world: "Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate." (Isaiah 6:11)

But Isaiah is long since dead. True, but the message is still to be given; for remember that the Lord made His call general, and not particularly to Isaiah. "Who will go for us?"

He is waiting for agents, and is anxious to use everyone who will allow his sin to be purged. We are to be "ready to every good work," (Titus 3:1) and this readiness is gained through the cleansing power of God. God will use the instrument that is ready to hand when His work is to be done.

This chapter emphasizes what was set forth in the article, "The Time of the Promise," (This is Chapter 2 in the current publication, re-titled as "The Prophetic Setting") at the beginning of this study in Isaiah, namely, that Isaiah's prophecy was especially for the last days. We do not need to make any interpretation, but simply take it as applying now.

Although it was so long ago, the people who then heard his words were in the same condition and circumstances that the people of these days are. They did not profit by the message. Let us therefore "give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, [and]" (Hebrews 2:1) "Fear, lest a promise having been left us ... any of us should come short of it, ... [and] fall after the same example of unbelief." (Hebrews 4:1,11)

Although destruction be determined upon all the land, a remnant shall be saved. "As a terebinth, and as an oak, whose stock remains, when they are felled; so the holy seed is the stock thereof." (Isaiah 6:13)

The holy seed, the humble believers in Christ, are the seed that prevents the earth from total and irretrievable ruin. As a tree will sprout and grow again, although cut down, so although the earth be made desolate, the few men who are left--the righteous ones--will be the sprout that will spring up and cause the whole earth to be renewed. "Israel shall blossom, and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit." (Isaiah 27:6)--Present Truth, January 26, 1899--Isaiah 6:1-13.

Chapter 10

God Our Only Refuge and Strength

"Know you this, O you peoples, and be struck with consternation; And give ear to it, all you of distant lands: Gird yourselves, and be dismayed; gird yourselves and be dismayed. Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; Speak the word, and it shall not stand: For God is with us. For thus said Jehovah unto me, As taking me by the hand He instructed me, That I should not walk in the way of this people, saying: Say you not, It is holy, Of everything of which this people shall say, It is holy: And fear not the object of their fear, neither be terrified. Jehovah God of Hosts, sanctify Him; And let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread: And He shall be unto you a sanctuary; But a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, To the two houses of Israel; A trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble, And shall fall, and be broken; and shall be ensnared, and caught. Bind up the testimony, seal the command among my disciples. I will therefore wait for Jehovah, who hides His face From the house of Jacob; yet will I look for Him. Behold, I, and the children, Whom Jehovah has given unto me; For signs and for wonders in Israel, From Jehovah God of Hosts, Who dwells in the mountain of Sion. And when they shall say unto you: Seek unto the necromancers and the wizards; To them that speak inwardly, and that mutter: Should not a people seek unto their God? Should they seek, instead of the living, unto the dead? Unto the command, and unto the testimony, let them seek: If they will not speak according to this word, In which there is no obscurity; Everyone of them shall pass though the land distressed and famished: And when he shall be famished, and angry with himself, He shall curse his king and his God. And he shall cast his eyes upwards, and look down to the earth: And lo! distress and darkness! Gloom, tribulation, and accumulated darkness!" (Isaiah 8:9-22,Lowth)

In studying this lesson, let each one use diligently both the King James and the Revised Version, in connection with the translation that is given here. There is quite a variation in the wording, but to the thoughtful student this will be a help instead of a cause of confusion. The different renderings, when carefully and thoughtfully compared, will only serve to give a broader view of the message of God. Different verbal renderings mean, not contradiction, but fullness.

United for Evil

The reading of verse 9 in the common version, or the Revision, is clearer and more in harmony with the text than that given by Lowth. "Associate yourselves, O you people, and you shall be broken in pieces; and give ear, all you of far countries: gird yourselves, and you shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and you shall be broken in pieces." (Isaiah 8:9,KJV) "Make an uproar, O you peoples, and be broken in pieces; and give ear, all you of far countries: gird yourselves, and be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and be broken in pieces." (Isaiah 8:9,RV)

The thought, as will be seen by comparison, is the same as that in the 2nd Psalm. We can readily see how the rendering, "Make an uproar" is consistent with, "Associate yourselves." A crowd is likely to make an uproar. "The heathen rage." (Psalm 2:1)

Notice that the people are not commanded to associate themselves together, or to make an uproar. This will be seen from the context. Even though they associate themselves, and rage against the Lord and His people, they "shall be broken in pieces." (Isaiah 8:9)

It is "a vain thing" that the heathen imagine, when they set themselves against the Lord, and against His Anointed, saying, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." (Psalm 2:3)

Instead of breaking, they will be broken. "There is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God." (Romans 13:1)

This being the case, it is evident that no one can withstand God. "Our God is in the heavens. He has done whatsoever He has pleased." (Psalm 115:3) "He rules over the kingdoms of the heathen, and in His hand is power and might, so that none are able to withstand Him." (2 Chronicles 20:6)

Therefore, "Fight not against the Lord God of your fathers; for you shall not prosper." (2 Chronicles 13:12)

God cannot be overthrown by His own power turned against Him. This is the comfort of the people of God in times of persecution. "Take counsel together, and it

shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us." (Isaiah 8:10)

In the French of Segond, this reads: "Form projects, and they shall come to nothing; give orders, and they shall come to nothing; give orders, and they shall be without effect; for God is with us." "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31)

Sons of God

God is King of kings. He makes His servant His firstborn: "Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth." (Psalm 89:27)

Read verses 17-27: "For You are the glory of their strength: and in your favor our horn shall be exalted. For the Lord is our defense; and the Holy One of Israel is our king. 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. I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him: With whom my hand shall be established: my arm also shall strengthen him. The enemy shall not exact upon him; nor the son of wickedness afflict him. And I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him. But my faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him: and in my name shall his horn be exalted. I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers. He shall cry unto me, You are my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation. Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth." (Psalm 89:17-27)

This is spoken to the seed of David. Christ was born "of the seed of David according to the flesh." (Romans 1:3)

But as His flesh is ours, we share His exaltation. "[God] raised Him 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)

And we are raised to sit with Him:

"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. 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." (Ephesians 2:1-6) "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, and to make them inherit the throne of glory." (Psalm 113:7-8) "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: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and He has set the world upon them." (1 Samuel 2:8)

Nothing to Fear from Man

God's people, therefore, have nothing to fear from man, or from any combination of men. If they are indeed His, they have a position higher than that of any earthly king. All nations may be arrayed against them, but they can accomplish no more against those who dwell in the secret place of the Most High than they can against the Almighty himself. "The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me? The Lord takes my part with them that help me: therefore shall I see my desire upon them that hate me. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes. All nations compassed me about: but in the name of the Lord will I destroy them. They compassed me about; yea, they compassed me about: but in the name of the Lord I will destroy them. They compassed me about like bees; they are quenched as the fire of thorns: for in the name of the Lord I will destroy them. You have thrust sore at me that I might fall: but the Lord helped me. The Lord is my strength and song, and is become my salvation. The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the Lord does valiantly. The right hand of the Lord is exalted: the right hand of the Lord does valiantly. I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord." (Psalm 118:6-17)

It is true that earthly rulers may put some of God's people to death, even as they crucified Christ, but even so they cannot prevail against them. Christ conquered when He went into the grave.

One man who knows the Lord (and the only way we can know Him is to have Him dwelling in us), is stronger than all nations combined. His authority is greater than theirs. This is the fact; unfortunately there are so many Christians who do not know their rightful place.

The fact that God's people have a place higher than the kings of the earth does not make them defiant. They are not to use their authority against men nor governments, but to help. Indeed, as soon as they assume a defiant, dictatorial attitude, they lose their power. Their strength is the strength of meekness.

God clothes His people with His own kingly authority, in order that they may properly represent Him as ambassadors. Paul, brought before the Roman governors, preached the Gospel to them; and the man in chains caused the man on the throne to tremble.

No Safety in Man

People confederate for the purpose of maintaining or executing some project which they think is right. So the translation which we are following has in verse 12, "it is holy." We shall get the sense, however, better, if we follow the common or the Revised rendering, "a confederacy," or "a conspiracy."

God would not have His people become bound up in any worldly compact. Ancient Israel were forbidden to make any league with the inhabitants of the land. Even so now they are not to be members of any human organization whatever. The church of Christ, of which He is the direct Head, provides for every want. Benevolent associations, so-called, are not needed by Christians, for the church is that. A little reflection will enable anybody to see that these associations are selfish, and so opposed to the Gospel of Christ.

It is not because God would have His people exclusive, that He tells them to make no league with the people of earth, and not to unite with any worldly society whatever for protection or help. No; it is because He would have them save the world.

When His people unite with the world in any organization or society for mutual help or protection, they thereby disparage Him, who is the only real help. They give the world the impression that the church of Christ, nay, Christ himself, does not afford sufficient protection and help. They put themselves in the position of dependents upon men, instead of occupying the position of benefactors, which God designs that they should hold.

They are to give to the world, even to kings, and not to receive from them. A true child of God, poor and unknown, is better able to offer protection to an earthly ruler, than the Government is to protect him. This being so, how much more does it apply to all smaller combinations of men.

In ancient times anyone who acknowledged God could join His people. Even so it is now. The church is God's kingdom. All may come into it, who are willing to have Christ reign over and in them.

And God's people, instead of being exclusive, must mingle with the people of the world, even going out into the highways and the lanes to find them, to do them good, and to invite them to come and share the blessings of God's house. But how dishonoring to the God whom they profess to serve, when they, finding that danger threatens, seek protection from those whom they are sent to deliver.

There are many societies organized for the purpose of helping men temporally and spiritually,--of improving their physical and moral condition,--and they all do more or less good; but that is no reason why the Christian should join them. He must not oppose them, but let them do all the good they can; but he must know that he, as a member of Christ's body, has a field of operation, and a power for good, infinitely greater than they have, so that to join them would narrow his efforts.

The glorious Gospel is the sovereign remedy for all human ills; therefore lift the standard high, and do not let it be confused with anything else.

The Secret Place

"Sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself; and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread. And He shall be for a sanctuary." (Isaiah 8:13-14)

Compare with:

"If you suffer for righteousness sake, happy are you; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." (1 Peter 3:14-15)

The only place of safety for any man is the secret place of the Most High. But we abide in God only when He abides in us. When God is set in the soul-temple as supreme, He himself is the Sanctuary of the soul. Then the man has a hope of which he can give a good account. It is a living hope. "Let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread." (Isaiah 8:13)

But God is a kind and compassionate Father, as much more tender with His children than any earthly father is with his children as He is greater than man. Earthly fathers have love for their children, but: "God is love." (1 John 4:8)

What a blessed position to be in, when the only thing in the universe to be afraid of is God, who is love. He loves men, even sinners, but hates sin. He is terrible to nothing but sin.

When He is our fear, the result is the destruction of sin. The only dread we need to have, with respect to God, is the dread of displeasing Him; and when we fear to displease Him, so much that we will trust Him, and yield to His ways, He will give us the testimony that we please Him. "Behold, I and the children whom God has given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of Hosts." (Isaiah 8:18)

Who says this? Read Hebrews 2:9-13 (Hebrews 2:9-13; But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For 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, Saying, I will declare your name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto you. And again, I will put my trust in Him. And again, Behold I and the children which God has given me), and it will at once be seen that Christ is the speaker here. Then we may take courage to go back and read verse 17 of our lesson: "I will wait upon the Lord, that hides His face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for Him." (Isaiah 8:17)

Has God hidden His face from us? So He did from Christ, yet Christ saw Him again. Not long ago one said to me, "God has forsaken me." "Very well," said I, "that is just what Christ said." "Ah, but," said the other, "God had not cast Him off." "Indeed He had not; and since all that He suffered was for you, and in your place, you may be just as sure that He has not cast you off."

No matter how much God seems to hide His face, if we go through the dark experience with Christ, we may be confident. Of all overcomers it is said, "They shall see His face." (Revelation 22:4)

Signs and Wonders

But what about the signs and wonders? That is a most glorious prospect. It presents the most marvelous possibilities before believers in God. "I and the children whom the Lord has given me, are for signs and wonders, [says Christ]." (Isaiah 8:18)

That is, we ourselves are classed in with Christ. It is not merely that we are to do signs and wonders, but we are to be them. All the marvels of "the Man Christ Jesus" are to be reproduced in all who are men in Christ. The world is to wonder at Christians just as much as it did at Christ, and for the same reason. "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." (1 Corinthians 1:22-24)

Here we have the same stumbling-block as in our lesson. Thank God that the stumbling-block is the sanctuary to believers. This stumbling-block is the sign; it is Christ crucified. You will remember that Christ said the Jews should have no other sign

than His crucifixion. "A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah." (Matthew 16:4)

He gave them the most wondrous sign that could be given, and they stumbled at it. God's people are to present the same sign to the world. When the death and resurrection of Christ are fully manifest in their lives, they themselves will be signs greater than any miracle that they could perform. Let the sign, then, the sign of the cross, shine out.

The remaining verses in this chapter were quoted for the sake of the connection, but will be left for special study till next week.

When Jesus sent out His disciples to preach, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand," (Matthew 10:7) we read: "He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease." (Matthew 10:1)

Again, just before His ascension to heaven, He said to His apostles, "You shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you: and you shall be witnesses unto me." (Acts 1:8,DRB)

Unless power accompanies the message it is not the Gospel. That which makes God's message to the world a gospel, or glad tidings, is that it brings the power which is so much needed. "The Gospel ... is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes." (Romans 1:16)

In the church of Christ there must be seen the working of His own mighty power. Unless this is true His people do not bear witness to Him. Any power short of the power of God does not reveal Him to men.--Present Truth, January 26, 1899--Isaiah 8:9-22.

Chapter 11

The Power and Glory of the Kingdom

"And when they shall say unto you: Seek unto the necromancers and the wizards; To them that speak inwardly, and that mutter: Should not a people seek unto their God? Should not they seek, instead of the living, unto the dead? Unto the command, and unto the testimony, let them seek: If they will not speak according to this word, In which there is no obscurity, Everyone of them shall pass through the land distressed and famished: And when he shall be famished, and angry with himself, He shall curse his king and his God. And he shall cast his eyes upwards, and look down to the earth: And lo! distress and darkness! Gloom, tribulation, and accumulated darkness! But there shall not hereafter be darkness in the land which was distressed: In the former time He debased The land of Zebulon, and the land of Naphtali; But in the latter time He has made it glorious: Even the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the nations." (Isaiah 8:19-23,Lowth) "The people that walked in darkness Have seen a great light; They that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, Unto them has the light shined. You have multiplied the nation, You have increased their joy: They rejoice before You as with the joy of harvest; As they rejoice who divide the spoil. For the yoke of his burden, the staff laid on his shoulder, The rod of his oppressor, have You broken, as in the day of Midian. For the graves of the armed warrior in the conflict, And the garment rolled in much blood, Shall be for a burning, even for a fuel of fire. 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, Counselor, The Mighty God, the Father of the everlasting age, the Prince of peace. Of the increase of His Government and peace there shall be no end, Upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, To fix it, and to establish it, With judgment and with justice, henceforth and for ever: The zeal of Jehovah God of Hosts will do this." (Isaiah 9:1-6,Lowth)

It will be noticed that in Lowth's translation, which is here printed, the chapter division is not the same as in our common version. The 8th chapter is given twenty-three verses, so that what we ordinarily call the seventh verse of the 9th chapter is here the sixth.

Some other versions follow this division, which is according to that in the Hebrew Bible. But both amount to the same thing however, since it is clearly to be seen that

there is no break in the subject, and in the prophecy as originally written there was no division whatever into chapters and verses.

The scripture is just the same whether it be called 8th or 9th chapter, and attention is here called to the fact of the difference in numbering the verses, so that none may be confused.

Wisdom only from God

"When they shall say unto you, Seek ... unto wizards." (Isaiah 8:19)

The meaning of the word "wizard" is "one who knows." The Hebrew word rendered "wizard" is merely a form of the verb "to know." Of course people would not be exhorted to seek to them who did not profess to know. But if they know, why not seek to them? Because they do not know. Their knowledge is foolishness. They "speak inwardly." (Isaiah 8:19)

Their knowledge is of themselves, and not from God. It is not the wisdom that comes from above. "[God] frustrates the tokens of liars, and makes diviners mad; [He] turns wise men backward, and makes their knowledge foolishness." (Isaiah 44:25) "The Lord gives wisdom, out of His mouth comes knowledge and understanding." (Proverbs 2:6)

In Christ are "hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Colossians 2:3)

The place to go for wisdom is to the Fountain Head, and not to any man, even though he got his wisdom from God. God gives to all liberally. Much less should we go to those who speak from themselves. For remember that wisdom is a gift from God. Truth is revealed, not searched out by human shrewdness.

No man knows the place where light dwells, but light springs forth, and we see it. Even so with truth, which is light, we get it merely by looking--looking to God and His Word. The man who thinks that he can "originate thought," will find out at the last that his supposed thought was emptiness. Only the thoughts of God shall stand.

But if we should not seek wisdom from living men, not even from ourselves, how utterly foolish to go to the dead for wisdom. "The dead know not anything." (Ecclesiastes 9:5) "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goes forth, he returns to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." (Psalm 146:3-4)

We pity the folly of poor heathen who ask wisdom from a piece of wood or stone; but what shall be said of the foolishness of men calling themselves enlightened Christians, who go to the dead for knowledge? What an insult to God! "To the law and to the testimony." (Isaiah 8:20)

Because, "The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." (Psalm 19:7-8) "You through your commandments have made me wiser than my enemies." (Psalm 119:98) "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." (Job 28:28)

The Lord gives wisdom, but not apart from himself in Christ. He cannot separate any of His attributes from himself. All things are in Christ, and He gives us all things in giving us Christ. Nothing is inherent in man; but whatever good thing there is in any man is the working of God in Him. Christ is: "the power of God, and the wisdom of God." (1 Corinthians 1:24)

And He is that to us who believe. God is not niggardly with His gifts. "[He] gives to all liberally." (James 1:5)

So it is better for a man to acknowledge the truth, that he knows nothing, because then he has for use all the wisdom of God. "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seems to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise." (1 Corinthians 3:18)

Even as God cannot separate His attributes from himself, for in that case He would cease to be God, so He cannot separate these attributes from each other, "for the Lord our God is one Lord." (Deuteronomy 6:4)

Therefore wisdom and righteousness go together. "[Christ is] made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." (1 Corinthians 1:30)

If we seek the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, all necessary things, including wisdom, will be added. "If any man wills to do His will, He shall know." (John 7:17)

The way of wisdom is therefore the way of the cross, which saves from sin. "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God." (1 Corinthians 1:18)

And this power is the direct antithesis of foolishness. All that any man has to do is to live a life of faith in God's Word, thus pleasing God, and this will bring him into such close companionship with the Source of all wisdom that he cannot fail to know things that are hidden from the wise men of the earth. How much better to seek wisdom from a living God than from a mortal man.

The Light of God's Word

Whatever reading of verse 20 we follow, we find the same thing. "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)

God's word is light, and those who reject that word have no light, and so must walk in darkness. Or we may take it as given in the Revision, "if they speak not according to this word, surely there is no morning for them." (Isaiah 8:20)

How can there be, if they reject the only source of light--God's Word? Or we may take the rendering of our text from the Lowth translation, "If they will not speak according to this word, in which there is no obscurity, Everyone of them shall pass through the land distressed and famished," (Isaiah 8:20-21) and shall find only darkness. All the readings agree in the one thing, that God's Word is light, and that apart from it there is only darkness. And it is true food also; so that those who reject it must go hungry.

By comparing verses 1 and 2 of chapter 9 with Matthew 4:12-16, we see that it is a direct prophecy concerning Christ. There was formerly great darkness in the land, but now, "He has made it glorious." (Isaiah 8:23,Lowth; ch. 9:1 in KJV)

Though "darkness cover the earth, and gross darkness the people," (Isaiah 60:2) the glory of the Lord shall lighten the gloom; for He is "the Light of the world," (John 8:12) and, "The Light shines in darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." (John 1:5) "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death upon them has the light shined." (Isaiah 9:2)

The light of Christ pierces even the darkness of the grave, for He went there; and even the grave was not able to quench the light of His life. His life--the light--triumphed over the darkness of the tomb.

The Joy of Redemption

The Revised Version renders verse 3 (verse 2 according to Lowth) just as we have it in our text: "You have multiplied the nation, You have increased the joy." (Isaiah 9:3,RV)

The connection shows that this is better than, "You have not increased the joy" [KJV]; for immediately we read, "they joy before You according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil." (Isaiah 9:3)

The question at once arises, "How can there be so marked a difference, even a direct contradiction, in the two translations?"

The answer is at hand: In the Hebrew the word "not," and the phrase "to him" are almost identical, and are pronounced exactly the same. Look now in the margin of verse 3, in the King James Version, and you will see the words "to him" given as an alternative. The nation has been multiplied by Christ, and thereby the joy to Him has been increased.

We read of Christ that, having been made an offering for sin, "He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. ... and He shall divide the spoil with the strong." (Isaiah 53:10,12)

Christ is the Seed, but, having died, He bears much fruit, so that the nation is increased. This is His joy, and His people share it with Him. It is the joy of harvest, because in the harvest--the end of the world--all His people will be gathered into the kingdom to shine forth as the sun. "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. Who has ears to hear, let him hear." (Matthew 13:38-43)

It will be the rejoicing of them that divide spoil, because He then opens the graves, and takes away from "him that had the power of death, that is the devil," (Hebrews 2:14) millions whom he has shut up in his prison house,--the grave,--claiming them as his own. The joy that is increased to Jesus in the multiplying of the nation, is shared by all His saints, because He gives them a share in His redeeming work, and thus says to them, "Enter into the joy of your Lord." (Matthew 25:21)

Destroying the Works of the Devil

"You have broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor." (Isaiah 9:4)

For Jesus took part in flesh and blood, "that through death He might destroy [not death merely, but]him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." (Hebrews 2:14) "Having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in himself." (Colossians 2:15,margin)

Satan is the oppressor, who binds heavy burdens on men. He has laden men with iniquity, but the bands have been broken, and liberty is proclaimed to all the captives. To all who are in prison the Lord says, "Go forth," and they can do it if they wish, for in the face of that command Satan has no power to hinder. "For all the armor of the armed

man in the tumult, and the garments rolled in blood, shall even be for burning, for fuel of fire." (Isaiah 9:4,Lowth)

Yes, "[The Lord] makes wars to cease unto the end of the earth; He breaks the bow, and cuts the spear in sunder; He burns the chariot in the fire." (Psalm 46:9)

War is of the devil, the destroyer. Christ redeems by destroying the destroyer, and so all the instruments of destruction will be destroyed. And the power by which at the last great battle all who destroy and all their weapons of destruction shall be destroyed, is the power by which today the yoke of Satan's oppression is broken for every believer.

Humanity is to Rule

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given." (Isaiah 9:6)

Who is He? "The Son of man." He is born unto us. The message that came to the shepherds of Bethlehem on the night of Christ's birth, is spoken equally to us, "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:11)

He is our Saviour, our Christ, our Son. He belongs to us, and so all that He has is ours.

"With Him God freely gives us all things." (Romans 8:32) "The government shall be upon His shoulder." (Isaiah 9:6)

The Government is upon His shoulder; the kingdom is His. Therefore we shall reign with Him; for He who is born to us is also "The Everlasting Father." (Isaiah 9:6)

In Him we have obtained an inheritance. "For if by one man's offense death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by One, Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:17)

Never forget that as Christ is raised to the throne of God, "Far above all principality and power and might and dominion," (Ephesians 1:21) and we are made to sit together with Him in heavenly places, (Ephesians 2:4-6; 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) we have thus with Him power "over all the power of the enemy;" (Luke 10:19) so that in Christ we may assert our freedom from every bondage. Since Christ has given us power over "the prince of this world," (John 14:30) "the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience," (Ephesians 2:2) how can we have any fear of what wicked men may do to us? (Hebrews 13:6; The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me) God can restrain the wrath of man, and that which He allows to manifest itself, He makes to praise Him. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise You: the remainder of wrath You shall restrain." (Psalm 76:10)

The Great Counselor

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

His name is Counselor. "[He is] wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." (Isaiah 28:29)

He is a host in himself, so that: "the multitude of counselors [in which] there is safety," (Proverbs 11:14) is found in Him. We read so often in the Bible of people who went to seek counsel of the Lord, and they were not disappointed. Why not do the same thing now, since God is the same? Of them who "walk not in the counsel of the ungodly, ... But ... delight ... in the law of the Lord," (Psalm 1:1-2) it is said that: "all that they do shall prosper." (Psalm 1:3)

The Lord himself is pledged to execute any action that He counsels, so that in Him we find not only advice as to what to do, but the thing itself done. He who is "the wisdom of God, ... is of God made unto us wisdom and right doing." (1 Corinthians 1:24,30)

The Lord Will Do It

"Of the increase of His Government and peace there shall be no end, ... The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." (Isaiah 9:7)

Christ does not ask any help of man to establish His kingdom. "The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His Father David." (Luke 1:32)

All that man has to do is to submit to His reign. We have not to enact laws and prepare the kingdom for Him, and then conduct Him to it; the kingdom is His, for God has anointed Him King in Zion, and He will put all His enemies under His feet. It is not by strife, not by force, not by human effort, but by the peaceful power of God in individual hearts, that the kingdom is made ready for the King. Then leave others alone, and "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts." (Colossians 3:15)--Present Truth, February 16, 1899--Isaiah 8:19-23, 9:1-6.

Chapter 12

Christ's Coming Foretold

Who can ever become weary of the grand words of the evangelical prophet of Israel? What a richness, a luxuriance, there is in them, and what rhythm? How easy it is to remember them! They fasten themselves in our memory, never to be effaced. There are but few of them in this lesson, but they are wonderfully comprehensive. Let us read them. "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them has the light shined. You have multiplied the nation, You have increased their joy: they joy before You according to the joy in harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, You have broken as in the day of Midian. For all the armor of the armed man in the tumult, and the garments rolled in blood, shall be even for bursting, for fuel of fire. 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, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts shall perform this." (Isaiah 9:2-7,RV)

From Darkness to Light

The lesson begins with darkness, and ends with light. The preceding chapter closes with the statement that upon the earth there shall be "trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish." (Isaiah 8:22) "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 60:2)

Christ is the light of the world; there is no life but from Him, and His light is the light of righteousness, for He is "the Sun of righteousness." (Malachi 4:2)

That the prophecy in our lesson refers to the first advent of Christ, is made plain by comparing the first two verses with Matthew 4:15-17. It was when "the Word of life" (1 John 1:1) was manifested, that the light came into the world. "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men." (John 1:4)

But God did not leave the world in darkness for four thousand years. Far from it. "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 Word of life--the light of men--was "from the beginning." (1 John 1:1)

It was the eternal life, shining for the salvation of all men. And men saw the light--and rejoiced in it--in the far-away olden time. Abraham saw it, and was glad. (John 8:5,8) When the light shone forth out of the darkness in the beginning, "God saw the light, that it was good." (Genesis 1:4)

From that time it has been bringing good news. Thus long has "the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ," (2 Corinthians 4:4) been in the world. "There be many that say, who will show us any good? Lord, lift up the light of your countenance upon us." (Psalm 4:6)

From "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," (2 Corinthians 4:6) has all the good come, that has ever been known on this earth. "Turn us again, O God, and cause your face to shine: and we shall be saved." (Psalm 80:3) "God be merciful to us and bless us; and cause His face to shine upon us; That your way may be known upon earth, your saving health among all nations." (Psalm 67:12-13) "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)

Thus sang the Psalmist hundreds of years before Jesus walked in "Galilee of the Gentiles." (Matthew 4:15)

Ah, the light that shines forth from Jesus of Nazareth was enlightening the earth ages before the glory of God shone round the shepherds of Bethlehem, and the angel said, in fulfillment of the words of Isaiah, "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour." (Luke 2:11) "And the light shines in the darkness; and the darkness apprehended it not." (John 1:5)

There is healing in the wings of the Sun of righteousness. He makes people feel whole, "every whit whole." (John 7:3)

To those that "sat in the shadow of death, light has sprung up." (Matthew 4:16)

The light of life scatters the shadows of death. "The light of His countenance" (Psalm 4:6) has in it "saving health." (Psalm 67:2)

Let "the joyful sound" (Psalm 89:15) ring out over all the earth, that He who heals the sick, gives sight to the blind, cleanses the lepers, raises the dead, brings the captives out of the dark prison house, and binds up the broken-hearted, has come to earth, and that His healing presence has never departed. Then why are not all healed and set at liberty? Oh, "Many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them were cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian." (Luke 4:27)

Yet the light shone for all. It still shines. From those who take the veil off their hearts, the shadow of death will flee away before the life-giving beams of the Sun of righteousness.

Sowing Time and Harvest

"And they shall joy according to the joy in harvest." (Isaiah 9:3) "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." (Psalm 97:11)

The sowing-time is the promise of the harvest. What though the corn of wheat falls into the earth and dies, and the storms of long, dark winter nights howl above it? The promise is sure: "If it die, it brings forth much fruit." (John 12:24)

Therefore he who sees with the eye of faith may rejoice as much amid the blasts of winter as when the golden light of autumn reveals the glory of the ripened sheaves. So although the rod of the oppressor is grievous, and "for a season, ... you are in heaviness through manifold temptations, The trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, you love; in whom

though now you see Him not, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." (1 Peter 1:6-9)

Rich men now oppress the poor; the just are condemned and killed; but the joy of the coming harvest is reflected in their faces, and for very joy they do not resist; but take all patiently. "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) "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. Who has ears to hear, let him hear." (Matthew 13:39-43)

All the armor of the armed man--the furious oppressor--shall be only for a "burning, for fuel of fire." (Isaiah 9:5)

Same Glory in First and Second Advents

Whereby may we know this? By this: "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given." (Isaiah 9:6)

The first coming of Christ had in it the power and the glory and the joy of the second advent. That little Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger, is "the power of God." (1 Corinthians 1:24)

A "tender plant" (Isaiah 53:2) it was, weak as any other babe that ever was born, yet Herod trembled, and raged against it in vain; "for the weakness of God is stronger than men." (1 Corinthians 1:25)

That Child shall yet cause all the kingdoms of this world to totter and fall and crumble into pieces that cannot be found, while "of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end." (Isaiah 9:7)

Often during His short revelation on this earth did the "Holy Child Jesus" (Acts 4:27,30) show forth His power and glory. Once was it seen that nothing less than "the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," (2 Peter 1:16) were veiled by the flesh of the Carpenter of Nazareth, and the three disciples in the holy mount were "eye-witnesses of His majesty." (2 Peter 1:16)

For the light that encircled Him then was not light that shone upon Him, but light that shone from Him; "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father" (John 1:14) was always visible to those who could recognize it in the form of "grace and truth." (John 1:14)

So we see that the mighty power that will be revealed in the shaking heavens and earth at the second coming of Christ, will be but the power of Christ's coming in the flesh. It is the same "power of the Highest" (Luke 1:35) that overshadowed Mary, enabling her to bring forth the "holy thing" (Luke 1:35) that was called the Son of God; and it is the same "power that works in us," (Ephesians 3:20) even now, to form Christ in us the hope of glory. There is not so much difference between the first and the second advent of Christ, as people are wont to think. The prophets, as in the instance before us, often mentioned them together as one. The second is but the further unfolding of the first. No man believes in the first, who does not also believe in the second.

He who was, is the One who is, and who is to come. (Revelation 1:8) He is not divided; we must take the whole of Him or nothing. If we do not accept Him as the One who is coming again to take visible possession of His own inheritance, then we do not fully realize His power as our present sovereign Lord.

Never in eternity will there be any more power manifested in Jesus than was necessary to bring Him to birth in Bethlehem of Judea, and to raise Him from the dead. And that is the power by which He now dwells in every living heart. The power of His coming to Judgment, is the power of His humble birth, and the power of the cross. Only by the cross are repentant sinners saved, and reprobate sinners destroyed.

Therefore lift up your heads and rejoice. The time of tribulation is the time to "joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." (Romans 5:11)

The oppressor may be as cruel and fierce as ever; "your adversary the devil," (1 Peter 5:8) may be as active as ever; there may be visible oppression; but Christ has promised "liberty to the captives," (Isaiah 61:1) and the liberty is ours. The power by which He will at the last "rend the heavens, [and] come down," (Isaiah 64:1) is the same power by which He now rides on a cherub and flies on the wings of the wind to the help of His afflicted, tempted ones. (Psalm 8:1-10) Then why not now rejoice over the conquered foe. Do you expect to be glad when the Lord comes to claim His own? You will not unless you rejoice now, even while surrounded with trials. The crown will be given only to those who "love His appearing;" (2 Timothy 4:8) and none love His appearing who do not know the power of it in His blessed presence. "A woman when she is in travail has sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembers no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world." (John 16:21)

Therefore, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice;" (Philippians 4:4) for, "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given." (Isaiah 9:6) "Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together Before the Lord; for He comes to judge the earth." (Psalm 98:8-9)--Present Truth, December 14, 1899--This article was not part of the series on Isaiah, but is included because it fits well into this collection--Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons--Isaiah 9:2-7.

Chapter 13

Strength Out of Weakness

"But there shall spring forth a rod from the trunk of Jesse; and a scion from his roots shall become fruitful. And the Spirit of Jehovah shall rest upon Him; The Spirit of wisdom, and understanding; The Spirit of counsel and strength; The Spirit of the knowledge, and the fear of Jehovah. And He shall be of quick discernment in the fear of Jehovah: So that not according to the sight of His eyes shall He judge; Nor according to the hearing of His ears shall He reprove. But with righteousness shall He judge the poor; And with equity shall He work conviction in the meek of the earth. And He shall smite the earth with a blast of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked one. And righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins; And faithfulness the cincture of His reins. Then shall the wolf take up his abode with the lamb; And the leopard shall lie down with the kid; And the calf and the young lion, and the fatling shall come together; And a little child shall lead them. And the heifer and the she-bear shall feed together; Together shall their young ones lie down; And the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the suckling shall play on the hole of the aspic, (Archaic word for "asp": any of several venomous snakes.) And upon the den of the baslisk (A legendary serpent or dragon with lethal breath and glance.) shall the weaned child lay his hand. They shall not hurt, nor destroy, in all my holy mountain; For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, As the waters that cover the depths of the sea." (Isaiah 11:1-9,Lowth)

It will be seen that this chapter is a continuation of something begun in the preceding chapter. Read the following, and you will see that a general destruction is foretold: "Behold Jehovah shall lop the flourishing branch with a dreadful crash; and the high of stature shall be cut down, and the lofty shall be brought low; And He shall hew the thickets oft with iron, and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty hand." (Isaiah 10:33-34)

A Rod

But, although there shall be this cutting off of the mighty trees of the forest, "There shall spring forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a scion from his roots shall be fruitful. And the Spirit of Jehovah shall rest upon Him," (Isaiah 11:1-2) so that He shall do great things. "There shall spring forth a rod." (Isaiah 11:1)

The Hebrew word here rendered "rod," occurs in but one other place in the Bible, namely, "In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride." (Proverbs 14:3)

A rod, a stick, only a stick, yet of more value than all the trees of the forest because of the Spirit of Jehovah resting upon Him. This also is for our learning and comfort. Did you never feel that you were but a useless stick? Never mind; it is with a stick, a rod such as one might cut as a useless thing, that God will judge the world. "I can of my own self do nothing." (John 5:30) "I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people." (Psalm 22:6)

This is what Christ said of himself. No man can possibly feel himself more helpless and useless. But it is not what we are, but what God is, that determines what shall be done. He is. That is enough.

"He that comes to God must believe that He is." (Hebrews 11:6) "Yes, but I am so."

Stop! It is not you are, but He is. If you come to God believing that He is, you will not straightway begin to say of yourself, "I am." "But hear me out. I was only going to say that I am nothing at all."

Of course you are not; that is embraced in the statement that He is. As long as He is, you don't need to be. Let Him be what He is,--everything,--and then you will find your happiness in the fact that you are nothing. But don't forget that the only proper way for you to declare that you are nothing is to acknowledge that God, and God only, is.

The Abiding Spirit

"The Spirit of Jehovah shall abide upon Him." (Isaiah 11:2)

The same Spirit is given to us, that He may abide with us for ever. He will be to us all that He was to Jesus, for He is "the eternal Spirit." (Hebrews 9:14)

The spirit of man is the life of man, since "the body without the spirit is dead." (James 2:26)

So the Spirit of God is the life of God. "The Spirit is life because of righteousness."
(Romans 8:10)

When the Spirit of Jehovah rests upon one, that one has the power of the life of Jehovah, "the power of an endless life." (Hebrews 7:16)

What can be done by that one then, (Mind, it is not what that one can do, but what can be done through him. See Acts 2:22) is measured only by God's own purposes for him. When the life of Jehovah animates a person, it matters not how insignificant he is, -he is then the instrument of Almighty power. When God breathed His life into a lump of earth, the clod became a man having dominion over all the earth.

How diversified are the manifestations of the Spirit? Here are set forth at least six of "the seven Spirits of God." The Spirit of God is pre-eminently wisdom and power for eyes are a synonym for perception, and horns indicate power; and the slain Lamb in the midst of the throne has "seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." (Revelation 5:6)

Why are they sent forth into all the earth? Is it to spy upon people? By no means; they are sent forth to be our wisdom; for Christ is to us "the power of God, and the wisdom of God." (1 Corinthians 1:24)

The Spirit of Wisdom

"The Spirit of wisdom and understanding; the Spirit of counsel and might." (Isaiah 11:2)

Wisdom is practical, not theoretical; it is real, and not simply a conception. The wisdom of God does not exhaust itself in formulas and statements. That which God in His wisdom counsels, He does. The counsel of peace (Zechariah 6:13) is between the Father and the Son, and Christ our peace (Ephesians 2:14) has come making peace for us. "He lays up sound wisdom for the righteous." (Proverbs 2:7)

This word, "wisdom," and also in: "With Him is strength and wisdom," (Job 12:16) are the same as the words "substance" and "working" in the following texts: "You dissolve my substance." (Job 30:22)

And, "The Lord of hosts ... wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." (Isaiah 28:29)

There is in His wisdom the performance of the thing. "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 10:12)

This is the wisdom that God gives us. It is the wisdom that succeeds. It is not the wisdom of man, which plans, and then tries the plans to see if they will work; God's plans always work. His plan works itself. Why need any man fall? He cannot, if he accepts the free gift of God. The wisdom of God and the power of God must overcome everything; and they are ours in Christ.

Quick Understanding

Of the man who walks in the counsel of God, it is said that: "Whatsoever he does shall prosper." (Psalm 1:3) "And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord." (Isaiah 11:3)

The two words "quick understanding" are from a single Hebrew word, the verb meaning "to smell." It is the verb from which comes the Hebrew word for wind, air, spirit. It is the same word that is rendered "smell" in: "The Lord smelled a sweet savor," (Genesis 8:21) and, "Noses have they, but they smell not," (Psalm 115:6) and in other places. So we may read this verse, "The Spirit of the Lord shall cause Him to smell the fear of the Lord."

But one smells by breathing, drawing in the air. So we have the most literal rendering by Segond, "Il respirera la crainte de l'Éternel," [He shall breathe the fear of the Lord.]

That is to say, the fear of the Lord is His life, He breathes it in with every breath.

Delight

And since it is only because of our breath that we are able to have any pleasure, and breathing is itself a delight, we can see in the text the rendering also of the Revised Version: "His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord." (Isaiah 11:3,RV)

Remember that Jesus is the representative Man. The one here referred to is from "the stem of Jesse." (Isaiah 11:1) "Christ ... was made of the seed of David according to the flesh." (Romans 1:3)

Therefore it is "the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5) upon whom this Spirit of understanding rests. Therefore in Him the same gift is ours. Everyone whose delight is in the law of the Lord, shall have prosperity in everything; and the Spirit of God is given in order that we may have our delight in the fear of the Lord.

If in the air that we breathe we recognize God's own Spirit of life, life itself will be a greater pleasure than ever before, and the delight of our life will be the presence of the Lord. So it was with Jesus.

Saved by His Breath

Can the breath of God make a man good? Most certainly. Christ breathed upon the disciples, and said, "Receive the Holy Ghost." (John 20:22)

In the beginning God made man of the dust of the ground. The man was perfect in form, but there was no life in him. As a man he was good for nothing. Then God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul--a "very good" man. As soon as God had made the man perfect by breathing into him, "[He] saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good." (Genesis 1:31)

But that could not have been said of man before the breath of God was put into him. Therefore it was the breath of God that made man good--very good. But it was the breath of God that made him good, and it is by the same breath that we are saved. "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)

As freely as the air is the Holy Spirit given to us, and He comes to us in the very gift of the air. God gives us air, breathing it moment by moment into our lungs, in order that we may live. But He expects us to live righteously, and He gives us the means whereby to live righteously, for the life which He gives to all men is His own life, and His life is righteousness.

If we but recognized the Lord as He is, we should breathe in righteousness with every breath. The Spirit of God would be our life, so that we should be wholly spiritual. "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." (Romans 8:9-10)

The Spirit would be our wisdom and our power. We should know the will of God, because God would do our thinking in us, thus working to will; and we should do His will, because He would at the same time work to do of His good pleasure. "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, 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)

There are infinite possibilities before the man who accepts the Spirit of God as his life. What eye has not seen, nor ear heard, and what the mind of man has never conceived, God has revealed unto us by His Holy Spirit.

Judging Righteously

"He shall not judge according to appearance nor according to hearsay." (Isaiah 11:3, Literal)

But that is just the way men judge, and the only way they judge. Note the contrast: "He shall not judge after the His eyes, nor reprove after the hearing of His ears; but with righteousness shall He judge." (Isaiah 11:3)

That is to say, He judges with righteousness because He does not judge after sight nor hearing. Therefore to judge after the sight of one's eyes, and after the hearing of

one's ears, is to judge unrighteously. But since this is the only way by which judgment in the world is rendered, it follows that there is not on earth any such thing as righteous judgment.

A well-known London magistrate said to a man who came to his court seeking justice: "You must know that law and justice are two entirely different things; you can get the law here, but not justice."

This is so, not because there are no men yet in the world who have right desires, but because the best human judgment must be faulty. It is absolutely impossible that there should be a perfectly just human government. "With righteousness shall He judge." (Isaiah 11:4)

He himself is righteousness; His life is righteousness. He judges with righteousness because He judges by himself. It is personal experience with Him. He has passed through every possible phase of human experience. Although in Him was never any sin, He was made to be sin for us, and as a sinner He experienced the punishment due to sin. "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him." (Isaiah 53:5)

Now, "He [was] made to be sin for us ... [in order] that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Therefore when this purpose is fulfilled in us, we do not come into judgment at all:

"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." (John 5:24)

But if not, then we experience the punishment that inevitably follows the rejection of His life. When in the judgment it appears that God's perfect, eternal life has been given to all men, each soul will pronounce sentence on himself, and declare that God is just. No one can say that it is unfair in God to give us exactly what He gave His only begotten Son.

God's Life Consumes Evil

"With the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked one." (Isaiah 11:4)

Compare with: "And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming." (2 Thessalonians 2:8) "Our God is a consuming fire." (Hebrews 12:29)

His life is constantly working to consume evil,--all that tends to death,--else we could not live. The life of God in the sunlight, the air, and the water, is continually at work to purify the earth. Waste products are consumed. This shows us how God a Spirit is working for our cleansing.

But if, in spite of the goodness of God, we cling to evil, so that we ourselves are evil, then at the last that life which is given us for our support, and which works for our good by consuming that which is corrupt, will necessarily consume us as plague-spots on the earth. So the slaying of the wicked at the last day is by the life of God, and is in keeping with the working of God to preserve life. The working of the life will result in the destruction of death, by destroying every cause of death.

A Peaceful Life Now

"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den." (Isaiah 11:6-8)

Then shall the wolf dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid; the cow and the bear, and their young ones, shall feed and lie down together; so gentle will these beasts be that a child can lead them at pleasure; and the now venomous beasts will be the harmless playmate of the prattling babe: "They shall not hurt nor destroy," (Isaiah 11:9) because the whole earth will then be "full of the knowledge of the Lord;" (Isaiah 11:9) and, "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits." (James 3:17)

See what a change is to take place in the nature of the now ferocious beasts; but do not suppose that this involves any new plan; it is only the restoration of that condition of things which existed at the beginning. God never made one beast to prey upon another. In the beginning, when God gave to man his diet of fruits and grains, He said, "And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to everything that creeps upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat; and it was so." (Genesis 1:30)

The wolf, the leopard, and the lion, were therefore vegetarians in the beginning, just as the ox is. God is the Good Shepherd, who feeds His flock, watching over it for its own good, and giving His life that the sheep of His pasture may have life. He does not tend His flock in order that He may live off them.

Satan is the roaring lion going about seeking whom he may devour. From him man has learned to destroy life in order that he may live, and by so doing has shortened his own life; for destruction can never produce life, any more than the wrath of man can work the righteousness of God. (James 1:20; For the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God.)

And when man, creation's lord, began to develop the Satanic instinct of preying on animals that were placed under him for protections and care, they also themselves developed the same traits, the strong devouring, instead of shielding, the weaker. Thus the earth became so full of violence that God was compelled to cleanse it by a flood of water.

Now after so long a time is the condition that existed in those days returning, (Matthew 24:37; But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be) so that God will be compelled to cleanse the earth again by a flood of fire. "Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And [God's] people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places." (Isaiah 32:16-18)

From all this it is easy to see that in the new earth, which will simply be the earth as it was first made for the abode of man, there will be no flesh-eating among men. Slaughter houses will be unknown. No streams of blood will flow, and no beast will

groan out its life to satiate the instincts of its cruel master. Man will then rejoice to live as God designed that he should. Life will be sustained by life, and not by death, and so life will be perfect.

There is probably no one who will dispute this. The most ravenous devourer of flesh would not think, if he should stop to think, of slaying and eating in the abode of God, when "the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them." (Revelation 21:3)

But cannot all see in this a reason for now leaving off the use of flesh as food, and adopting in its stead the abundant bill of fare which God gave man? This time is given us in which to prepare for the future world. We must now begin to live the life that is to continue to eternity.

No man would think that he should continue to indulge hatred and envy, expecting God to change his character to love and peace at His coming; then why should anyone think that any other habit is to be continued, which will not exist in the perfect state.

Someone may urge that the beasts still prey upon one another, and that the nature of animals will not be changed until the coming of the Lord. True; and that very thing contains a reason why men should correct their habits. Men are not beasts, but are made with moral natures, so that they may be associates of God.

If man were not endowed with a free will, which allies him to God, then he would have no responsibility, and would depend on God to effect all changes in him, without his cooperation. But as it is, man must perfect holiness in the fear of God. (2 Corinthians 7:1; Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God)

What a humiliating thing for any man to admit that he is waiting for God to effect changes in his character, just as He does in the beasts. God's kingdom is to come, and His will be done in earth as it is in heaven, by the yielding of individuals at this present time to the perfect will of God. "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts." (Colossians 3:15)--Present Truth, February 23, 1899--Isaiah 11:1-9.

Messiah's Kingdom Foretold

It is noteworthy that very many of the illustrations used by Isaiah, to represent the truths taught by him, are drawn from the vegetable world. He speaks a great deal of the kingdom of God, and of that kingdom Christ himself said that it is "as if a man should cast seed into the ground." (Mark 4:26)

In the present lesson the Saviour is likened to a rod coming forth from the stem of Jesse, and a branch growing out of his roots. There had been a good many vicissitudes in the history of Jesse's descendants, when Isaiah wrote, and the future contained a great many more. It seemed sometimes, so far as any hope of spiritual life was concerned, that Jesse's was a dry, withered root, but out of this unpromising soil, Christ was to grow up "as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground." (Isaiah 53:2)

The Word Made Flesh

"All flesh is grass," (Isaiah 40:6) and Christ was made in all things like unto His brethren. He had no more strength than the grass of the field, for He declared that of himself He could do nothing. It was the Word of the Lord that caused the grass to grow and gave it life. The grass is simply the visible manifestation of the Word by which it lives. Hence the various forms of the grass show forth the beauty and glory of the Lord.

Many will not allow that it can be true of them that they are merely grass. They point with pride to their achievements, to the acquirements which mark them as superior to others, and claim that these give proof of an independent intelligence.

Christ made no such claim for himself. He sought not His own will. The Father gave Him commandment what He should speak, and showed Him all things that He should do. He simply took the humble place of the grass of the field, which exists only because of the Word of life, and reveals, not itself, but the working of that Word, in the Word made grass. Christ was the Word made flesh, and all flesh is grass.

Led by the Spirit

Because Christ did not lean to His own understanding, but trusted in the Lord with all His heart, the Lord directed His every step. Because He submitted to the guidance of the Spirit, it had free course in Him and was revealed in its fullness in His life. It was everything to Him, and so it imparted to Him freely everything that it was.

It was not given by measure, and being unhindered by Him in its manifestations, all its characteristics were revealed in His life as: "wisdom and understanding, ... counsel and might, ... knowledge and the fear of the Lord." (Isaiah 11:2)

The Spirit made Him "of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord," (Isaiah 11:3) and He allowed it to influence His mind and form His judgment on all matters that demanded attention. He did not rely upon the inadequate means of information supplied by His human eyes and ears, but trusted in the infallible guidance of the Spirit. So His judgment and reproof was given in righteousness and equity. "And He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears: But with righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth." (Isaiah 11:3-4) "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)

A Witness to the People

Christ came to earth to make known what inconceivable riches had been bestowed by God upon men in the gift of His life. The life was communicated by the Spirit, but men saw no particular value in the gift, and felt indifferent as to whether it was given or not.

What it would do for helpless men was seen in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Springing, like His brethren in the flesh, from a dry root, which only conveyed its inheritance of sin and death, He triumphed over both by receiving the life from above. The whole of His victorious life was a witness to men of what God had done for them.

His sinlessness did not separate Him from the unworthy, for such a High Priest became us, but showed the power of the salvation that was theirs by free gift. So He

said, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings" (Isaiah 61:1) to men, that they too might be, like himself, "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord." (Isaiah 61:3)

Out of Weakness Made Strong

It may seem at first sight humiliating to be told that: "All flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the field," (Isaiah 40:6) so that man is absolutely dependent upon the Lord, but those who receive this truth find in it unending strength and rejoicing. They learn that in being made dependent on His life God does not doom them to a beggarly existence, and their hearts are comforted, "being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Colossians 2:2-3)

A Glorious Rest

As men learn to trust in the Lord for all things, and put no confidence in the flesh, God's strength is made perfect in their weakness, and they are made "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." (Ephesians 6:10)

Thus the power of God is seen and declared among men, and the root of Jesse "shall stand for an ensign of the people: to it shall the Gentiles seek: and His rest shall be glorious." (Isaiah 11:10)

As the tumults of earth agitate human minds, and "Men's hearts fail them for fear, looking after those things that are coming on the earth," (Luke 21:26) God's people trust calmly in Him, in whom there is everlasting strength, and perfect peace. "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You: because he trusts in You. Trust in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." (Isaiah 26:3-4)

When trials and clouds are thickest and darkest, His rest is most glorious, and made known to the Gentiles as most worth their acceptance.

Abundance of Peace

"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Isaiah 11:6-9)

The picture of perfect peace presented in this lesson is but a demonstration of what the Spirit of God can do, in reconciling the most contrary natures. The wolf and the lamb, the leopard and the kid, the calf and the young lion, can all live together in amity and peace, because the rule of God, interrupted by man's rebellion, is fully restored in all things.

The law of God, which is the life of God, is made again the universal law of being, and there shall be no evil or destruction, because: "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Isaiah 11:9)

In the everlasting inheritance of God's redeemed, "The meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace," (Psalm 37:11) for only they shall possess the earth. "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." (Matthew 5:5)

The earnest of that inheritance is given now in the Holy Spirit to believers, (Ephesians 1:13-14) and since the inheritance is all that it is by virtue of the power of the Spirit, it follows that whosoever receives the Spirit knows thereby the power of the world to come. (Hebrews 6:4-5)

This is the power which is made known to those who confess themselves to be only grass, and find a glorious rest in the knowledge that: "It is God which works in them both to will and to do of His good pleasure." (Philippians 2:13)--Present Truth, October 20, 1898--This article was not part of the series on Isaiah, but is included because it fits well into this collection.--Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons, October 30--Isaiah 11:1-10.

Chapter 15

The Lord My Banner

"And it shall come to pass in that day, The root of Jesse, which stands for an ensign to the peoples, Unto Him shall the nations repair, And His resting-place shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, Jehovah shall again the second time put forth His hand, To recover the remnant of His people That remains, from Assyria, and from Egypt, And from Pathros, and from Cish, and from Elam; And from Shimar, and from Hamath, and from the western regions. And He shall life up a signal to the nations; And He shall gather the outcasts of Israel, And the dispersed of Judah shall He collect, From the four extremities of the earth. And the jealousy of Ephraim shall cease; And the enmity of Judah shall be no more Ephraim shall not be jealous of Judah; And Judah shall not be at enmity with Ephraim. But they shall invade the borders of the Philistines westward; Together shall they spoil the children of the East; On Edom and Moab shall they lay their hand; And the sons of Ammon shall obey them. And Jehovah shall smite with a drought the tongue of the Egyptian sea; And He shall shake His hand over the river with His vehement wind; And He shall strike it into seven streams, And make them pass over it dry-shod. And there shall be a highway for the remnant of His people, Which shall remain from Assyria; As it was unto Israel, In the day when he came up from the land of Egypt.

The first glance at the text composing this lesson will show the student that he must go back in order to get the connection. "It shall come to pass in that day." (Isaiah 11:10)

In what day? Evidently in the day when the rod springs forth out of the stem of Jesse. Let the whole of the 11th chapter of Isaiah be studied in connection, and it will be seen that it covers the entire period from the first advent of Christ till His second coming and the restoration of all things. The chapter is, however, divided into two sections. The first nine verses cover this entire period, and then, beginning with verse 10 the same period is covered again, with some additional details.

The Sign of the Cross Compare verse 10 with: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." (John 12:32)

So the verse before us says that the nations shall repair to "the root of Jesse, which stands for an ensign to the people." (John 12:10)

The Lord is the banner, and it is "Christ, and Him crucified," (1 Corinthians 2:2) that constitutes this ensign, round which the people are to gather. It is written, "Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree." (Galatians 3:13)

The cross was the sign of ignominy and reproach. It was the most humiliating death that could be imposed on anybody. Yet this very ignominious death is Christ's glory. By the cross, which was supposed by the men of His time to be the miserable end of an adventurer, Jesus was elevated to the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. The badge of disgrace was the crown of glory. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Galatians 6:14)

What is the lesson in this for us? Just this, that there is the brightest hope for the lowest and most despised of mankind. The banner round which God proposes to gather "the outcasts of Israel," (Isaiah 11:12) is the Christ crucified, that is, Christ despised and rejected of men. If He took His stand in some exalted place, in a halo of glory, and from there called the poor outcasts to Him, they might well hesitate; but when the very rallying place is the lowest point of degradation, there can be no doubt that "whosoever will" (Revelation 22:17) may come. The way is adapted to the lowest and weakest; it must necessarily be in order that none be shut out; but where the lowest and weakest can come in, the highest and strongest cannot possibly be excluded. They can easily humble themselves and come down, if they will; but the others could not possibly lift themselves up.

The Jews thought that they were inflicting the most crushing defeat on Christ,--that they were degrading Him to the uttermost,--whereas they were really lifting Him up. He was lifted up from the earth, even to the height of heaven. The way to heaven lies by the cross. This world consists of pride and self-exaltation: "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," (1 John 2:16) so that the cross does in reality lift one up and away from this earth.

Creation and Rest

"His rest shall be glorious." (Isaiah 11:10)

The cross gives rest. Jesus calls, "Come unto me, all you that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

This rest is Sabbath rest,--the rest which God took when He had finished the six days' work of creation. The cross creates: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature [or, "there is a new creation". (2 Corinthians 5:17,RV,margin)

The cross restores what was lost in the fall. The fall deprived man of the glory of God; the cross restores it. The cross creates anew, doing the same work that God did in the beginning. The cross represents a perfect work completed--for on it Jesus said, "It is finished." (John 19:30)

Now finished work means rest; it can mean nothing else, therefore the cross of Christ must give rest to all who come to it.

Moreover, since redemption is identical with creation,--is creation,--restoring that which was lost, it is evident that the rest which it brings is identical with the rest which followed the finished work of creation in the beginning. In the cross of Christ we find the Sabbath, the rest, of the Lord.

See how people have reversed God's order. They find in God's

Sabbath only a cross; to rest on the seventh day of the week, "according to the commandment," (Luke 23:56) when the majority of men make it the busiest day of the week, seems to them too great a cross to be borne. Well, if that is the way they look at it, they will find no rest in it.

But let them come to the cross of Christ, accepting it without any reservation. Let them not take a part of it, rejecting another portion, but let them take the cross with the whole life of Jesus; then they will find perfect rest--God's Sabbath. And then it will be a joy to indicate the perfect rest which Christ gives, by resting from their labors on the day which He has given as the memorial, the sign of His power to redeem.

Gathering the Remnant

"It shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall set His hand again the second time (On this matter of the setting of God's hand "the second time" to gather His people, read the first article entitled: "The Time of the Promise," which appeared on the first page of Present Truth for December 29, 1898, in connection with the first of lessons in Isaiah. [Editor's note: in this edition, this is the second article, and is entitled, "The Prophetic Setting"]) to recover the remnant of His people." (Isaiah 11:11)

This will not be a small affair, but will be a gathering "from the four corners of the earth." (Isaiah 11:12)

And since it is "the remnant" that are to be gathered, it is evident that this work is the last thing that will be done in connection with the people of God. This is the closing work of the Gospel. It is by the Gospel that God's Israel--overcomers--are to be gathered.

The last verses of this chapter indicate the power that is to accompany the closing work of the Gospel. "There shall be a highway ... like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt." (Isaiah 11:16)

Read the account of God's wonderful leading then. It was not by any human strength, but by the strength of Almighty God, that the deliverance was effected. Think of the marvelous miracles in Egypt, and the dividing of the Red Sea. Yet while all this was but the manifestation of God's own power it was all accomplished through a human agent. "You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron." (Psalm 77:20)

It was always by the stretching out of the rod in the hand of Moses, that these signs were wrought. Now just that power must be manifested in the preaching of the Gospel before the Lord comes. The power that divided the Red Sea must and will be seen in the work when the Sabbath--the sign of Jehovah's creative power--is given its rightful place among God's people. God's rest will be seen to be glorious, and by it "The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord." (Habakkuk 2:14)--Present Truth, March 2, 1899--Isaiah 11:10-16.

Chapter 16

The New Song

"And in the day you shall say; I will give thanks unto You, O Jehovah; For though You have been angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You have comforted me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid: For my strength, and my song, is Jehovah; And He is become my salvation. And when you shall draw waters With joy from the fountains of salvation, In that day you shall say: Give thanks to Jehovah; call upon His name; Make known among the peoples His mighty deeds; Record how highly His name is exalted. Sing unto Jehovah, for He has wrought a stupendous work; This is made manifest in all the earth. Cry aloud, and shout for joy, O inhabitants of Sion; For great in the midst of you is the Holy One of Israel." (Isaiah 12:1-6,Lowth)

This is a most wonderful chapter, and everybody ought to study it so thoroughly that the words will be forever impressed on the mind. Such passages as this, full of comfort and encouragement, should be perfectly familiar to every person.

They should not be studied mechanically as a school-boy studies his spelling lesson, so that they can be repeated parrot-like, but intelligently and thoughtfully. It will not take long to fix the chapter so thoroughly in the mind that the words will come naturally in their proper order. When this has been done, we can study the Bible at any odd moment, and can feed on the living Word, which is always fresh.

A Present Salvation

It will be noticed that this chapter is a continuation of chapter 11. "In that day." (Isaiah 12:1)

In what day? Why, in the day when the root of Jesse stands for an ensign to the peoples; when the Lord sets His hand the second time together the remnant of His people--the outcasts of Israel. In short, now; for: "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation." (2 Corinthians 6:2)

It is not in the future, immortal state that this song is to be taken up and learned. Now is the time for men to say, "Jehovah is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation ... I will trust, and not be afraid." (Isaiah 12:2)

Take notice that this song is identical with that sung by Moses after the crossing of the Red Sea. Compare with: "The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation: He is my God, and I will prepare Him a habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt Him." (Exodus 15:2)

When the redeemed stand on Mount Zion, they will sing "the song of Moses the servant of God, the song of the Lamb," (Revelation 15:3) and it will be this very song; but they will have learned it before they get there. Moses was yet in the wilderness when he sang his song of triumph. There was no water in the desert where the children of Israel were when they joined in the chorus. But it was right for them to sing it. The trouble was that they stopped singing, and that stopped their progress; for: "The redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be on their head." (Isaiah 51:11)

The "new song" of the redeemed is that which they have learned on earth, inspired by the love of God, which, though everlasting, is always new. The "new commandment" is the old commandment that was from the beginning. When God brings a man up out of the horrible pit, and the miry clay, He puts a new song in his mouth. "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. And He has put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord." (Psalm 40:1-3)

So,

When in scenes of glory,
I sing the new, new song,
'Twill be the old, old story
That I have loved so long.

--Kate Hankey, Hymn: I Love to Tell the Story, 1866.

Saved From Fear

"Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid." (Isaiah 12:2)

Why not? How could one fear, knowing God himself to be his salvation? It is not merely that God saves, but He himself is salvation. Having Him, we have salvation, and are not merely looking forward to it, and hoping for it. He is our salvation,--from what? From everything that we need to be saved from. "I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears." (Psalm 34:4)

That is the best of all. God not only saves us from death, but from the fear of death. "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)

Many things that we fear, exist only in our imagination; but the trouble is just as great to us as though the danger were real; our fears are as oppressive. Now God saves us from all these fears. God says: "Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it comes. For the Lord shall be your confidence, and shall keep your foot from being taken." (Proverbs 3:25-26) "Whoso hearkens unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil." (Proverbs 1:33) "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear; because fear has torment. He that fears is not made perfect in love. Remember that God is near at hand" (1 John 4:18) "in all things that we call upon Him for." (Deuteronomy 4:7) "He gives to all life, and breath, and all things. In Him we live, and move, and have our being." (Acts 17:25,28)

And He is Almighty; there is none able to withstand Him. "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) "Our God is in the heavens; He has done whatsoever He has pleased." (Psalm 115:3)

And His thoughts towards us are "thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give us an expected end." (Jeremiah 29:11)

Is it not clear, therefore, that every fear, no matter what kind of a fear it is, nor what it is that we are afraid of, is evidence of distrust? We either distrust His care or His power. If we are afraid, that shows that we do not believe that God is at hand, or else we do not believe that He cares for us, or else we do not believe that He is able to save us. Give this some sober thought: think how often you have been afraid, and how often you are seized and controlled by fear; and then decide whether you do really love and trust the Lord. "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 though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." (Psalm 46:1-3)

Someone will say, "No; I don't expect to be afraid in the last great day; I shall then be confident in the Lord."

Why will you be more confident in the Lord? Why will you be more confident in the Lord then, than now? Will He at that time be more trustworthy than now? Do you not know that if you do not get acquainted with the Lord, and learn to trust Him now, you will not trust Him then? Jesus is coming to take vengeance on them that know not God. "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when 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." (2 Thessalonians 1:7-8)

Now all those who know the name of the Lord put their trust in Him: "And they that know your name will put their trust in You: for You, Lord, have not forsaken them that seek You." (Psalm 9:10)

Therefore those who are saved when the Lord comes will be found trusting. "But there are so many little things that startle me, and make me nervous; I am not afraid of great things; I know the Lord will protect me then; but I can't expect Him to keep me from nervousness at sudden noises, or from being timid and afraid to speak a word in meeting, or from being anxious at sea, or for those who are on it."

Why not? Do you not see that this is a virtual shutting out of God from all the ordinary affairs of life? He is a God nigh at hand as well as afar off. "Am I a God at hand, says the Lord, and not a God afar off?" (Jeremiah 23:23)

He who does that which is greatest, is abundantly able to do that which is least. Fear in little things is evidence of distrust in God, just as much as fear in great things. It shows that we do not believe that God is very near, or that He is great enough to look after details. The true child of God, who is living a life of constant trust in Him, need not, cannot, be afraid of anything in the world. He who is not afraid of God, cannot be afraid of anything; for nothing is so great as He. "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalm 27:1) "[He is] the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea." (Psalm 65:5) "The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." (Deuteronomy 33:27) "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 the arrow that flies by day; nor for the pestilence that walks in darkness; nor for the destruction that wastes at noonday." (Psalm 91:1-5)

This perfect confidence is the result of acquaintance with the Lord. Because one has learned to trust the Lord in all things, proving that nothing is too small for His attention, he can trust Him in the great trial. "In returning and rest shall you be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength." (Isaiah 30:15)

When the perfect love casts out all fear, (1 John 4:18) then perfect rest must remain. This is the rest that remains to the people of God. (Hebrews 4:9) It is the perfect keeping of the Sabbath. It is this blessed rest that the Sabbath of the Lord makes known. "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God;" (Exodus 20:10) but the keeping of the Sabbath is not by any means met by resting from manual labor on the last day of the week. The ceasing from our work on that day is but the sign of our perfect rest in God--of the committing of our souls to God "in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator." (1 Peter 4:19)

But perfect rest must be constant; to trust one day and be anxious and fearful the next, is not to rest in God. So in the message of the Sabbath of the Lord, which is the

message that prepares for His coming, we find that revelation of God as Creator and Lord, that will keep us from ever being afraid again. What a glorious message!

God in Us is Our Strength

"My strength and my song is Jehovah; and He is become my salvation." (Isaiah 12:2)

Just see what one gets in return for acknowledging that he has no strength: he gets the Lord for his strength. All the strength of the Lord is his. Thus he is "strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power." (Colossians 1:11)

This is far better than the utmost that anyone could hope for, even at the highest estimate of his own strength. "With joy shall you draw waters from the wells of salvation." (Isaiah 12:3)

When? Now; whenever you are thirsty for salvation. Jesus cried: "If any man thirst, let him come to me, and drink." (John 7:37) "Let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." (Revelation 22:17) "[God is] the fountain of living waters." (Jeremiah 2:13) "In Him we live;" (Acts 17:28) therefore we are continually drawing water from the wells of salvation, whether we know it or not. Recognize the fact, and the drinking of the water of life will be a joy. "Make known among the peoples His mighty deeds." (Isaiah 12:4)

This is the proper occupation of all men. Nobody has any right to talk to another soul about his own weakness. Our sole business is to speak of the glory of God's kingdom, and to talk of His power; "To make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of His kingdom." (Psalm 145:12) "Say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!" (Isaiah 40:9)

We don't, as a general thing, need to tell people very much about our own weakness and insignificance; they usually have a fair knowledge of that without our taking special pains to point it out. It does them no good, and it increases our own discouragement, when we talk of our own weakness. But when we speak of the power of Jehovah, we have an endless theme, and one which strengthens and encourages both speaker and bearer. "Cry out and shout, you inhabitant of Zion; for great is the Holy

One of Israel in the midst of you." (Isaiah 12:6) "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High; 5 God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved." (Psalm 46:4)

The presence of God in Zion renders it immovable; so the presence of God in the midst of His people assures their safety. God's presence recognized in a man makes him "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." (1 Corinthians 15:58)

Why shout? because you are so great? No; because God is so great, and He dwells in us. "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world." (1 John 4:4) "What shall we say then to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? ... 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 8:31,38-39)--Present Truth, March 9, 1899--Isaiah 12:1-6.

The Judgment Upon Babylon

"Upon a lofty mountain erect the standard; Exalt the voice; beckon with the hand; That they may enter the gates of princes. I have given a charge to my enrolled warriors; I have even called my strong ones to execute my wrath; Those that exult in my greatness. A sound of a multitude in the mountains, As of a great people; A sound of the tumult of kings, Of nations gathered together! Jehovah, God of hosts, musters the host for the battle. They come from a distant land, From the end of the heavens; Jehovah, and the instruments of His wrath, To destroy the whole land. Howl, for the day of Jehovah is at hand; As a destruction from the Almighty shall it come. Therefore shall all hands be slackened; And every heart of mortal shall melt; And they shall be terrified; Torments and pangs shall seize them; As a woman in travail, they shall be pained; They shall look upon one another with astonishment; Their countenances shall be like flames of fire. Behold, the day of Jehovah comes, inexorable; Even indignation, and burning wrath; To make the land a desolation. And her sinners He shall destroy from out of her. Yes, the stars of heaven, and the constellations thereof, Shall not send forth their light; The sun is darkened at his going forth, And the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will visit the world for its evil; And the wicked for their iniquity; And I will put an end to the arrogance of the proud; And I will bring down the haughtiness of the terrible. I will make a mortal more precious than fine gold; Yes, a man than the rich ore of Ophir. Wherefore I will make the heavens tremble; And the earth shall be shaken out of her place; In the day of His burning anger. And the remnant shall be as a roe chased; And as sheep when there is none to gather them together; They shall look everyone towards his own people; And they shall flee everyone to his own land. Everyone that is overtaken shall be thrust through; And all that are collected in a body shall fall by the sword. And their infants shall be dashed before their eyes; Their houses shall be plundered, and their wives ravished. Behold, I raise up against them the Medes, Who shall hold silver of no account; And as for gold, they shall not delight in it. Their bows shall dash the young men; And on the fruit of the womb they shall have no mercy; Their eye shall have no pity even on the children. And Babylon shall become, She that was the beauty of kingdoms, They glory of the pride of the Chaldeans, As the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah by the hand of God. It shall not be inhabited for ever; Nor shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation; Neither shall the Arabian pitch his tent there, Neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But there shall the wild beasts of the

desert lodge; And howling monsters shall fill their houses; And there shall the daughters of the ostrich dwell; And there shall the satyrs hold their revels. And wolves shall howl to one another in their palaces; And dragons in their voluptuous pavilions; And her time is near to come; And her day shall not be prolonged." (Isaiah 13:2-22, Lowth)

This is "the oracle concerning Babylon which was revealed to Isaiah the son of Amos." Isaiah 13:1. The lesson may seem to be very long, but the principal point that needs consideration is, "What is Babylon?"

When this point is understood, the chapter as a whole is very simple, for it consists simply in plain statements concerning the fate of Babylon; and therefore we could not well consider it except as a whole.

The Spirit of Babylon

The origin of Babylon is given in the 11th chapter of Genesis. After the flood the people came to a plain in the land of Shinar, and said to one another, "Let us build a city and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven, and let us make us a name lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." (Genesis 11:4)

The Lord saw what they "imagined to do," (Genesis 11:6) and confounded their language so that they could not continue to build. Thus that which they thought to avoid came upon them: They were scattered abroad. The name of the city which they began to build was called "Babel," which means "confusion," because their language as well as their lofty ideas was confounded. (Genesis 11:9)

Since Babel, or Babylon, means confusion, it is evident that the term is not limited to a particular spot or city, but that wherever there is confusion there is Babylon. "Where envy and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work." (James 3:16) "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise that they are vain." (1 Corinthians 3:20)

He therefore provided the spiritual weapons that are "mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." (2 Corinthians 10:4-5)

God's way is perfect, because His thoughts are perfect and they alone endure to all generations. Only the mind of God can think right thoughts, even as God alone can do righteous acts.

"There is no power but of God." (Romans 13:1)

Man has no more power in himself to think than he has in himself to live and to move. Just as every attempt of man to act for himself results in erratic movements, so every attempt of man to think in opposition to God must come to nothing; that is, will be utterly confounded. We see, therefore, that Babylon exists as extensively and as long as there is opposition to God.

As long as the ancient city of Babylon stood, it was the embodiment of boastful exaltation against God. The 4th chapter of Daniel sets forth this spirit. In Isaiah 47 we read of Babylon, that she said, "I am, and none else beside me." (Isaiah 47:8)

This spirit has characterized every nation since the day when Belshazzar's blasphemous boastings were cut short by the destruction of his kingdom by the Medes.

Babylon was a universal kingdom. "You, O king, are a king of kings: for the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven has He given into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all. You are this head of gold." (Daniel 2:37-38)

Modern Babylon

The kingdom as a name, ceased with the death of Belshazzar and the capture of the city by the Medes; but in reality it has existed to the present day. That this is so is evident from the chapter before us, for it tells of judgments upon Babylon, yet these are evidently none other than the final judgments upon the whole earth. Thus we read that the Lord "musters the hosts of the battle ... from the end of heaven ... and the weapons of His indignation, to destroy the whole land. ... 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 out of it." (Isaiah 13:4-5,9)

The Lord says that at the time of this judgment of Babylon, "He will punish the world for their evil and the wicked for their iniquity, and will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. ... He will shake the heavens, and the earth shall be removed out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts and in the day of His fierce anger." (Isaiah 13:11,13)

Compare this with the 2nd chapter of Isaiah, where we have the account of the judgments of God "upon every high tower, and every fenced wall, ... [When] the loftiness of men shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the Lord alone shall be exalted." (Isaiah 2:15,17)

By comparing Isaiah 47:8-9, with Revelation 18:7-8, we see that the prophet John, a century after Christ, used exactly the same language concerning Babylon that is used by the prophet Isaiah seven hundred years before Christ. This shows that the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah was yet in the future in the days of John, yet the city that was built in the plan of Shinar, had been leveled to the ground long before.

We do not need to resort to the idea that one was literal Babylon and the other spiritual or figurative Babylon, for the language of John refers to just as literal a city as does that of Isaiah; but we do see that Babylon was not by any means confined to the city of brick and stone that was embellished by Nebuchadnezzar, nor to the people known as Babylonians. It still exists and its destruction will be the final judgment upon the earth when sin and sinners shall be destroyed out of it, and rebellion against God be made to cease for evermore.

The question may arise, "If this threatened judgment upon Babylon, Isaiah 13, refers to the final judgment upon the wicked, how is it that the Medes are referred to as taking part in this retribution?"

The answer is very simple. It is because judgment upon Babylon began twenty-five hundred years ago, when the Medes captured the city and destroyed Belshazzar in the height of his insolent pride. The desolation of that proud and wicked city is a proof that everything that exalts itself against God shall be destroyed.

With these facts in mind, this chapter is very simple. With a knowledge of what Babylon is, not only this, but a great portion of the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel is made plain.

God calls His people to come out of Babylon where they have been to a large extent ever since. They were carried captive because of their haughty rebellion against God. Everyone whose soul is lifted up is in Babylon. A man can come out and be free at any time by allowing the mind of the Spirit of God to take the place of his carnal mind, which is enmity against God. Now is the time to hasten from Babylon; for: "Her time is near to come, and her day shall not be prolonged." (Isaiah 13:22)--Present Truth, March 16, 1899--Isaiah 13:1-22.

Chapter 18

Israel's Deliverance

"For Jehovah will have compassion on Jacob, And will yet choose Israel. And He shall give them rest upon their own land: And the stranger shall be joined unto them, And shall cleave unto the house of Jacob. And the nations shall take them, and bring them into their own place; And the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of Jehovah, As servants and as handmaids: And they shall take them captive, whose captives they were; And they shall rule over their oppressors. And it shall come to pass in that day, that Jehovah shall give you rest from your afflictions, and from your disquiet, and from the hard servitude that was laid upon you; And you shall pronounce this parable upon the king of Babylon; and shall say: How has the oppressor ceased! the exactress of gold ceased! Jehovah has broken the staff of the wicked, the scepter of the rulers. He that smote the nations in wrath, with a stroke unremitted; He that ruled the nations in anger, is persecuted, and none hinders. The whole earth is at rest, is quiet; they burst forth into a joyful shout: Even the fir trees rejoice over you, the cedars of Libanus: Since you are fallen, no feller has come up against us. Hades from beneath is moved because of you, to meet you at your coming: He rouses for you the mighty dead, all the great chiefs of the earth; He makes to rise up from their thrones, all the kings of the nations. All of them shall accost you, and shall say unto you: Are you, even you too, become weak as we? are you made like unto us? Is then your pride brought down to the grave; the sound of your sprightly instruments? Is the vermin become your couch, and the earthworm your covering? How are you fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!" (Isaiah 14:1-12,Lowth)

It would be well if everyone who is following these studies in Isaiah could keep with him for constant reference the article entitled, "The Time of the Promise," which accompanied the first lesson. (Editor's note: in this edition, this is the second article, and is entitled, "The Prophetic Setting") Each succeeding lesson would impress the truth there summarized more and more on the mind, until a glance at any part of the book of Isaiah would enable the student to see that it refers to the last days of this world's history.

Historical Background

Consider the condition of Israel in the time when this prophecy was written. They were not in captivity, but were dwelling in the land of Canaan, under their own king. We do not know at just what date this was written, but we know that it was not later than 700 BC. Isaiah prophesied during the reign of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, beginning at the close of the reigns of Uzziah. "The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah." (Isaiah 1:1) "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 twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain 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." (Isaiah 6:1-9)

Jotham and Ahaz each reigned sixteen years, and Hezekiah twenty-nine years. "Jotham was twenty and five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Jerushah, the daughter of Zadok." (2 Chronicles 27:1) "Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem: but he did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord, like David his father." (2 Chronicles 28:1) "Hezekiah began to reign when he was five and twenty years old, and he reigned nine and twenty years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah." (2 Chronicles 29:1)

It was in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah's reign that Isaiah had a special message for him, announcing his death, and later his restoration. We know this because at that time fifteen years were added to the king's life. "And I will add unto your days fifteen

years; and I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for my own sake, and for my servant David's sake." (2 Kings 20:6)

The prophet had therefore been prophesying at least forty-six years, and this was 713 BC. He did not prophesy after Hezekiah's death, even if he did so long as that, since if he had it would have been mentioned in Isaiah 1:1. But even if he continued till the death of Hezekiah, his work was all at least 700 years before Christ, for Hezekiah died in 698 BC.

The Promised Rest

Now this little study of date is not a technical matter. It is a thing of vital importance. From it we see that this prophecy of Isaiah concerning the choosing of Israel, and bringing them to their own place, giving them rest in their own land, was uttered nearly a hundred years before they were carried away to Babylon. At the time the promise was spoken, the kingdom was enjoying prosperity, and the Israelites were dwelling safely in the land of Canaan; yet God promised that they should yet have rest in their own land. This is very significant.

A similar thing is found in the history of David. "And it came to pass, when the king sat in his house, and the Lord had given him rest round about from all his enemies; That the king said unto Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells within curtains. And Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that is in your heart; for the Lord is with you. And it came to pass that night, that the word of the Lord came unto Nathan, saying, Go and tell my servant David, Thus says the Lord, Shall you build me a house for me to dwell in? Whereas I have not dwelt in any house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle. In all the places wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel, did I speak a word with any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people Israel, saying, Why don't you build me a house of cedar? Now therefore so shall you say unto my servant David, Thus says the Lord of hosts, I took you from the sheepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel: And I was with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies out of your sight, and have made you a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth. 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, as beforetime." (2 Samuel 7:1-10)

There we learn that when David, at the height of his power, the Lord having given him rest from all his enemies, proposed to build a house for the Lord, he received a great promise from God, a part of which was this: "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, as beforetime." (2 Samuel 7:10)

These things show plainly that the present land of Canaan, even though as fruitful as in the days of Joshua, is not good enough for an inheritance for God's people. David confessed that he was only a stranger and a sojourner in the land, and that was when the kingdom was at its greatest. "For we are strangers before You, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding." (1 Chronicles 29:15)

He considered himself as much a sojourner as were Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Only when sinners are destroyed out of the land, so that the children of wickedness cannot afflict any more, do the meek inherit the earth, and delight themselves in the abundance of peace. "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)

Sin is the True Captivity

"Of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage." (2 Peter 2:19) "Everyone that commits sin is the bondservant of sin." (John 8:34,RV) "His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be held with the cords of his sins." (Proverbs 5:22)

No man can be in bondage if he is not overcome by sin. Daniel was in Babylon for more than seventy years, but he was never in bondage. He would not yield to sin, and so instead of being a servant, he became ruler of the realm. His three companions were likewise free. So free were they, even in Babylon, that when they were bound with

cords, and cast into a burning furnace, because of their loyalty to God, the fire that was designed for their destruction, merely burned the bonds, and allowed them to walk at liberty. They were "free indeed," for the Son himself made them free. (John 8:36) "Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Then they brought these men before the king. Nebuchadnezzar spoke and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, that you do not serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? Now if you be ready that at what time you hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, you fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if you worship not, you shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer you in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto you, O king, that we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up. Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego: therefore he spoke, and commanded that they should heat the furnace seven times more than it was wont to be heated. And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." (Daniel 3:13-25)

Thus we see that only sin can make one a captive in Babylon, and Satan is the author of sin; therefore when we read the promise that God's people shall take captive those by whom they were formerly taken captive, and shall rule over their oppressors, we know that it means victory over all their sins, and over all the power of the devil. It is the fulfillment of "the oath which God 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 1:73-75)

The victory is ours now, for: "This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith." (1 John 5:4)

A Future Deliverance

But there will come a time when Satan himself shall be bound, so that he can "deceive the nations no more." (Revelation 20:3)

Then, not only a part, but all of God's people, gathered out of all the lands, will burst forth into singing: "How has the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased! The Lord has broken the staff of the wicked, and the scepter of the rulers. He who smote the people in wrath with a continual stroke, he that ruled the nations in anger, is persecuted, and none hinders." (Isaiah 14:4-6)

The promise is that they who seek after our soul, and desire our hurt, shall be turned back and brought to confusion; (Psalm 35:4) they shall "be as chaff before the wind: and ... the angel of the Lord [shall] chase them. Their way [shall be] dark and slippery: and ... the angel of the Lord [shall] persecute them." (Psalm 35:5-6)

The song of the redeemed upon Mount Zion must be learned here, for "The redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion." (Isaiah 51:11)

It will be a new song that they sing; but it is now, in this present age, that the Lord lifts us out of the horrible pit, and the miry clay, and sets our feet on the Rock, and establishes our goings, and puts a new song in our mouths. (Psalm 40:1-3)

The Real King of Babylon

This song of redemption is sung over deliverance from the power of the king of Babylon. Can there be any question as to who this king is? It is the one who smites the nations in wrath with a continual stroke. When he is laid low, "The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet." (Isaiah 14:7)

It is none other than the adversary, the devil, who goes about in the whole earth, to destroy the inhabitants thereof. Even he is to be brought low, although at one time he was "Lucifer, son of the morning, ... [but is] fallen from heaven." (Isaiah 14:12)

No chapter shows this identity between the real king of Babylon, and Satan, more fully than this one. Let this fact be fully grasped and held; let it be understood that the book of Isaiah was written for the last days, and that it applies specially to us, and the entire prophecy becomes simple, and may be read with pleasure and profit. "The prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience," (Ephesians 2:2) is Satan, "the god of this world." (2 Corinthians 4:4)

As he has gained the place which rightly belongs to God, in the hearts of men, it naturally follows that he rules in the nations that forget God.

In ancient times there were no nations on earth but unqualified heathen. Devil-worship was the worship of heathendom, and Satan was the real ruler in every kingdom. Now the leading nations of earth are professedly Christian, yet everyone is openly and decidedly at variance with the teaching of Christ. The precepts of God are defied, and those who will follow them and teach others to do so, are punished.

Consequently Satan, the author of confusion, because the originator of envy and strife,--the king of Babylon,--still reigns, and oppresses many, even of the people of God.

Power Over the Nations

But, "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 15:57)

God has visited the nations, "to take out of them a people for His name." (Acts 15:14)

Everyone who overcomes will be given power over the nations. "And he that overcomes, and keeps my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father." (Revelation 2:26-27)

But the necessary qualification for ruling the nations is the ruling of one's own spirit, (Proverbs 16:32) and this can be done only through Christ, who has been given "power over all flesh," (John 17:2) and in whom we are made complete. (Colossians 2:10)--Present Truth, March 23, 1899--Isaiah 14:1-12.

Selfish Ambition and Its Fall

"How are you fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How are you cut down to the earth, you that did subdue the nations! Yet you did say in your heart: I will ascend the heavens; Above the stars of God, I will exalt my throne; And I will sit upon the mount of the Divine Presence on the sides of the North; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High. But you shall be brought down to the grave, to the sides of the pit. Those that see you shall look attentively at you; they shall well consider you: Is this the man that made the earth to tremble; that shook the kingdoms? That made the world like a desert; that destroyed the cities? That never dismissed his captives to their own home? All the kings of the nations, all of them, Lie down in glory, each in his own sepulchre: But you are cast out of the grave, as the tree abominated; Clothed with the slain, with the pierced by the sword, With them that go down to the stones of the pit; as a trodden carcass. You shall not be joined unto them in burial; Because you have destroyed your country, you have slain your people: The seed of evil doers shall never be renowned. Prepare slaughter for his children, for the iniquity of their fathers; Lest they rise, and possess the earth; and fill the face of the world with cities. For I will arise against them, says Jehovah God of Hosts: And I will cut off from Babylon the name, and the remnant; And the son, and the son's son, says Jehovah. And I will make it an inheritance for the porcupine, and pools of water; And I will plunge it in the miry gulf of destruction, says Jehovah God of Hosts. Jehovah God of Hosts has sworn, saying, Surely as I have devised, so shall it be; And as I have purposed, that thing shall stand: To crush the Assyrian in my land, and to trample him on my mountains. Then shall his yoke depart from off them; And his burden shall be removed from off their shoulder. This is the decree, which is determined on the whole earth; And this is the hand, which is stretched out over all the nations: For Jehovah God of Hosts has decreed; and who shall disannul it? And it is His hand that is stretched out; and who shall turn it back?" (Isaiah 14:12-27,Lowth)

Those who are making a special study of the book of Isaiah should pay special attention to the text for there is where they will get their knowledge. Light comes from the Word. Read the portion of Scripture that composes the lesson many times carefully, giving thought to each statement, comparing everything with what precedes and what

follows. The notes that are given in the paper, in connection with the lesson text, are simply designed to fasten your attention more closely upon it.

In studying this lesson, begin with the 13th chapter, and read through the 14th. It would be well also to read the 2nd chapter again. Recall what has been said concerning the time of the promise, and the purpose of the book of Isaiah, (See chapter 2, "The Prophetic Setting") and remember also the meaning of Babylon. (See chapter 17, "The Judgment Upon Babylon") Even without these things before us, but more especially with them, we cannot fail to see that the judgment upon Babylon means the destruction of "all the proud, and all that do wickedly," (Malachi 4:1) at the last day. This lesson is therefore specially important now.

Lucifer and Self-Exaltation

Lucifer means "light-bearer." The margin gives "day star," and other renderings are the same. He is also called the "son of the morning." (Isaiah 14:12)

A glorious being he certainly was, but now fallen from heaven through overweening ambition. There can be no question but that he is the mightiest of "the angels that sinned," (2 Peter 2:4) and so "kept not their first estate, [who are now] reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the Judgment of the great day." (Jude:6)

It is Satan, no longer the bearer of light, but the prince of darkness, the chief of "the rulers of the darkness of this world." (Ephesians 6:12)

But though fallen from his state of light and glory, he still remembers enough of it to be able to transform himself into an angel of life. "And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works." (2 Corinthians 11:14-15)

Therefore we need to be on our guard lest we be deceived. Even when we are walking most in the light, he will try to steal in as a part of that light, and thus lead us astray while we think we are still in the right way. But we have one safeguard, namely, "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God," (Ephesians 6:17) "the word of

truth." (Ephesians 1:17) "Sanctify them through your truth: your word is truth." (John 17:17)

He who "abode not in the truth, [and who is] a liar, and the father of it," (John 8:44) cannot endure the word of truth. Keep fast hold of that, and the devil will flee. "Submit yourselves therefore to God. 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." (1 Peter 5:8-9) "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." (Proverbs 16:18) "For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon everyone that is proud and lofty, and upon everyone that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low." (Isaiah 2:12)

This is because righteousness must prevail, and only God can rule in righteousness, and He is of a lowly spirit. "Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith." (Habakkuk 2:4)

When righteousness, which is meekness, (Zephaniah 2:3) prevails, then pride and ambition must be destroyed. God says, "Be holy, for I am holy." (1 Peter 1:16; Leviticus 11:44) "Be you therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matthew 5:48)

Lucifer said, "I will be like the Most High." (Isaiah 14:14)

Wherein then was Lucifer wrong? Simply in this, that he took the wrong way to be like God. He thought that by exalting himself he could be like God, whereas self-exaltation makes one most unlike Him. Whoever lifts himself up will not find God, for God calls on all to humble themselves to walk with Him. "He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8,margin) "He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree." (Luke 1:52) "He that humbles himself shall be exalted." (Luke 14:11) "[God] 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)

The Humility of Christ

In contrast with Lucifer who tried to exalt himself to occupy God's place, we have the case of Christ, "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But 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 Him a 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; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:6-11)

Self-righteousness is therefore un-righteousness. He who thinks to make himself righteous,--he who thinks that he has goodness in himself,--is guilty of the same sin that Lucifer was, and is moved by the same spirit. It is the spirit of "that man of sin, Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God," (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4) or, setting himself forth as God. Whoever justifies himself, and refuses to receive the reproofs of instruction, which are the way of life, (Proverbs 6:23) is a part of the man of sin. The one who is always anxious to make himself out to be right, who becomes irritated when corrected, and who is always ready with a plausible excuse for everything that he does, shows himself to be one with Lucifer, and in danger of sharing his destruction.

Let us learn this lesson indeed. Let us learn of Christ, who is meek and lowly in heart, "Who did not sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: [Yet] ... when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed himself to Him that judges righteously." (1 Peter 2:22-23)

The Uttermost North

"I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation in the sides of the north."
(Isaiah 14:13)

Literally, "in the uttermost north." Everybody knows that the farther north he goes, the higher the north star appears. From this each can learn that if he stood at the north

pole, north would be directly overhead. North, therefore, is up. God is "the Most High," and therefore He dwells "in the uttermost north." His dwelling place is "the high and holy place." (Isaiah 57:15) "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of His holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north [literally, "the uttermost north"], the city of the great King. God is known in her palaces for a refuge." (Psalm 48:1-3) "Promotion comes neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the Judge; He puts down one, and sets up another." (Psalm 75:6-7)

Promotion comes not from the east, the west, nor the south; therefore it must come from the north; and since God alone is Judge, to lift up and to put down, it follows that He dwells in the north. There alone is where promotion comes from. Therefore when Lucifer thought to occupy the north, he meditated an impossibility, for he could not get there without being drawn up by the Lord of hosts.

There is a mystery about the north. This is true even of this earth. The Hebrew word rendered "north" signifies secret, hidden. What is this attraction--this drawing power? It is God. Every manifestation of force is but the working of God. Christ said of His crucifixion, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." (John 12:32)

By the cross of shame and humiliation He was lifted up to the right hand of God,-- up to "the uttermost north." The power therefore by which God draws all things, by which the worlds are kept in their places, is the power of the cross. All creation, the whole universe, preaches the cross. Every manifestation of attractive energy tells us of the power of the cross to save us from sin.

The way to the Highest is the way of the cross. If we humble ourselves to the death of the cross, we may even now dwell in the "secret place of the Most High, [and] abide under the shadow of the Almighty." (Psalm 91:1)

For, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." (Psalm 25:14)

Strength and Weakness

"How are you cut down to the ground, which did weaken the nations!" (Isaiah 14:12)

Righteousness is strength; sin is weakness. Satan, the adversary,--once Lucifer, the light-bearer,--brought sin into the world, and all sinned. By sin man lost his dominion. It was not arbitrarily taken from him, but he could not hold it any longer. He lost his power to rule. He could not rule himself, and so could rule nothing. Then, "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." (Romans 5:6)

Satan weakens us, but it is our glorious privilege to "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." (Ephesians 6:10)

Christ, the meek and lowly One, is given to us, and He is "the power of God." (1 Corinthians 1:24)

He has conquered, and in Him we have "power and authority over all devils." (Luke 9:1)

One of the most blessed of all the words of comfort is the assurance that by faith we may be "made strong ... out of weakness." (Hebrews 11:34)

The Branch

"You are cast out of your grave like an abominable branch." (Isaiah 14:19)

Christ is the true Vine. He says of the Father, "Every branch in me that bears not fruit, He takes away. ... If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." (John 15:2,6)

Christ is the tree of life, because He is "the wisdom of God," (1 Corinthians 1:24) and wisdom is "a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her." (Proverbs 3:18)

He is the life. "Jesus said unto him, I am ... the life." (John 14:6)

There is no life except in Him. He is also the Way--the way to God. "Thomas said unto Him, Lord, we know not whither You go; and how can we know the way? Jesus said unto him, I am the way." (John 14:5-6) "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to

enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which He has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh." (Hebrews 10:19-20)

Only by Him can anyone approach God. "Jesus said unto him, ... no man comes unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6) "But now in Christ Jesus you who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. ... For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." (Ephesians 2:13,18)

Lucifer would not accept this way; he "abode not in the Truth," (John 8:44) and so he was "cut down to the ground, ... cast out ... like an abominable branch." (Isaiah 14:12,19)

This is a warning to us, to abide in the Vine. It is so easy to do this, for we have but to let ourselves rest. Only in trying to lift ourselves up, do we wear ourselves out.

The End of Pride

Remember the origin of Babylon (Genesis 11) and the character of its rulers. It was the spirit of Lucifer,--envy of any who occupied a superior position, and a determination to be above them. But, "Where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work." (James 3:16)

That is why Satan is full of all evil, and why the whole world, inspired with the same spirit, is corrupt. But this is why the destruction of Babylon involves the whole earth. "For I will rise up against them, says the Lord of hosts, and cut off from Babylon the name, and remnant, and son, and nephew, says the Lord. I will also make it a possession for the bittern and pools of water: and I will sweep it with the besom of destruction, says the Lord of hosts. The Lord of hosts has sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand: That I will break the Assyrian in my land, and upon my mountains tread him under foot: then shall his yoke depart from off them, and his burden depart from off their shoulders. This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth: and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations." (Isaiah 14:22-26)

How shall we escape in this time of destruction? "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)

God, who dwells in "the high and holy place, [dwells also] with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit." (Isaiah 57:15)

The high and holy place is therefore the place of humility. So then, "He that dwells in the secret place of the Most High [the place of lowliness and meekness] shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. ... 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 nigh 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 nigh your dwelling." (Psalm 91:1,4-10)--Present Truth, March 30, 1899--Isaiah 14:12-27.

The Devouring Curse

"Behold, Jehovah empties the land, and makes it waste; He even turns it upside down, and scatters abroad the inhabitants. And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; As with the servant, so with his master; As with the handmaid, so with her mistress; As with the buyer, so with the seller; As with the borrower, so with the lender; As with the usurer, so with the giver of usury. The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled; For Jehovah has spoken this word. The land mourns, it withers; The world languishes, it withers; The lofty people of the land do languish. The land is even polluted under her inhabitants: For they have transgressed the law, they have changed the decree; They have broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore has a curse devoured the land; Because they are guilty, that dwell in her. Therefore are the inhabitants of the land destroyed; And few are the mortals that are left in her. The new wine mourns; the vine languishes; All, that were glad of heart, sigh. The joyful sound of the tabor ceases; The noise of exultation is no more; The joyful sound of the harp ceases: With songs they shall no more drink wine; The palm-wine shall be bitter to them that drink it. The city is broken down; it is desolate: Every house is obstructed, so that no one can enter. There is a cry in the streets for wine; All gladness is passed away; The joy of the whole land is banished. Desolation is left in the city; And with a great multitude the gate is battered down. Yea, thus shall it be in the very center of the land, in the midst of the people; As the shaking of the olive; as the gleaning when the vintage is finished. But these shall lift up their voice, they shall sing; The waters shall resound with the exaltation of Jehovah. Wherefore in the distant coasts, glorify Jehovah; In the distant coasts of the sea, the name of Jehovah, the God of Israel. From the uttermost part of the land we have heard songs. Glory to the righteous! But I said, Alas, my wretchedness, my wretchedness! Woe is me! the plunderers plunder; Yea the plunderers still continue their cruel depredations. The terror, the pit, and the snare, Are upon you, O inhabitant of the land: And it shall be, that whoso flees from the terror, He shall fall into the pit; And whoso escapes from the pit, He shall be taken in the snare: For the floodgates from on high are opened; And the foundations of the earth tremble. The land is grievously shaken; The land is utterly shattered to pieces; The land is violently shattered out of its place; The land reels to and fro like a drunkard; And moves this way and that, like a lodge for a night; For her iniquity lies heavy upon her; And she shall fall, and rise no more. And it shall come to pass in that day, Jehovah shall summon on high the host that

is on high, And on earth the kings of the earth: And they shall be gathered together, as in a bundle for the pit; And shall be closely imprisoned in the prison: And after many days, account shall be taken of them. And the moon shall be confounded, and the sun shall be ashamed; For Jehovah God of Hosts shall reign On Mount Sion, and in Jerusalem; And before His ancients shall He be glorified." (Isaiah 24:1-23,Lowth)

The reading of this chapter makes more deep the impression that the book of Isaiah is emphatically a book for the last

days. To the prophets of old it was revealed, "That not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." (1 Peter 1:12)

This chapter tells us not only what shall take place in the last days, but also the cause of it. Study the chapter through as a whole, and note that it is a unit, presenting only one thing.

Emptying of the Earth

Note that which is to come upon the earth; it is to become empty, turned upside down, "devoured by the curse, ... clean dissolved." (Isaiah 24:6,19)

It is to "reel to and fro like a drunkard, and be removed like a cottage." (Isaiah 24:20)

These are very strong expressions; they mean nothing less than utter destruction at the coming of the Lord. "The earth mourns and fades away, the world languishes and fades away, the haughty people of the earth do languish. ... The new wine mourns, the vine languishes, all the merry hearted do sigh." (Isaiah 24:4,7)

The terms "languish" and "fade away." indicating weakness, sickness, are frequent in this chapter. "Behold, the Lord makes the earth empty, and makes it waste, and turns it upside down." (Isaiah 24:1)

The verb in the expression "turns it upside down," means "beset with pain." So in verse 4, "the world languishes," we have the fact that the earth becomes sick. It is getting old and feeble, hence it staggers and totters, instead of going steadily.

The Cause of the Curse

Why does this take place? Verse 5 tells. It is "because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant." (Isaiah 24:5)

In the beginning man was given dominion over the earth; not simply over the beasts and birds, and the fishes, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the face of the earth, but over the earth itself. "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." (Genesis 1:26)

Now when the governor cannot control himself, when he transgresses the laws, and makes them void, what can result but that all that is under him should be out of order? The earth sympathizes with its lord. Man having lost his dominion, the earth runs wild. The curse eats up the earth, not because God arbitrarily sends it, but because man's disobedience to the laws which he should keep and execute, brings the curse.

A Remnant

"Therefore has the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left." (Isaiah 24:6)

"Few men left." Thank God, He sends His messenger before His face, to turn the hearts of the children to the fathers, and the fathers to the children, so that He need not come and smite the earth with utter destruction. "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 their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." (Malachi 4:5-6)

When the Lord has "removed men far away, and there is a great forsaking in the midst of the land," (Isaiah 6:12) yet, "the holy seed shall be the substance thereof." (Isaiah 6:13)

Who will be one of the few? "Whosoever will" may come. (Revelation 22:17)

The Millenium

"And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited." (Isaiah 24:21-22)

Compare these verses with: "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: on such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years." (Revelation 20:4-6)

At the coming of the Lord all the wicked who are then alive will be destroyed by the brightness of His coming. "And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming." (2 Thessalonians 2:8)

They cannot endure the sight. A thousand years the earth will lie desolate, while God's people, caught up at Christ's coming, both living and dead made immortal (1 Corinthians 15:51-54; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) will be with the Lord. At the end of the thousand years the wicked who have been "gathered together ... as prisoners are gathered in the pit," shall "be visited." Then will their iniquity be visited upon them, and the earth will be purified, and "the first dominion" will return. (Micah 4:8)

The End of Sin

"Then ... the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion and before His ancients gloriously." (Isaiah 24:23)

Note verse 20: "The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, ... and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it." (Isaiah 24:20)

Here we see plainly that it is the weight of sin, that causes the earth to be removed, even as it does men. "The earth is clean dissolved." (Isaiah 24:19)

Compare this with: "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)

Read the whole of this latter chapter, and it will be seen even more clearly that the coming of the Lord is under consideration in the prophecy of Isaiah. But although all these things shall be dissolved at that time, "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness." (2 Peter 3:13)

Do not lose sight of the fact that "in that day, the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones on high." (Isaiah 24:21)

Compare this with: "wicked spirits in high places." (Ephesians 6:12,margin)

Compare the last part of the 2nd chapter of Isaiah. The day of the Lord is against every thing that is proud and lofty. Let us, then, in order that we may escape, hide ourselves in Him who is meek and lowly in heart, that the storm may pass over our heads, so that we shall be among those who glorify God from the ends of the earth, and "sing for the majesty of the Lord." (Isaiah 24:14; See verses 13-15 for the whole context)--Present Truth, April 6, 1899--Isaiah 24:1-28.

Deliverance of God's People

"O Jehovah, You are my God: I will exalt You; I will praise your name: For You have effected wonderful things; Counsels of old time, promises immutably true. For You have made the city a heap; The strongly fortified citadel a ruin; The palace of the proud ones, that it should be no more a city; That it should never be built up again. Therefore shall the fierce people glorify You; The city of the formidable nations shall fear You. For You have been a defence to the poor; A defense to the needy in his distress; A refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat; When the blast of the formidable rages like a winter storm. As the heat in a parched land, the tumult of the proud shall You bring low; As the heat by a thick cloud, the triumph of the formidable shall be humbled. And Jehovah God of Hosts shall make, For all the peoples, in this mountain, A feast of delicacies, a feast of old wines: Of delicacies exquisitely rich, of old wines perfectly refined. And on this mountain shall He destroy The covering, that covered the face of all the peoples; And the vail, that was spread over all the nations. He shall utterly destroy death for ever; And the Lord Jehovah shall wipe away the tear from off all faces; And the reproach of His people shall He remove from off the whole earth; For Jehovah has spoken it. In that day shall they say: Behold, this is our God; We have trusted in Him, and He has saved us: This is Jehovah; we have trusted in Him; We will rejoice, and triumph, in His salvation." (Isaiah 25:1-9,Lowth) "O Lord, You are my God." (Isaiah 25:1)

Whoever says this understandingly, from the heart, has everything. Nothing can make him discontented; nothing can cause him to worry; nothing can make him afraid.

What is the Lord to Us?

To find out what the Lord is, read: "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, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation." (Exodus 34:6-7) and also: "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; yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and You are exalted as head above 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 29:11-12)

And to learn His power, read: "For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In His hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is His also. The sea is His, and He made it: and His hands formed the dry land." (Psalm 95:3-5)

And then think what an infinite treasure everyone has who can say, "O Lord, You are my God." (Isaiah 25:1)

Jehovah is not merely the Being whom we worship, to whom we bow down in reverence as One infinitely above us, but He is ours. He belongs to us, as truly as we belong to Him. "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup." (Psalm 16:5)

To as many as receive Christ: "gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." (John 1:12)

By believing we become sons of God, "and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ." (Romans 8:17)

Through faith we become partakers of the nature of God, just as Christ is one with Him. He is ours to the extent that everything that He has, and everything that He is, belongs to us. We have Him.

It was this knowledge that gave Jehoshaphat and all Israel the victory over a vastly superior force, even before the battle had begun, and when everything seemed against them. They were in an extremity, and there was no earthly prospect that they could escape. Then Jehoshaphat stood in the midst of the congregation of Israel, and said, "Lord God of our fathers, are not You 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)

The fact that God is in heaven, shows that He is over all, and does whatever pleases Him. "But our God is in the heavens: He has done whatsoever He has pleased." (Psalm 115:3)

Nothing is hard for Him, (Jeremiah 32:27; Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?) and no enemy can withstand Him. Therefore when in addition to this Jehoshaphat could say, "Are not You our God?" he had the victory already; for since God was his, all who came against him came also against the Lord; and their overthrow was assured. Accordingly when this prayer of faith had been uttered, the assurance came, "Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's. ... You shall not need to fight in this battle; set yourselves, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you." (2 Chronicles 20:15,17)

To God belongs victory; "His right hand, and His holy arm, has gotten Him the victory." (Psalm 98:1)

When by faith we claim Him as ours, then we prove that faith is the victory that has overcome the world.

The Age of Miracles

"You have done wonderful things." (Isaiah 25:1) "His name [is] Wonderful," (Isaiah 9:6) so that it is His nature to do wonderful things. He does nothing that is not wonderful. The age of miracles is the age of God. "Who is so great a God as our God? You are the God that does wonders: You have declared your strength among the people." (Psalm 77:13-14) "Many, O Lord my God, are your wonderful works which You have done, and your thoughts which are toward us; they cannot be reckoned up in order unto You; if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered." (Psalm 40:5)

Therefore let us "Sing unto the Lord a new song; for He has done marvelous things." (Psalm 98:1) "I will speak of the glorious honor of your majesty, and of your wondrous works." (Psalm 145:5)

Here is something to talk about. "All your works shall praise You, O Lord; and your saints shall bless You. They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom, and talk of your power." (Psalm 145:10-11)

If men would do this all the time, such a thing as discouragement or fear would be unknown.

The Amen

"Your counsels of old are faithfulness and truth." (Isaiah 25:1)

Both of these words, "faithfulness" and "truth," are from the one root which we have Anglicized as "amen." The word means firmness, steadfastness, solidity, immovability. So we might read, "Your counsels of old are amen and amen," or, as Lowth has it, "immutably true." Jesus Christ is "the Amen, the faithful and true witness." (Revelation 3:14)

His name also is Counselor: "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, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6)

So, "All the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen." (2 Corinthians 1:20)

All the promises of God center in the one great promise, the promise of Christ's coming. He is not slack concerning His promise, even though unbelieving men may think He is. "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. ... The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:3-4,9)

This has been the purpose of God since the world began, and "[He] works all things after the counsel of His own will." (Ephesians 1:11)

His promises are "immutably true." (Hebrews 6:17-18) His faithfulness is established "in the very heavens," (Psalm 89:2) so that as true as the heavens is the promise of Christ's coming. Always true to their appointed times are the heavenly bodies; those who observe their movements, and keep note, know that they will keep their appointments to the very second; even so will it be with Christ's coming in glory to judgment and salvation. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." (Psalm 46:1)

The children of men take refuge under the shadow of His wings: "How excellent is your lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of your wings." (Psalm 36:7) "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." (Psalm 91:9-10)

The Lord is everything that anybody requires. "[He is] a refuge from the storm, [and] a shadow from the heat," (Isaiah 25:4) yet He is a sun, even "a consuming fire," (Hebrews 12:29) and, "[He] has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm." (Nahum 1:3)

From Him we get light and heat, and also shade. That is, in Him we find evenness of temperature. But those who do not put their trust in Him will be in darkness, and at the same time consumed by the heat. "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." (Psalm 2:12)

The Lord of hosts will make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, that is, all sorts of delicacies. He provides the table for all, and whoever will may come and eat, "without money and without price." (Isaiah 55:1) "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies: You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over." (Psalm 23:5)

Even though the enemy may be coming on in full strength, raging and boasting, and threatening dire calamity, we can quietly sit down and eat. The Lord invites us to His feast, and even when He comes to us as our guest, He provides the food.

Taking Away the Vail

"In this mountain." (Isaiah 25:6)

That is, in Mount Zion. See the last verse of the preceding chapter: "When the Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously." (Isaiah 24:23)

That is God's dwelling-place, (Psalm 2:6; 48:1-2) and it is there that He has prepared the feast of salvation for all people. "The covering that is cast over all people, and the vail spread over all nations," (Isaiah 25:7) is to be taken away in Mount Zion. Over all the earth and over all minds and all lives, rests the shadow of the curse. "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." (Galatians 3:13)

It is through the blood of the new covenant,--the everlasting covenant,--that remission of sins is found. But, "The god of this world has blinded the minds of all that believe not," (2 Corinthians 4:4) and this vail of unbelief keeps the glory of the cross, which swallows up the curse, from shining in. "Nevertheless when [the heart] turns to the Lord, the vail is taken away." (2 Corinthians 3:16) "The true light now shines," (1 John 2:8) and whoever will may see light in His light. (Psalm 36:9) Even though the majority will not believe, but persist in walking in darkness, the time is coming when even they shall see that God's way is perfect, and shall be compelled by force of evidence to acknowledge that He is just. The covering which has concealed God's gracious working will be removed in the Judgment, and God will stand clear. It will then be too late, however, for any to receive benefit from the light that will shine, since they have rejected light when they might have walked in it.

This vail, the curse, which is even now taken off from all who truly believe, is to be forever removed from the earth. The very earth itself is to be "delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glory of the liberty of the sons of God." (Romans 8:21)

Eternal Victory

For, "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth." (Isaiah 25:8)

Tears will be wiped away, because the cause of tears--sin and death--will be removed. Compare Revelation 21:1-5 for further evidence that in the prophecy of Isaiah we have in detail the things that are only briefly mentioned in the New Testament. "He will swallow up death in victory." (Isaiah 25:8)

Literally, "He will swallow up death in eternity," or forever. In 1 Corinthians 15:54 we have this same thing quoted, and there the Greek has it plainly, "victory," while in the Hebrew of Isaiah 25:8 it is just as plainly "eternity." Does this indicate a contradiction, or any lack of harmony in the two texts? Not the slightest; it simply shows that the two words mean the same thing. Victory, in order to be really victory, must be eternal. A seeming victory, which does not last, is no victory at all. When God gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ, it is for eternity, for: "Whatsoever God does, it shall be for ever." (Ecclesiastes 3:14)

But the final victory over death is only the present victory over sin, which is the sting of death. The power by which the righteous will be raised from their graves, immortal, is identical with the power by which in their lifetime they were raised above the power of sin. That is the power of Christ's resurrection. It was not possible for death to hold Him, (Acts 2:24) because guile was not found in His mouth. "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." (1 Peter 2:22)

John, in prophetic vision saw the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, "and with Him a hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written in their foreheads. ... And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God." (Revelation 14:1,5)

So we see that there will be found a people over whom death will have no more power than it had over the Lord Jesus. We know that He could not die except by His own will, because He was sinless. In like manner those who "keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus," (Revelation 14:12) will be superior to death. No man, not even Satan, can take their life from them, and hence they will be translated. Their translation without seeing death is not due to the accident of their being on earth when Christ comes, but to their life of perfect righteousness by faith. There is nothing accidental about it; it is the natural working out of the life of Christ. At any time in the past God's people might have been translated, if at any time it could have been said of

them, "Here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus."
(Revelation 14:12)

Men are saved only by the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ. It is not abstract righteousness, but the righteousness of Christ's real life, "unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference," (Romans 3:22) that saves us. The instant any man, however sinful he may be, believes on the Lord Jesus, and confesses Him, he is counted righteous. God declares him righteous, and that makes him righteous. If he should die that very hour, as was the case with the thief on the cross, he would be saved, and would appear in heaven as though he had never sinned.

Thousands will appear in the kingdom of God without fault, who never in their lifetime knew all the commandments of God, nor all that is involved in the faith of Jesus. Consequently not all the righteousness of the law has been exhibited in their lives. They have unconsciously been living in violation of some precepts of the law, but from all these secret, hidden faults they have been cleansed. But these have learned the lesson of submission to God, and were willing to serve Him. They can be taken to heaven, therefore, they will make no break in its harmony, for the instant they see the fullness of God's righteousness they will embrace it with joy.

But if all the righteous were saved in this way there would be an opportunity for the accuser of the brethren, who accuses them before God day and night, (Revelation 12:10) to say that it is impossible for God to make men absolutely perfect in this world; that He is obliged to take them to heaven, and get them out of the reach of Satan's temptations, in order to make them perfectly righteous.

To be sure, he can be confronted with the case of Christ, who lived an absolutely perfect life, in spite of all Satan's temptations; but he would evade the force of that by saying, as men, and even Christian men, do now, that Christ was different from other men. Therefore, in order to:

- show that Christ was here in this world with no advantages over other men, and
- that what God did by Him, He is able to do for all,
- to exalt the power of God,

- to show that Christ has power over all flesh, and
- effectually to stop the mouths of all gainsayers, God will not send Jesus the second time until He can point to a people who, like Jesus, are absolutely without fault, and who, surrounded by sin, and subject to Satan's onslaughts, live entirely above the power of sin and death. They will be complete possessors of the victory that has overcome the world. (1 John 5:4; For whatsoever is born of God overcomes the world: and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.)

Thus will not only the mouths of all the wicked be stopped, but there will be given the perfect witness of God's power to salvation, which will draw many in the last days from the world to God.

It is eternity--eternal life--that swallows up death. Absolutely perfect faith means perfect knowledge of God's Word, because "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." (Romans 10:17) "The just shall live by faith," (Romans 1:17)--so that perfect faith means perfect life,--the life of Jesus manifest in our mortal flesh. When this is experienced, the individual will be delivered from all diseases, even though in weak, mortal flesh, with disease attacking him, just the same as he will be delivered from all sin, even while beset and in heaviness by manifold temptations.

Thus will Christ and those whom God gives Him be for signs and wonders. They will walk unscathed in the midst of raging pestilence, just as the three Hebrews did in the burning, fiery furnace, because "the form of the Fourth" (Daniel 3:25) is with them. And this will be not only in the time when the plagues of the unmingled wrath of God are falling on the reprobate, but before men have made their final decision, so that the witness will tell for the salvation of many. It is just as easy for God to make a man perfectly whole now, and to keep him so, as it is to keep him alive at all; for it is the one life that does all.

Salvation Now and Forever

"And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." (Isaiah 25:9)

In that day shall they say, "Behold, this is our God, we have trusted in Him, and He has saved us."

Not merely, "He will save us," but, "He has saved us."

A present, complete salvation is the assurance of future salvation. All that is necessary for anybody to be able to say is, "The Lord has saved me, and He saves me now."

Keep trusting, and the salvation will continue. Those who have become acquainted with the Lord, will know Him when He comes. The Lord himself will come, and He will not be a stranger. "We will rejoice, and triumph in His salvation," (Isaiah 25:9,Lowth) because we have trusted in Him, and have proved the power of that salvation. But the power of the salvation now is worth rejoicing over just as much as it will be at the coming of the Lord. Therefore, "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, rejoice," (Philippians 4:4) because it is with rejoicing that the redeemed of the Lord come to Zion, the mountain of God. (Isaiah 51:11)--Present Truth, April 13, 1899--Isaiah 25:1-9.

Trust and Protection

"In that day shall this song be sung: In the land of Judah we have a strong city; Salvation shall He establish for walls and bulwarks. Open the gates, and let the righteous nation enter; Constant in the truth, stayed in mind: You shall preserve them in perpetual peace, Because they have trusted in You. Trust in Jehovah for ever; For in Jehovah is never-failing protection. For He has humbled those that dwell on high; The lofty city, He has brought her down; He has brought her down to the ground: He has leveled her with the dust. The foot shall trample upon her; The foot of the poor, the steps of the needy. The way of the righteous is perfectly straight; You most exactly level the path of the righteous. Even in the way of your laws, O Jehovah, We have placed our confidence in your name; And in the remembrance of You is the desire of our soul. With my soul have I desired You in the night; Yea, with my inmost spirit in the morn have I sought You. For when your judgments are in the earth, The inhabitants of the world learn righteousness. Though mercy be shown to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: In the very land of rectitude he will deal perversely; And will not regard the majesty of Jehovah. Jehovah, your hand is lifted up, yet will they not see: But they shall see, with confusion, your zeal for your people; Yea, the fire shall burn up your adversaries. 12 Jehovah, You will ordain for us peace; For even all our mighty deeds You have performed for us. O Jehovah, our God! Other lords, exclusive of You, have had dominion over us: You only, and your name, henceforth will we celebrate. They are dead, they shall not live; They are deceased tyrants, they shall not rise. Therefore have You visited and destroyed them; And all memorials of them You have abolished. (Isaiah 26:1-14)

The New Jerusalem

Note the difference in punctuation in the first verse of Lowth's translation, as compared with the ordinary version.

"In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah: We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." (Isaiah 26:1)

There is no difference in the sense, but Lowth's rendering makes it a little more emphatic. Not only is the song sung in the land of Judah, but the city is there. This is of course implied in the common rendering. The city is therefore Jerusalem made new--New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from God. "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 3:1) "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." (Revelation 21:2)

It is a city built up entirely new, and will occupy the very place where the present city stands, only it will be very much more extended. "Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." (John 14:1-2) "Behold, the day of the Lord comes, and your spoil shall be divided in the midst of you. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle. And His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And you shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, you shall flee, like as you fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with you. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: But it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light. And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and His name one." (Zechariah 14:1-9)

Lowth's rendering of Isaiah 26:15 also indicates this: "You have added to the nation; You are glorified; You have extended far all the borders of the land." (Isaiah 26:15,Lowth)

This is the city for which the patriarchs of old looked. "For he looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. ... For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He has prepared for them a city." (Hebrews 11:10,14-16)

Its builder and maker is God; and its foundations are described in: "And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass." (Revelation 21:18-21)

Coming down, as it does, in the land of Canaan, the land that was promised to Abraham and his seed for an inheritance, the promise of God is fulfilled to the very letter. To apply the prophecies concerning the building up of Jerusalem to any work done by men, and in this present state, is a gross perversion of the Scriptures, and a depreciation of the promises of the Gospel. Only God himself can fulfil His own promises, (Romans 4:21) and only He can build a city suitable for the habitation of His redeemed ones.

It will be a "strong city." Its defense will be salvation. It will be so strong that it will be able to withstand a siege by Satan and all his hosts, including all the armies of wicked men who have trained under Satan's banner. "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of

the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them." (Revelation 20:7-9)

Someone will exclaim, "Of course no enemy in the universe could take the city of God, the New Jerusalem! It would be absurd for anyone to try."

Very true; yet that city will be no safer than are God's people now; for it will be kept only by the very same power that now keeps those who trust in the Lord. The humblest and most insignificant person on earth, who trusts the Lord, is just as safe as will be the hosts of the redeemed in the New Jerusalem. The wicked far outnumber the righteous, and the mighty host marching against the city of the saved would strike terror to their hearts, if they had not individually learned the power of Christ's salvation. "The Gospel ... is the power of God to salvation, to everyone that believes," (Romans 1:16) and that is the power that will be the confidence of the redeemed in the Holy City when it is besieged by Satan's hosts.

A Righteous Nation

"Open the gates, that the righteous nation which keeps the truth may enter in." (Isaiah 26:2)

The righteous nation is the nation that keeps the truth. Jesus said, "He that has my commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves me." (John 14:21)

God has committed His truth to men, even to wicked men, to see what they will do with it. If they repress it then the wrath of God is justly revealed from heaven against them. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." (Romans 1:18)

But if they keep it, letting it have free course in them, then it will preserve them from all evil. The truth of God is the shield of His people. "He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings shall you trust: His truth shall be your shield and buckler." (Psalm 91:4) "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You: because he trusts in You." (Isaiah 26:3)

God is the God of peace, (Hebrews 13:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:3) therefore all who put their trust in Him are necessarily kept in perfect peace. The peace and protection that are given are not a reward for trusting, but are the necessary consequence of that trust; "for in Jehovah is never-failing protection." (Isaiah 26:4,Lowth) "In the Lord Jehovah is an everlasting Rock [or, "the Rock of Ages" margin]." (Isaiah 26:4,RV)

Deliverance from Pride

There is nothing in this world that troubles people more than pride. And pride is what the Lord has promised to bring down. Pride is an abomination to the Lord. This fact, instead of alarming us, should be a cause of rejoicing, for it means deliverance from our worst enemy. Note in the chapters of Isaiah, which we have already studied, how much is said about bringing down that which is proud and lofty. "He has humbled those that dwell on high; the lofty city, He has brought her down." (Isaiah 26:5,Lowth)

But before that time comes, He delivers His people from pride, and therefore from the destruction that follows it. Read the promise in: "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! You shall hide them in the secret of your presence from the pride of man; You shall keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues. Blessed be the Lord: for He has showed me His marvelous loving kindness in a strong city." (Psalm 31:19-21)

Note that it is "from the pride of man" that God promised to keep those who trust in Him. Then of course He keeps us from our own pride, and that is the only pride from which we are in any danger.

The Path of the Just

"The way of the just is uprightness: You, most upright, do weigh the path of the just." (Isaiah 26:7)

What a blessed assurance is contained in verse 7. The text that we have quoted is very much more close to the original than is our common version, yet there is a very precious suggestion in this latter. Mark the expression, "You, Most Upright, do weigh the path of the just."

The word rendered "weigh," means to ponder, think upon. Compare with: "For the Lord knows the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish." (Psalm 1:6)

The Lord makes the way of His people the object of special solicitude; He makes it straight and plain, and that is why they are upright. He is "no respecter of persons," (Acts 10:34) and therefore He takes the same care of all people; but the wicked will not walk in the way marked out for them. All anybody has to do, to be righteous, is to walk in the way of the Lord. "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord. Blessed are they that keep His testimonies, and that seek Him with the whole heart." (Psalm 119:1-2)

Mercy Shown to All

"With my soul have I desired You in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek You early: for when your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. Let favor be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord. Lord, when your hand is lifted up, they will not see: but they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at the people; yea, the fire of your enemies shall devour them." (Isaiah 26:9-11) "The Lord is good to all; and His tender mercies are over all His works." (Psalm 145:9)

He encompasses the wicked with the same mercy that He does the righteous. The whole earth is surrounded with an atmosphere of grace and mercy, which the inhabitants breathe in as they do the air, so that nothing is lacking for the salvation of any person. Therefore if any are destroyed, it is only because they reject the mercy of the Lord. The only thing that any lost soul will have to bring against the Lord will be that He dealt mercifully with him. "He has not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." (Psalm 103:10)

Surely God will be clear when He judges, since those who are lost have been hardened only by His mercy. See the case of Pharaoh, and note how it was the forbearance and mercy of the Lord that hardened his heart. He regarded the kindness of the Lord as weakness, and presumed on it. "But when Pharaoh saw that there was

respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them; as the Lord had said. ... And the Lord did according to the word of Moses; and He removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people; there remained not one. And Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go." (Exodus 8:15,31-32) "And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants. And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, neither would he let the children of Israel go; as the Lord had spoken by Moses." (Exodus 9:34-35)

God's Working in Man

"Lord, You will ordain peace for us: for You also have wrought all our works in us." (Isaiah 26:12) "It is God which works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." (Philippians 2:13)

He is striving to work in all, but many will not allow Him to have His own way with them, and He will not force any, since He works only by love. It is the pride of men, their unwillingness to acknowledge that they are not their own masters, that keeps them from yielding to God. Whoever is willing to admit that he is nothing, and is not able to do anything, not even to make a single movement of himself, but will acknowledge God in all his ways, will find that God works in him, making his way perfect.

What a blessed thing it is to be able to see, from the working of God in the things round about us, how able He is to do all our works in us, and to do marvelous things. In the things that are made, the everlasting power and Divinity of God are clearly 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; so that they are without excuse." (Romans 1:20)

The least thing that He does is great, and shows His almighty power. They are all unconsciously passive in His hands, and so His will is wrought in them. Because their yielding is involuntary, there is no morality in the fulfillment of God's will in them; but when we voluntarily yield as completely as the inanimate things do involuntarily, then does God make our way even as His own, and gives to us the credit of having done that

which only His omnipotence could accomplish. "Let your work appear unto your servants, and your glory unto their children. And 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 90:16-17)

The Rulership of Love and Gentleness

"O Lord our God, other lords beside You have had dominion over us: but by You only will we make mention of your name." (Isaiah 26:13)

Other lords besides Jehovah have had dominion over us. Who is there that has not been guilty of idolatry? "You shall have no other gods before me," (Exodus 20:3) is not an arbitrary commandment, but a blessed promise to all who will put their trust in the Lord. God rules only by love and gentleness, but other lords exercise dominion over us, compelling us to serve them. Being delivered from the bondage of corruption, we say to the Lord, "You only, and your name, henceforth will we celebrate." "They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased tyrants, they shall not rise." (Isaiah 26:14,Lowth)

There is no God but Jehovah. All the gods of the heathen are nothing. "They must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good. ... But the Lord is the true God, He is the living God, and an everlasting King." (Jeremiah 10:5,10)

A man is like that which he serves. Hence he who serves a dumb, dead idol is himself destitute of life. "They that make them are like unto them, so is everyone that trusts in them." (Psalm 115:8)

When we trusted in the works of our own hands, we were lifeless: "dead in trespasses and sins." (Ephesians 2:1)

But having been made alive in Christ, we reign with Him, instead of being lorded over.

Not only will all false gods perish, but the very memory of them will be destroyed. The memorial of God, on the other hand, endures for ever.

"Your name, O Lord, endures for ever; and your memorial, O Lord, throughout all generations." (Psalm 135:13)--Present Truth, April 29, 1899--Isaiah 26:1-14.

God's Care for His People

"Your dead shall live; my deceased, they shall rise: Awake, and sing, you that dwell in the dust! For your dew is as the dew of the dawn; But the earth shall cast forth, as an abortion, the deceased tyrants. Come, O my people; retire into your secret apartments; And shut your door after you; Hide yourself for a little while, for a moment; Until the indignation shall have passed away. For behold, Jehovah issues forth from His place, To punish for his iniquity the inhabitant of the earth; And the earth shall disclose the blood that is upon her; And shall no longer cover her slain." (Isaiah 26:19-21,Lowth) "In that day shall Jehovah punish with His sword; His well-tempered, and great, and strong sword; Leviathan the rigid serpent, And Leviathan the winding serpent: And shall slay the monster, that is in the sea. In that day, To the beloved Vineyard, sing a responsive song. [J] It is I, Jehovah, that preserve her: I will water her every moment; I will take care of her by night; And by day I will keep guard over her. [V] I have no wall for my defense: O that I had a defense of the thorn and the briar! [J] Against them should I march in battle, I should burn them up together. Ah, let her rather take hold of my protection. [V] Let Him make peace with me! Peace let Him make with me! [J] They that come from the root of Jacob shall flourish, Israel shall bud forth; And they shall fill the face of the world with fruit." (Isaiah 27:1-6,Lowth)

The student will notice the initials "[J]" and "[V]" before a few of the verses in the beginning. These stand for Jehovah and Voice, respectively, indicating a colloquy between the Lord and His people, which the translator supposes to be transcribed in the first part of the chapter. They are no part of the text, but simply express the translator's idea of it. The student will compare this rendering with that in his Bible, and take the suggestion for what he considers it worth.

Promise of the Resurrection

"Your dead shall live; my deceased, they shall rise." (Isaiah 26:19,Lowth)

This is much plainer and more forcible than as it is rendered in our common version. There it is made to appear as though it were simply the prophet saying that his dead body shall arise; but the fact is that it is God who is speaking of His own dead,--of

those who die in the Lord. Israel has been mourning, and God comforts her with the assurance that her dead shall live, for He claims her deceased ones as His own; and he that believes in God, "though he were dead, and yet shall he live." (John 11:25)

Joy in Dust

"Awake and sing, you that dwell in the dust!" (Isaiah 26:19)

Out of the dust the Lord God formed man in the beginning, and set him over the works of His hands. God took the dust to make a king, and a king that should bear rule over things in heaven as well as on earth. This is the assurance to us that: "He takes 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)

A heart broken and crumbled into dust (contrite), the Lord does not despise, because He knows the possibilities in dust. Indeed, that is the only material out of which a perfect man can be made. Therefore when man has, in his pride and self-exaltation, departed out of the way, and has fallen, "God turns him again to dust, and says, Come again, you children of men." (Psalm 90:3)

Conversion is the pledge of the resurrection, for it is but the working of resurrection power. God's people can rejoice over the grave, for since they have been created from the dust, and made to sit with Christ in the heavenly places, they know that death cannot separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus their Lord. (Romans 8:38-39)

The Dew of the Morning

There is not so much difference as there might seem at first glance between the rendering, "Your dew is as the dew of herbs," (Isaiah 26:19,KJV) and, "Your dew is as the dew of the dawn," (Isaiah 26:19,Lowth) which is also found in other versions besides that of Lowth [NASB, ISV]; for the dew of herbs is the dew that falls in the morning. The French of Segond has it, "a vivifying dew," which is very pertinent. The Hebrew expression is thus given in one lexicon, "a light-reflecting dew." How expressive this is of the joy and freshness of the resurrection, when God's people reflect the light of life.

But why is it that the dew of God's people is as the dew of the morning? The answer is found in Psalm 133. It is because they have brotherly kindness and unity, which is "As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." (Psalm 133:3)

The Enemies Cast Out

"And the earth shall cast out the dead." (Isaiah 26:19)

The reader will notice that instead of, "the earth shall cast out the dead," Lowth renders it, "the earth shall cast out, as an abortion, the deceased tyrants." (Isaiah 26:19)

If you examine the margin of the Revision, you will see that the word in the Hebrew is "Rephaim," which is the name of one of the wicked nations that the Lord promised to cast out of the land of Canaan, before the children of Abraham. (See Genesis 14:5; 15:20) So here we find an intimation of the fact that the resurrection is the time when the promise to Abraham shall be fulfilled.

The Avenger of Blood

"Behold, the Lord comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain." (Isaiah 26:21)

All the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from that of Abel, cries to God for vengeance. Ever since nations have legalised murder, if only committed by wholesale, it has been thought only a light thing to cause the death of men. Worldly men are so bent on carrying out their schemes, that they think nothing of it if a few just men are destroyed in the process. The slain sink out of sight, the earth covers them up, and drinks up their blood, and the oppressors think that the transaction is ended. Not so; soon will the earth give up her dead, and will no more be an unwilling accomplice in bloody deeds.

Safety for God's People

It will be a terrible time when God comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity. The earth shall be "utterly broken down, [and] clean dissolved." (Isaiah 24:19)

The prophet Habakkuk had a vision of that day, when God "drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow. ... Before Him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at His feet. ... The sun and moon stood still in their habitation; at the light of your arrows they went, and at the shining of your glittering spear. You did march through the land in indignation, You did thresh the heathen in anger." (Habakkuk 3:6,5,11-12)

When the prophet saw the "great and terrible day of the Lord," (Joel 2:31) "my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble." (Habakkuk 3:16)

So God has promised that in the time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation, His people shall be delivered. "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which stands for the children of your people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone that shall be found written in the book." (Daniel 12:1)

He says, "Come, my people, enter into your chambers, and shut your doors about you; hide yourself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast." (Isaiah 26:20)

The 91st Psalm tells where they will hide. "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." (Psalm 91:1-2)

There they will be during the thousand years that intervene between the first and second resurrections, (Revelation 20) and during the time when the fire of God's wrath consumes the wicked; but they will be no more safe then than during the seven last plagues, when they are here on the earth, in the midst of the destruction. All the time,

"the Lord will be the hope of His people, and the strength of the children of Israel."
(Joel 3:16)

God's Vineyard

"A vineyard of red wine." (Isaiah 27:2)

Let it not be forgotten that: "The new wine is found in the cluster, [and that] a blessing is in it." (Isaiah 65:8)

The best wine is that which is procured by pressing the grape direct into the cup. "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 40:10-11)

Such wine it was that the Saviour furnished by a miracle for the wedding guests at Cana, which the governor of the feast pronounced the best. But the vineyard of the Lord is His people. "Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well-beloved has a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. 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? And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briars and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant: and He looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry." (Isaiah 5:1-7)

The miracle at Cana shows how the Lord's servants are to bear fruit to His glory. The servants obeyed the words of the Lord to the letter. They are nameless, and very little thought is given to them; yet they acted a most important part in the miracle. It was

done by them. The vessels stood empty, and Jesus said, "Fill the waterpots with water."
(John 2:7)

This the servants did without any objection, although it must have seemed to them an unnecessary act. Then said Jesus, "Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast." (John 2:8)

This was seemingly a more foolish command than the other, and one likely to cost the servants their position; for they might have reasoned, "It is not water, but wine, that is wanted; if we carry this water to the governor of the feast, he will think that we are insulting him, and we shall not only make ourselves the laughing-stock of the guests, but shall be discharged for unseemly action."

Let it be remembered that it was water that was in the pots, and that it was water that the Lord told the servants to draw out and carry to the governor. They did as they were commanded, and some time in the process, we do not know at what point, the water became wine. Through the servants as agents of the Lord, the transformation was effected.

Thus would the Lord show us how we are to be branches of the true Vine. It is the branches that bear the fruit, yet they do not bear it of themselves. They are simply the channels for transmitting the water from the root to the clusters. They do not make the wine, but are servants used in the performance of the miracle.

Those servants in Cana acted the part of branches in a vineyard. The Lord did by them what He ordinarily does by the branches of the grape vine. If we, like them, do whatever He says to us, we shall also be fruit bearing branches of the living Vine.

God's Care for His Vineyard

"I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." (Isaiah 27:3)

This agrees with what we have just learned. If we abide in His Word, He will water us continually, so that we may be fruitful. "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)

A vineyard that is gently watered night and day, cannot but be a flourishing one. And not a moment does God forget His charge. "He that keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade upon your right hand. The sun shall not smite you by day, nor the moon by night." (Psalm 121:3-6)

This is a most pertinent and cheering promise; for in the day when the Lord "with His great and strong sword shall punish that crooked serpent," (Isaiah 27:1) which is the dragon and Satan, (Revelation 12:9; 20:2) the sun will have power to scorch men with fire. "And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which has power over these plagues: and they repented not to give Him glory." (Revelation 16:8-9) "O Lord, to You will I cry: for the fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and the flame has burned all the trees of the field. The beasts of the field cry also unto You: for the rivers of waters are dried up, and the fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness." (Joel 1:19-20)

But during all the time when the fire of God's rejected grace shall be consuming the wicked, "There shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain." (Isaiah 4:6)

Yet the safety of the people of God in that day will be by nothing else than by the very same loving protection that is given them now day by day.

The Consummation

"Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit." (Isaiah 27:6)

This will be the completion of the work of the Gospel, the last proclamation of which is, "Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come; and

worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters."
(Revelation 14:7)

It is by our bearing fruit, that God is glorified. "Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be my disciples." (John 15:8)

When Israel fills the face of the world with fruit, then will the earth be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord. And this will be accomplished by recognizing and honoring God as the Creator, the One by whose direct care and attention all the processes of nature are effected: "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)--Present Truth, April 27, 1899--Isaiah 26:19-21; 27:1-6.

The Crown of Shame and the Crown of Glory

"Woe to the proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim, And to the fading flower of their glorious beauty! To those that are at the head of the rich valley, that are stupefied with wine! Behold the mighty one, the exceeding strong one! Like a storm of hail, like a destructive tempest; Like a rapid flood of mighty waters pouring down; He shall dash them to the ground with His hand. They shall be trodden under foot, The proud crowns of the drunkards of Ephraim: And the fading flower of their glorious beauty, Which is at the head of the rich valley, Shall be as the early fruit before the summer; Which whoso sees, he plucks it immediately; And it is no sooner in his hand, than he swallows it. In that day shall Jehovah God of Hosts become a beauteous crown, And a glorious diadem, to the remnant of His people: And a spirit of judgment, to them that sit in judgment; And strength to them, that repel the war to the gate (of the enemy). But even these have erred through wine, and through strong drink they have reeled; The priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink; They are overwhelmed with wine; they have reeled through strong drink: They have erred in vision, they have stumbled in judgment. For all their tables are full of vomit; Of filthiness, so that no place is free. Whom (say they) would He teach knowledge; And to whom would He impart instruction? To such as are weaned from the milk, as are kept back from the breast? For it is command upon command; command upon command; Line upon line; line upon line; A little here, and a little there. Yea verily, with a stammering lip and a strange tongue, He shall speak unto this people. For when He said unto them: This is the true rest; give rest unto the weary; And this is the refreshment; they would not hear. Therefore shall the word of Jehovah be indeed unto them, Command upon command, command upon command; Line upon line, line upon line; A little here, and a little there; That they may go on, and fall backward; And be broken, and snared, and caught." (Isaiah 28:1-13,Lowth)

There are several different renderings of the first verses of this chapter. The student will see that the first verse differs somewhat in Lowth's translation from what it is in the common version. The Revised Version, however, seems to be more consistent than any other, in that it keeps one subject throughout. In this it is the proud crown "of the drunkards of Ephraim," which is "the fading flower of his glorious beauty," and which stands at "the head of the fat valley." In the others it would seem that the woe is pronounced against the crown of pride, and against the drunkards of Ephraim, as well.

There is, in fact, however, no difference, for since the crown of pride which stands at the head of the fat valley is undoubtedly the city of Samaria, it follows that the drunkards of Ephraim suffer in the woe pronounced against her.

Keeping the Promise in View

Let no one think, because this prophecy specifies Ephraim and the city of Samaria, which long since ceased to have any importance as a city, that it is merely local, and all in the past. Look ahead in the chapter, and read in verse 22, and it will be seen that the destruction threatened against Ephraim is "the consumption ... determined upon the whole earth." (Isaiah 28:22)

Remember that the earth was given to man in the beginning. It was to be the possession of a perfect people. Therefore when God brought His people out of Egypt, "And gave them the lands of the heathen ... That they might observe His statutes, and keep His laws," (Psalm 105:44-45) it was in fulfillment of the promise to Abraham, that he and his seed should possess the earth. "For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith." (Romans 4:13)

All of God's dealing with His people, no matter how localized, had reference to the one great promise. This was the thing that God always had in view. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise." (2 Peter 3:9)

At any time up to the captivity of Judah, the people might have had the fulfillment of the promise, in the resurrection; and whenever God tells of judgments that shall come upon them because of their disobedience, it involves the whole earth. When God punishes those who have been His people, because they have become like the heathen, it follows that He will at the same time punish the heathen themselves.

The Fading Flower of Man's Glory

Keeping those principles always in mind, we may read this prophecy as applying to us, that is, to the professed people of God in this day, no matter what their name. The glory of those who lift up themselves in pride shall be as a fading flower. "For all flesh

is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withers, the flower fades: because the Spirit of the Lord blows upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withers, the flower fades: but the word of our God shall stand for ever." (Isaiah 40:6-8) "And the fading flower of their glorious beauty, Which is at the head of the rich valley, Shall be as the early fruit before the summer; Which whoso sees, he plucks it immediately; And it is no sooner in his hand, than he swallows it." (Isaiah 28:4,Lowth)

So quickly will be the destruction of those who exalt themselves against God, and boast of their own security. "The day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction comes upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." (1 Thessalonians 5:2-3)

The Crown of Glory

What a glorious prospect is held out in verses five and six. When the crown of pride shall be trodden underfoot, and the glorious beauty of the transgressors shall be a fading flower, "In that day shall the Lord of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of His people, And for a spirit of judgment to him that sits in judgment, and for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate." (Isaiah 28:5-6)

The residue is the remnant, and the remnant shall be saved. God is from everlasting to everlasting; therefore those who have Him for their crown of glory, have a crown "which fades not away." (1 Peter 5:4)

The heavens and the earth shall wax old like a garment, (Isaiah 51:6) but He remains the same, and His years do not fail. (Hebrews 1:12)

Since God is to be the crown of glory to His people in the day of destruction to all in which haughty men boast, it is plain that in God alone should men trust and make their boast now. "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, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth; for in these things do I delight, says the Lord." (Jeremiah 9:23-24) "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are

vain. Therefore let no man glory in men." (1 Corinthians 3:20-21) "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chose 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 nought 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 inthe Lord." (1 Corinthians 1:27-31)

The Lord is to be the crown of glory to His people. He himself is to be the only ornament that His people will wear. Their adorning must be "the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." (1 Peter 3:4)

This crown of glory will not be appreciated by the world. Indeed, the world may scoff at those who wear it, even as they did at Christ himself. "The world knows us not, because it knew Him not." (1 John 3:1)

When Christ was on earth He had "no form nor comeliness." (Isaiah 53:2)

When men saw Him, they thought, "there is no beauty [in Him] that we should desire Him. [Therefore,] we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. ... we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God." (Isaiah 53:2-4)

Yet He had glory that could be seen by those who had eyes for it, even "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." (John 1:14)

But it was the glory of grace and truth: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, ... full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

When the Lord comes, those who have this beauty,--the beauty of holiness,--will shine forth as the sun. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who has ears to hear, let him hear." (Matthew 13:43)

Those who will now show such appreciation of the beauty of the Lord that they will be content with it, and not put a slight upon it by seeking to supplement it with the

adorning of the world, even though they be considered plain, have the assurance that through all eternity they will be as beautiful as the heavens.

The Spirit of Judgment

The time is coming when "the saints shall judge the world," (1 Corinthians 6:2) and angels as well: "Know you not that we shall judge angels?" (1 Corinthians 6:3)

They will surely need the very best judgment then; therefore the Lord of hosts will be "for a spirit of judgment to him that sits in judgment." (Isaiah 28:6)

It will be no human judgment that will be exercised in that day, but the judgment of the Lord himself, working in men. But the fact that this perfect judgment is to be exercised by the saints in glory is set forth as the reason why they should not now act foolishly. God will now be judgment to those who trust Him, as well as in the day of final judgment. Just as it will be His Spirit that speaks in His children when they are called upon to answer for the hope that is in them, (Matthew 10:20) so will He now be wisdom and judgment for them in all the affairs of life. "And all your children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of your children." (Isaiah 54:13) "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) "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)

But let it be remembered that this spirit of judgment is but the manifestation of the spirit of meekness with which God's people are adorned. "The meek will He guide in judgment; and the meek will He teach His way." (Psalm 25:9)

Is it not better to acknowledge that we have no wisdom at all, and to have the wisdom of God, which is perfect, than to boast of our independence, and be left to act

foolishly? In other words, Is it not much better to act wisely, and give God the credit, than to act foolishly, and take all the credit to ourselves?

The Wine of Babylon

"But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment." (Isaiah 28:7)

God says that the priest and the prophet, as well as the people, have erred through wine, and are out of the way through strong drink, and that therefore, "they stumble in judgment." This is too true in the most literal sense, for it is a sad fact that very many professed Christians, including many who call themselves ministers of the Lord, are often filled with wine in which is excess, rather than with the Spirit.

But there is a wine, against the use of which no temperance society that has ever yet been formed has ever protested, and that is the wine of Babylon, the wine of worldly pride. "And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." (Revelation 14:8) "For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies." (Revelation 18:3)

It is very easy for Christians to become intoxicated with the prospect of worldly fame and applause, and thus to depart from the simplicity of the faith. Proud Babylon, the Church of Rome, whose religion is outward pomp and worldly prosperity and political power, is but the aggregate of the working of the spirit of worldliness in individuals. Beware of this form of drunkenness, lest you be where "All the tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean." (Isaiah 28:8)

Compare with: "And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird." (Revelation 18:2)

Those who are drunken with the wine of their own pride, and who, trusting in their own wisdom, scorn to be directed by the plain and simple Word of God, "the sincere milk of the Word," (1 Peter 2:2) say contemptuously, "Whom will He teach knowledge? and whom will He make to understand the message? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts? For it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little." (Isaiah 28:9-10)

Vain in their imaginations, and puffed up with the pride of their own opinions, thinking themselves competent to sit in judgment upon the Bible, men resent being taught like little children. Yet in no other way can they enter into the kingdom of heaven. "Verily I say unto you, Except you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:3)

Men of the world, "professing themselves to be wise," (Romans 1:22) choose to reason things out, to work up complex "systems" of belief; children, however, learn by accepting simple statements of fact. The child grows in knowledge merely by believing, and consequently it grows rapidly. At no other period in a person's life does he learn so much and so rapidly as in the first three or four years, when he takes everything by faith. Afterwards, as he gradually "comes to years of understanding," that is, as he thinks that he must manufacture wisdom, instead of receiving it as a gift from God, his progress is much slower.

But God designs that His children shall always remain little children, so that their progress in wisdom may be as great in later years as in the beginning. So He will continue to teach by giving precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little. Constant repetition of simple truths which, although simple, contain infinity, is the way to acquire "the wisdom which is from above." (James 3:17)

But how about the statement that this sort of teaching is to be given to the people, "that they might go and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken?" (Isaiah 28:13)

Ah, that is the same thing for which Jesus gave thanks, saying, "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)

Men go with heads lifted up so high, looking so far off for wisdom, that they stumble over simple truth lying at their feet. Is it not a thing to be thankful for, that the only way the Lord makes the way of life hard for anybody is by making it easy?

How can any of the wise men of earth, who stumble and fall over the teaching of the Lord, accuse Him of injustice in His dealing with them, when that which He set forth before them was so simple that a babe could understand it? To say that the way of life was too hard for them, would be to deny all their pretensions to wisdom, and to confess that they did not know as much as the babes.

No; there is no excuse. The only reason why any err from the truth is that they will not hear. God not only offers them rest and peace, but says, "This is the rest wherewith you may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing;" (Isaiah 28:12) but they refuse to hear. He would make them fellow-workers with himself, but they will not. Let us not refuse to learn the lesson. "See that you refuse not Him that speaks." (Hebrews 12:25)--Present Truth, May 4, 1899--Isaiah 28:1-14.

Chapter 25

The Sure Foundation

"Hear the word of Jehovah, you scoffers; You of this people in Jerusalem, who utter sententious speeches: Who say, we have entered into a covenant with death; And with the grave we have made a treaty: The overflowing plague, when it passes through shall not reach us: For we have made falsehood our refuge; And under deceit we have hidden ourselves. Wherefore thus says the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I lay in Sion for a foundation a stone, an approved stone; A corner-stone, precious, immovably fixed: He, that trusts in Him, shall not be confounded. And I will mete out judgment by the rule; And the strict justice by the plummet: And the hail shall sweep away the refuge of falsehood; And the hiding-place the waters shall overwhelm. And your covenant with death shall be broken; And your treaty with the grave shall not stand: When the overflowing plague passes through, By it shall you be beaten down." (Isaiah 28:14-18,Lowth)

Let the student read carefully again the first portion of this chapter, together with the twenty-second verse, and remember that the instruction and warnings given are for us no less than for the people in Isaiah's time. The word of the Lord is living, and is addressed to us just as directly as though we heard the tones of the prophet's voice.

The Foolishness of the Wise

The word of the Lord is here to those who are proud in their own conceit; who know so much in their own estimation that they are not willing to be taught. Scorning to be thought so ignorant as to need the simple precepts of the Scriptures, "precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little and there a little," (Isaiah 28:13) they fail to learn anything. The case of those of whom the Apostle Paul speaks in Romans 1:22 is not peculiar to them. Whenever men profess themselves to be wise, they become fools; therefore, "If any man among you seems to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." (1 Corinthians 3:18-19)

The foolishness of those who profess themselves to be wise is seen from what they put their trust in for safety. They say, "We have made a covenant with death, and with

hell are we at agreement. When the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us, for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves." (Isaiah 28:15)

They have thought to anticipate God, and to head off punishment that He would bring. They have bribed death to protect them; but death and hell are poor protectors. Falsehood and lies cannot save. The only place of protection that death has is the grave. To be at agreement with hell, is deliberately to go to perdition. It is the kid fleeing to the tiger for protection from the bear. "No lie is of the truth." (1 John 2:21)

Whoever, therefore, rejects truth chooses falsehood. There are many people who pride themselves upon their honesty, that are nevertheless hiding themselves under falsehood. They might not themselves tell deliberate lies, but truth is a unit, and whoever deliberately rejects any truth that comes to him, thereby rejects all truth. That portion of truth which he elects to retain, he changes into a lie. "Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator." (Romans 1:25)

Satan works "with all power and signs and lying wonders, And 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 2:9-10)

And all who receive not the love of the truth will certainly perish, because it alone is a shield and buckler. "He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings shall you trust: His truth shall be your shield and buckler." (Psalm 91:4)

Truth cannot be built up by a falsehood. Truth and falsehood have no connection. Truth is that which is, therefore truth is life.

This is seen in the words of Christ, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." (John 14:6)

And since truth is life, falsehood is death. So to make lies one's refuge, hoping by them to escape death, is like a man cutting his own throat to save his neck from the halter.

The Sure Foundation

Those who err from the truth, trusting in death to save them, have said, "When the overflowing scourge shall pass through it shall not come unto us. Therefore thus says the Lord God, 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. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then you shall be trodden down by it." (Isaiah 28:15-18)

This sure foundation is truth, for 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)

And He is the only foundation (1 Corinthians 3:11; For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ) that will stand. Whatever is not in harmony with that will be swept away, for even death itself shall be destroyed. A foundation is that upon which one builds. In the Hebrew the word "to believe" is from a root which also has a specification, to build, to establish. "Believe in the Lord, so shall you be established." (2 Chronicles 20:20)

The words "believe" and "be established" are from the same Hebrew word, and the sentence might be rendered, "Build upon the Lord your God, so shall you be built up."

Abraham built upon God when he believed in God. Christ is the sure foundation. He is also the Word, the living Word. He is the truth, and His word is truth. (John 17:17) Whoever, therefore, builds upon His word, builds upon the rock, and when the rains descend, and the floods come, and the winds blow and beat upon that house, it does not fall.

But whoever does not build upon His words,--that is to say, whoever does not let those words control him, and manifest themselves in his life,--builds upon the sand; and when the tide rises, and the rain descends, and the winds blow and beat upon that house, it will fall, and its destruction will be great. (Matthew 7:24-27) The rock will stand,

because it is "the Rock of Ages." "In the Lord Jehovah is the Rock of Ages." (Isaiah 26:4,margin)

Whoever builds upon God shall not be ashamed (Romans 9:33) nor confounded. (1 Peter 2:6) As the text says, "he shall not make haste." (Isaiah 28:16)

He will not need to run when the storm comes, because he is already in a place of safety.

"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, my fortress; my God; in Him will I trust." (Psalm 91:1-2)

A Tried Stone

This stone which God lays in Zion for a foundation is a "tried stone." (Isaiah 28:16) "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." (2 Corinthians 5:19)

God placed His character in Christ. He had pledged himself to the redemption of the world, and sent Christ to do the work. He made a promise to Abraham, and to his seed, and "confirmed it with an oath, That ... we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus." (Hebrews 6:17-20)

Thus we learn that God swore by himself that He would forgive the sins of all who sought forgiveness through Christ. Jesus Christ is the manifestation of God. If Christ had failed or become discouraged because of the difficulties of His task, God's oath would have been broken; but if God's oath would have been broken, God's own life would have been forfeited; and since He is the Creator and upholder of all things, everything would have ceased to be.

Now we can see how well tried is the foundation upon which we are asked to build. God placed himself and the weight of the entire universe upon it, and it stood the test. Therefore, we can rest upon it in confidence. It is a precious stone to those who believe.

The Word will be the only standard in the Judgment. The Word is righteousness, and righteousness will be the plumb line. The whole building must square with this foundation. Nothing must project over the edge; that is, nothing must go beyond the Word. Whatever is outside of the Word of God, will be swept away with "the overflowing scourge. ... the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies." (Isaiah 28:18,17) "Have you entered into the treasures of the snow? or have you seen the treasures of the hail, Which I have reserved against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war?" (Job 38:22-23) "And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great." (Revelation 16:21)

This tried stone which is laid for a foundation is "a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious." (1 Peter 2:4)

Whoever comes in contact with it is made alive. Living things grow, and so in Christ, "All the building fitly framed together grows unto a holy temple in the Lord." (Ephesians 2:21)

We read, "As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him: Rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith." (Colossians 2:6-7)

Thus we see that the house built upon Christ and His Word, is not like an ordinary house built by men, which simply stands upon its foundation, but it is a living house, built upon a living foundation, of which it becomes a part, so that the house and the foundation are as firmly joined together, and as much a part of each other; as the tree and its roots.

Therefore, there is no danger that the house will be swept off from the foundation, and the foundation be left standing. Everyone who stands on God's Word and lives by it, will stand as long as God lives, and will be as immovable as He.

A Stone of Stumbling

From the last lesson, in the first part of this chapter, we learn that those to whom the Lord is speaking, reject the simple instruction of His Word, and therefore they

stumble and fall. They profess themselves to be wise, yet they stumble at that which is revealed to babes. Even so it is in their relation to this sure foundation, which the Lord lays, and upon which men are to build and be safe. While it is a foundation and a sanctuary, it is also a "stone of stumbling." (Isaiah 8:14) "As it is written, Behold I lay in Sion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, and whosoever believes on Him shall not be ashamed." (Romans 9:33; Isaiah 28:16)

Here the two passages of Isaiah are brought together, and we learn that the same Lord who is the foundation which builds up those who build upon it, and makes them a sanctuary, is at the same time a stumbling stone. If men will not place their feet upon that which is made for them to stand upon, then they stumble over it. So the very thing which is salvation to those that believe, is destruction to those who do not believe. "Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believes on Him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe He is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed." (1 Peter 2:6-8)

This being the case, there is no possible chance left for anybody to accuse God of injustice. When that which causes some people's destruction is nothing other than the salvation which God provides for all men, God is surely clear when He judges.--Present Truth, May 11, 1899--Isaiah 28:14-18.

The Righteous Judgment of God

"Your covenant with death shall be broken, And your treaty with the grave shall not stand: When the overflowing plague passes through, By it shall you be beaten down. As soon as it passes through, shall it seize you; Yea, morning after morning shall it pass through, by day and by night; And even the report alone shall cause terror. For the bed is too short, for one to stretch himself out at length; And the covering is too narrow, for one to gather himself up under it. For as in Mount Peratsim, Jehovah will arise; As in the valley of Gibeon, shall He be moved with anger; That He may execute His work, His strange work; And effect His operation, His unusual operation. And now, give yourselves up to scoffing no more, Lest your chastisements become more severe: For a full and decisive decree have I heard, From the Lord Jehovah God of Hosts, on the whole land. Listen, and hear my voice; Attend, and hearken unto my words. Does the husbandman plough every day that he may sow, Opening and breaking the clods of the field? When he has made even the face thereof, Does not he then scatter the dill, and cast abroad the cummin; And sow the wheat in due measure; And the barley, and rye, has its appointed limit? For his God rightly instructs him; He furnished him with knowledge. The dill is not beaten out with the corn drag; Nor is the wheel of the wain made to turn upon the cumin: But the dill is beaten out with the staff; And the cummin with the flail: but the bread-corn with the threshing-wain. But not for ever will he continue thus to thresh it, Nor to vex it with the wheel of his wain; Nor to bruise it with the hoofs of his cattle. This also proceeds from Jehovah God of Hosts: He shows himself wonderful in counsel, great in operation." (Isaiah 28:18-29,Lowth)

The first five verses of the portion here given have already been considered, but we give them again in order to preserve the connection. Not only they, but all the preceding verses should be read in connection with this lesson.

Remember that the Bible does not consist of isolated texts, but each writer has a message from the Lord. One can no more get the sense of the Scriptures by taking a verse here and another there, than we can get the meaning of a letter that we receive, by reading a sentence in the middle of it, then another near the beginning, and then another at the close. We must read it through from beginning to end, and then whenever we wish to refer to some particular sentence in it, we must take it in connection with the

rest. We must at the same time we quote it, remember what has preceded, and what follows. Even so must we deal with the message which the Lord sends us by His prophets.

The Judgment is Salvation

Those who recall not only the first part of this chapter, but the preceding chapters will know that the general subject is the judgments of God. The last days, and the very last judgments of God upon this earth, are very vividly brought to view. But let it never be forgotten that the idea is salvation rather than destruction. God comes to save His people.

Too many always connect the Judgment with thoughts of revenge, as though God had in mind nothing except to destroy somebody. Let all remember that God is a Shepherd, and that His sole solicitude is for His flock. When He comes to deliver His sheep from the mouth of the lion, who would devour them, He is moved by feelings of the deepest love and compassion. The last judgment is only a wonderful manifestation of God's everlasting love for His people. Read again: "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day. Fury is not in me." (Isaiah 27:3-4)

God is love just as much when He destroys the wicked, who would destroy His people, as when He gives His life for the world. In the execution of His greatest judgments, "His mercy endures for ever." (Psalm 136:1; 2-26)

Great as is God's power to destroy, so great is His power to redeem. The destruction of the wicked is only one part of the great work of redemption. This is shown in the death of Christ. Christ died for the world of sinners. He was made to be sin for us, and therefore He suffered the penalty for sin. He was made to be sin for us, in order that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him, and even so He suffered as a sinner, in order that guilty sinners might be saved from wrath through Him.

In giving His only Son to die for sinners, and giving himself in His Son, God showed us not only the inevitable fate of sinners but also how much He longed not to see a single sinner punished. He has no pleasure in the death of any. "As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from

his way and live: turn you, turn you from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?" (Ezekiel 33:11)

The wicked who will be destroyed at the last day, will only be taking by themselves that which they would not share with Christ. The cross of Christ appears in everything. So in the description of future judgments, God is making known to us some of the sufferings of Christ for sinners, that we may know how great is His power now to redeem those who fly to Him for refuge.

Thus we may understand that when God arises to Judgment, and is "wroth as in the valley of Gibeon," (Isaiah 28:21; Joshua 10:10-11) where He smote the enemies of His people, and "slew them with a great slaughter," (Joshua 10:10) and "chased them," (Joshua 10:10) and "cast down great stones from heaven upon them," (Joshua 10:11; Compare with Revelation 16:21) it is for Him a "strange work." (Isaiah 28:21)

The angels were awed into silence, and the heavens grew black with astonishment, when God showed His marvelous love for man by giving His Son to die. Such a way of showing love, not for friends, but for enemies, could be conceived and understood only by the heart of God. Even yet the angels desire to understand it. "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into." (1 Peter 1:10-12)

Since no man nor angel can comprehend the love of God that is manifested in the death of Christ for sinners, let no one childishly accuse God of injustice and cruelty when he reads of the judgments that are to fall upon the heads of those who reject the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

The Terror of That Day

Terrible things will come, too. "Even the report alone shall cause terror." (Isaiah 28:19,Lowth)

The prophet Habakkuk saw in vision the time when the Lord went forth for the salvation of His people, threshing the heathen by the power that was hidden in His glorious, wounded side, (Habakkuk 3:4,margin; 12-13) and he said, "I heard and my belly trembled, my lips quivered at the voice, rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in my place; that I should rest in the day of trouble, when it comes up against the people which invades Him in troops." (Habakkuk 3:16,RV)

So Jesus, describing to His disciples the terrors of that day, said, "There shall be signs in the sun and moon and stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, in perplexity for the roaring of the sea and of the billows; Men expiring for fear, and for expectation of the things which are coming on the world; for the powers of the heavens shall be shaken." (Luke 21:25-26,RV) "In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats; To go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake terribly the earth." (Isaiah 2:20-21)

All the men of this earth, both great and small, will flee to hide themselves, and will say to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" (Revelation 6:16-17)

But there will be no place for hiding; "For the bed is too short, for one to stretch himself out at length; and the covering is too narrow for one to gather himself up under it." (Isaiah 28:20,Lowth)

This is a striking figure, which all can understand. Who has not at some time suffered with cold because of scanty bed-clothing? Try as you would, you could not get protection. Such an experience the Lord uses to illustrate the vain efforts of those who would escape His righteous judgments. There will be no place of concealment, for God will then "bring to light the hidden things of darkness." (1 Corinthians 4:5)

Here is an exhortation that comes to all: "Now therefore be not mockers, lest your bands be made strong: for I have heard from the Lord God of hosts a consumption, even determined upon the whole earth." (Isaiah 28:22)

Even as the Gospel is "to all people," (Luke 2:10) so all people are interested in the account of these judgments. They come not upon one particular locality, but upon the whole earth. Compare with this: "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." (Psalm 2:1-3)

They will enter into an alliance with death and the grave against the Lord; but the Lord will laugh at their vain efforts. The Son, whom they despise, will "break them with a rod of iron, [and will] dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." (Psalm 2:9)

So the exhortation comes, "Be wise now therefore, O you kings; be instructed, you judges of the earth." (Psalm 2:9)

If not, the bands which they vainly think to break and cast off, will be made tighter; but if they will but submit themselves to the yoke of the Lord, then they will find the bands tokens of liberty, since they are bands of love.

Lesson from the Seasons

Last of all in this chapter which we are studying, we have a lesson from the seasons, and the work which comes with each. Just as in the service of the Jewish tabernacle the whole work of the Gospel was set forth in figure each year, even so it is now, and has been from the beginning, in nature. Seed-time and harvest are yearly reminders to all men of the work of God for men,--of the Gospel and its consummation. Everybody is familiar with the growth of grain, and the harvest, so we have need only to read the last five verses of Isaiah 28 to have material for many lessons.

The husbandman does not plough all the time, neither is he all the time sowing. When he has broken up the earth, and harrowed it, making the surface smooth, then he scatters the various kinds of grain. Each kind of grain has its appointed time, and is sown in its season. "For this God does instruct him to discretion and does teach him." (Isaiah 28:26)

Yes, the wisdom which men have to till the soil comes from God alone. There is nothing that men know, that they have not learned from God. Whatever men know well, when priding themselves upon their skill and dexterity in doing it, let them remember that God knows how to do it infinitely better, and can still teach them more.

Righteousness comes by faith. But righteousness is right-doing. That is, the man who lives by faith will do whatever he has to do much better than the one who is not a Christian. If men have not always seen it so, then it is to the shame of the professed Christians; they have not lived up to their profession. Since faith makes a man righteous,--a right-doer,--then it follows that faith--true and intelligent faith,--will make a man a better farmer, a better carpenter, a better workman in any line. "[God] is wonderful in counsel; and excellent in working," (Isaiah 28:29) and those who trust in Him fully will find it manifest in themselves.

But this is only by the way, important as it is. It is a side lesson. The special thing to be learned from this reference to agriculture is that God works consistently, and adapts His means to the ends He has in view. The farmer does not thresh all kinds of grain with the same instrument. The machine that is used for threshing corn, would utterly destroy some more delicate kinds of seeds.

So God adapts His judgments to the individual. There is only one standard in the Judgment, namely, the law of God,--the perfect life of the Lord,--but each person will be judged only by the amount of the light and knowledge of the law he has had. "For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; ... In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my Gospel. ... For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. 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 meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another." (Romans 2:12,16,13-15)

In the Judgment, the man who has never seen the Bible, and who has had no knowledge of God, other than that which is revealed in the book of nature, will not be held accountable for the same light that the one is who has lived all his life amid the greatest Gospel privileges. It will then be seen, however, that there is no one who has

not had an opportunity to hear the Gospel, and who has not both heard and seen it. "Have they not heard? Yea, verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." (Romans 10:18) "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold down the truth in unrighteousness; because that which may be known of God is manifest in them." (Romans 1:18)

All are without excuse, because ever since the creation of the world the everlasting power and Divinity of God are clearly seen in the things which He 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)

The seed-time is the giving of the news of salvation. "The seed is the Word of God," (Luke 8:11) and Christ is the Word: "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." (John 1:1,14) "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)

Christ is the Seed, (Galatians 3:16) and He died and was buried to bring "many sons unto glory." (Hebrews 2:10)

Every springing seed speaks, to all who will hear of the power of the resurrection, and so of the power of God to salvation. "The harvest is the end of the world." (Matthew 13:39)

John says, "And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in your sickle, and reap: for the time is come for you to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And He that sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped." (Revelation 14:14-16)

This is when "He comes with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also that pierced Him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him." (Revelation 1:7)

Thus we see again that the things spoken of in our lesson are no light thing concerning only a few Jews hundreds of years ago. They are matters of present and universal importance. "But not for ever will he continue thus to thresh it, nor to vex it with the wheel of his wain; nor to bruise it with the hoofs of his cattle." (Isaiah 28:28,Lowth) "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide; neither will He keep His anger for ever." (Psalm 103:8-9) "For yet a very little while, and the indignation shall cease, and my anger in their destruction." (Isaiah 10:25)

It is a strange thing for God to execute punishment upon His creatures; therefore He will not keep forever before His eyes, and the eyes of the universe, the spectacle of people tormented in flames. Men may make a covenant with death and the grave, thinking thus to escape the righteous judgments of God; but that will avail nothing, for both death and the grave shall be utterly consumed in the lake of fire, (Revelation 20:14) so that "Yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be; yea, you shall diligently consider his place, and it shall not be." (Psalm 37:10)

The wicked are chaff, stubble, and noxious weeds. "Therefore as the fire devours the stubble, and the flame consumes the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust; because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel." (Isaiah 5:24) "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)

As 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 the 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 13:41-43)--Present Truth, May 18, 1899--Isaiah 28:18-29.

The Cause of Ignorance

"Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city which David besieged! Add year to year; let the feasts go round in their course. Yet will I bring distress upon Ariel; And there shall be continual mourning and sorrow: And it shall be unto me as the hearth of the great altar. And I will encamp against you, like David; And I will lay siege against you with a mound; And I will erect towers against you. And you shall be brought low; you shall speak as from beneath the earth: And from out of the dust you shall utter a feeble speech; And your voice shall come out of the ground like that of a necromancer: And your words from out of the dust shall give a small, shrill sound. But the multitude of the proud shall be like the small dust; And like the flitting chaff the multitude of the terrible: Yea, the effect shall be momentary, in an instant. From Jehovah God of Hosts there shall be a sudden visitation, With thunder, and earthquake, and a mighty voice; With storm, and tempest, and flame of devouring fire. And like as a dream, a vision of the night, So shall it be with the multitude of all the nations, that fight against Ariel; And all their armies, and their towers, and those that distress her. As when a hungry man dreams; and lo! he seems to eat; But he awakes, and his appetite is still unsatisfied: And as a thirsty man dreams, and lo! he seems to drink; But he awakes and he is still faint, and his appetite still craving: So shall it be with the multitude of all the nations, Which have set themselves in array against Mount Sion. They are struck with amazement, they stand astonished; They stare with a look of stupid surprise: They are drunken, but not with wine; They stagger, but not with strong drink. For Jehovah has poured upon you a spirit of profound sleep; And has closed up your eyes; The prophets, and the rulers; the seers has He blindfolded. So that all the vision is to you, as the words of a book sealed up; Which if one delivers to a man, that knows letters, Saying, Read this, I pray you; He answers, I cannot read it; for it is sealed up: Or should the book be given to one that knows not letters, Saying, Read this, I pray you; He answers, I know not letters. Wherefore Jehovah has said: Forasmuch as this people draws near with their mouth, And honors me with their lips, While their heart is far from me; And vain is their fear of me, Teaching the commandments of men: Therefore behold, I will again deal with this people, In a manner so wonderful and astonishing; That the wisdom of the wise shall perish, And the prudence of the prudent shall disappear.

Woe to Ariel

What is Ariel? That it is a city, is plainly stated. What city? In the translation which we are using, it is stated to be the city which David besieged, which is not very definite, since David besieged more than one city. In the Revised Version we have the better rendering, "the city where David encamped," (Isaiah 29:1,RV) and when we put by the side of this the rendering of the common version, "the city where David dwelt," (Isaiah 29:1) we have no difficulty in understanding that Jerusalem is the city referred to in the prophecy. In the 28th chapter we have the case of Samaria set forth, and now in this chapter Jerusalem is dealt with; but in both it is the whole world that is involved.

The word "Ariel" means "lion of God." A few moments' study of the passages in which this word occurs may be of interest. Aside from this chapter, we find it in 2 Samuel 23:20, and the parallel passage in 1 Chronicles 12:22, where it is stated that Benaiah "slew two lion-like men of Moab." (1 Chronicles 11:22)

The Revision shows us that the words "men of" are added by the translator. Literally it is "two Ariel of Moab," which is not a translation, and which to us does not mean anything. Translated it would read, "two lions of God of Moab." Now when we remember that the phrase "to God" is often used to express the superlative degree as to size, fairness, etc., (See Psalm 36:6; Acts 7:20, with the margin of both cases) we understand that Benaiah slew two very great lions of Moab.

Again the word occurs in Ezekiel 43:15-16, where it is rendered "altar." The marginal rendering is in one case "mountain of God," and in the other, "lion of God." This we can understand when we remember that the temple, the essential part of which was the altar, was on the summit of Mount Zion, and that Mount Zion and the temple stood for Jerusalem.

Jerusalem stands as the center of the worship of the true God, and therefore all the judgments that come upon Jerusalem because of the corruption of the worship of Jehovah will surely come wherever that worship has been perverted. It should also be noted, in reading the text, that instead of "Woe to Ariel!" we may read, "Ho, Ariel!" as in the Revision and in the margin of our common version. So combining the various renderings, we may arrive at this: "Ho, Ariel, Ariel, the city where David dwelt! add

year to year; let the feasts be observed in their courses, and the sacrifices be offered, yet will I bring distress upon Ariel, and there shall be mourning."

That is to say, ceremonies and festivals, no matter how numerous nor how strictly observed, will never ward off judgments, nor take the place of personal righteousness of character. Compare this with verses 13-14. It is the same lesson that is set forth in the 1st chapter of Isaiah, and one which cannot be repeated too often in this generation.

Judgment Upon Jerusalem

The reader will notice that Lowth's rendering of the first part of verse 3, is widely different from that in the common version or the revision. Lowth has it, "I will encamp against you, like David," (Isaiah 29:3,Lowth) while the others have it, "I will camp against you round about." (Isaiah 29:3,KJV)

The difference comes in this way: The Hebrew word for "circle" differs from the Hebrew of "David" only in the last letter, and those two letters are so nearly alike that one is easily mistaken for the other, and some ancient manuscripts have it David. It is really a matter of no importance, and attention is called to it only that we may see that little differences of that kind do not affect the meaning. If we read, "I will encamp against you, like David," it is the same as though we read, "I will camp against you round about," for that is the way David did. We can now read the verses and see the picture which they present.

Jerusalem, although very scrupulous in the observance of all the forms and ceremonies of the law, and of many of which the law knew nothing, yet disregarding the weighty matters of the law, namely, judgment, mercy, faith, (Matthew 23:23) was besieged by the Assyrians, afterward by the Babylonians, and still later by the Romans, and laid low. These nations, heathen and wicked as they were, were the agents of God, so that God himself could say that He was encamping against the city. And those judgments upon Jerusalem of old were only a foretaste of the final destruction which shall come upon all who choose to follow their own way rather than God's way. (Compare verse 6 with 1 Thessalonians 4:15-16; 5:3; Revelation 6:12-17; and Revelation 11:18-19) "And your voice shall be, as of one that has a familiar spirit, out of the ground." (Isaiah 29:4)

When Saul consulted a woman with a familiar spirit, the answer came out of the ground. (See 1 Samuel 28:7-13) Evil comes from beneath; all that is good comes from above. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above. Christ said to the wicked Jews: "You are from beneath; I am from above: you are of this world; I am not of this world." (John 8:23) "He that comes from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaks of the earth: He that comes from heaven is above all." (John 3:31)

The evil spirit speaks from the earth; Christ speaks from heaven. "See that you refuse not Him that speaks. For if they escaped not who refused him that spoke on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaks from heaven." (Hebrews 12:25) "You shall be visited of the Lord of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire." (Isaiah 29:6)

Jerusalem is to be visited with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, and storm and tempest, and the flame of the devouring fire, and its destruction is to be sudden. "When they shall say, Peace and Safety, then sudden destruction comes." (1 Thessalonians 5:3)

The multitude of the proud shall be as chaff that passes away. "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)

The time when this judgment shall be executed upon Jerusalem is very evident. "And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, even all that fight against her and her munition, and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night vision." (Isaiah 29:7)

The fact that men are instruments in the hands of God to execute judgments, does not necessarily prove that what they do is righteous. They are unconscious and unwilling instruments. They are intent upon carrying out their own purposes, but God overrules all in such a way that His purposes are accomplished.

See the case of the selling of Joseph by his brethren. They were moved by envy and hate, nevertheless it was God's purpose that was carried out in the deed. So it is

when God allows unfaithful servants to fall into the hands of their enemies. What they suffer is but a part of God's judgment upon them, yet the men who execute this judgment are prompted only by their evil passions, and must themselves receive punishment for the judgments that they inflict.

One can readily see how Jerusalem will be the center of contention among the nations. Among all professed Christian nations the Turk is regarded as something to be got rid of. Professed ministers of the Gospel have been for years crying out for vengeance to be executed upon the Turks, and berating the heads of Government for their slowness to begin the war of extermination. The Turkish Empire would long since have ceased to be a part of Europe, if the other Governments could have been agreed as to who should be its successor.

In process of time it will be driven out, and when the Turkish Empire is limited to Asia, Jerusalem will be the natural capital of it, inasmuch as it is the principal city in many respects. But since even now the cry has gone out for the Turk to be driven off the face of the earth, so much the more will it go forth then. So that it will be at Jerusalem that the armies of the nations will chiefly be assembled when the Lord appears in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel.

Final End of the Wicked

When the Lord appears in the clouds, all the wicked will be destroyed by the brightness of His coming. "And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming." (2 Thessalonians 2:8)

This will be but the beginning of their destruction. At the appearing of Christ, all the righteous dead will be raised incorruptible, and will be taken to be with the Lord. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17) "Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and

the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." (1 Corinthians 15:51-52)

But the rest of the dead, the wicked, will not live again until the end of a thousand years, during which the righteous will be sitting in judgment with Christ, in heaven. "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: on such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle; the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city; and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them." (Revelation 20:5-9)

They go up with the intent to capture the city; but, lo, the city against which they now come is the New Jerusalem. Jerusalem has undergone a transformation while they have been asleep; and against this new city they are powerless.

When the psalmist went into the sanctuary of God, he understood the end of the wicked. He said, "Surely You did set them in slippery places; You cast them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awakes; so, O Lord, You shall despise their image." (Psalm 73:18-20)

So the multitude of those who come up to fight against Jerusalem shall be "as a dream of a night vision." (Isaiah 29:7)

They are to be "punished with everlasting destruction," (2 Thessalonians 1:9) and the fire with which they will be consumed is "eternal fire," (Jude 1:7) yet they are "utterly consumed, ... as in a moment." (Psalm 73:19)

Their destruction is the more speedy simply because the fire is eternal, even the consuming fire of God's own glory. No matter how long a time is occupied in the act of consuming them, compared with the eternity to follow it is but a moment. "So shall the multitude of all the nations be that fight against Zion." (Isaiah 29:8)

Men who receive not the love of the truth, that they might be saved, have no alternative but strong delusion, that they should believe a lie. "They received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 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 2:10-12)

The greater the light which God sends, the greater will be the darkness if it is rejected. Thus it is that the Lord pours out the spirit of deep sleep, and closes the eyes of the prophets and rulers. "For the Lord has poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers has He covered." (Isaiah 29:10)

The rendering of this verse in the Revised Version is very striking and suggestive: "For the Lord has poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes, the prophets; and your heads, the seers, has He covered." (Isaiah 29:10,RV)

The prophets and the seers are the eyes and heads of the people; when therefore these are drunken the whole body must necessarily stumble and fall.

A Time of Darkness

A vision is a thing seen. To give a vision is to make something plain. Think then in what a condition of dullness people are, to whom a vision is as a sealed book, or like an open book handed to one who cannot read. "And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray you: and he says, I cannot; for it is sealed: And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray you: and he says, I am not learned." (Isaiah 29:11-12)

In verses 11, 12 we have a picture of a time of gross ignorance. What can be the cause of it? The Lord himself tells us: "Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: "Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people,

even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid." (Isaiah 29:13-14)

The wisdom of the wise perishes, and the understanding of the prudent man is hid, because the people draw near the Lord with their mouth, while their heart is far from Him, and their fear toward Him is taught by the commandment of men. Here is something for serious consideration.

Compare the reading of verse 13 in the Revised Version: "Their fear of me is a commandment of men which has been taught them," (Isaiah 29:13) or, as the margin has it, "learned by rote." There is no thought or reason in it, but they have been told certain things to do, and have learned them parrot-like, and do them mechanically. Ignorance, and not simply ignorance, but the inability to comprehend, is the inevitable consequence of such a course; for when men do not use the gifts that God has bestowed on them, those talents are sure to fall into decay.

God has given all men minds which are to be used to their utmost limit, and that can take place only when He is allowed to use them; but when some men allow other men to serve as minds for them, they of course have no use for one of their own, and so it is removed.

Wisdom from the Word

Only the commandments of men may be learned by rote. Men may attempt to learn the commandments of God in that way, but it is impossible. God's commandments are a living force, and wherever they are, there must be activity.

Commandments of men are not to be regarded. Of course this refers to matters pertaining to God. There is no man in the world so good that his word is to be regarded as of any authority in things pertaining to God. If it is his word, it is of no more value than the wind. But if he speaks the word of God, then the word will be with power, and will have the stamp of authority. No man is authorised by the Lord to speak his own words to the people, and whoever does so is a false teacher, seeking only his own profit. "He whom God has sent speaks the words of God." (John 3:34) "To the law, and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, there is no light in them." (Isaiah 8:20)

When the wisdom of the wise men perishes, and the understanding of the prudent men is hid, what will become of the poor people who trust in the wisdom of men? They will evidently fall into the ditch, together with their blind leaders. "Cursed be the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good comes." (Jeremiah 17:5-6)

What then is a poor, ignorant man to do? His course is plain; he is to go to the Lord for wisdom; "For the Lord gives wisdom; out of His mouth comes knowledge and understanding." (Proverbs 2:6)

If anyone, no matter how poor, lack wisdom, "let him ask of God, who gives to all men liberally, and upbraids not; and it shall be given him." (James 1:5) "Through your precepts I get understanding. ... I have more understanding than all my teachers; for your testimonies are my meditation." (Psalm 119:104,99)

God has not made any one class of men the depositories of wisdom. "If any man will do His will, he shall know." (John 7:17)

The Book is open, and it is plain; let each one read it for himself, and whatever he finds there let him adopt, without waiting to inquire of some man. The most ignorant may become wise, simply by giving heed to the Word of God; while the wisest men become fools when they turn away from that Word. Some will say, "We have no time to study the Word of God, and to become acquainted with it."

That is indeed strange. It is like the captain of a ship who is so busy navigating his vessel that he has no time to consult the chart and compass, or to take observations. It is like a man who has no time for eating. Men live only by the word of God; therefore the study of the word is the only thing they have time for.

Time is given to men for the sole purpose of enabling them to gain eternity. Yet how few will believe it. They will act as though this short life were all, and as though it depended on them to secure it; whereas this life is given by God, and is but the ante-room to the life eternal. Who will be wise? let him. "Seek first of all the kingdom of

God, and His righteousness," (Matthew 6:33) and infinite wisdom and riches will be his.--Present Truth, May 25, 1899--Isaiah 29:1-14.

Too Deep for Jehovah

"Wherefore Jehovah has said: Forasmuch as this people draws near with their mouth, And honors me with their lips, While their heart is far from me; And vain is their fear of me, Teaching the commandments of men: Therefore behold, I will again deal with this people, In a manner so wonderful and astonishing; That the wisdom of the wise shall perish, And the prudence of the prudent shall disappear. Woe unto them, that are too deep for Jehovah in forming secret designs; Whose deeds are in the dark; and who say, Who is there, that sees us; and who shall know us? Perverse as you are! shall the potter be esteemed as the clay? Shall the work say of the workman, He has not made me? And shall the thing formed say of the former of it, He has no understanding? Shall it not be but a very short space, Ere Lebanon become like Carmel, And Carmel appear like a desert? Then shall the deaf hear the words of the Book, And the eyes of the blind, covered before with clouds and darkness, shall see. The meek shall increase their joy in Jehovah: And the needy shall exult in the Holy One of Israel. For the terrible one fails, the scoffer is no more; And all that were vigilant in iniquity are utterly cut off: Who bewildered the poor man in speaking; And laid snares for him, that pleaded in the gate; And with falsehood subverted the righteous. Therefore thus says Jehovah the God of the house of Jacob, He who redeemed Abraham: Jacob shall no more be ashamed; His face shall no more be covered with confusion: For when his children shall see the works of my hands, Among themselves shall they sanctify my name; They shall sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, And tremble before the God of Israel. Those that were led away with the spirit of error, shall gain knowledge; And the malignant shall attend to instruction. (Isaiah 29:13-24)

The chief thing necessary in order to an understanding of the prophecy of Isaiah, is to keep in mind the fact that it all applies to the very last days. It was indeed a present, personal, practical message to those who lived when Isaiah was writing, but it has a still greater application to us since we are nearer the time of its fulfillment than they were.

We are, however, no nearer than they might have been if they had believed the message. If in our study we watch for the expressions which plainly indicate the application of the prophecy to the end of time, we shall have much less difficulty in reading with profit.

Heart Knowledge

"Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men." (Isaiah 29:13)

There is no profit in hypocrisy. Those who honor God only with their lips, while their hearts are far from Him, will soon lose what little of reality they have to begin with. Whatever is not used, degenerates, and ultimately goes to decay.

In our common version, as well as in the Revision, we read in verse 13, that the people "have removed their heart" far from the Lord. The Norwegian has it, "They hold their hearts from me." Compare this with the 1st chapter of Romans, where we read of those who hold down the truth in unrighteousness, and note in both places that the same result follows.

We very often hear of one who has "learned a thing by heart." That is the only way men can learn the things of God. But that does not mean learning them by rote, like a parrot. It means that the Scriptures must be translated into the life--must become a part of one's being.

Because men have removed their hearts from the Lord, their understanding wanes and vanishes. The only difficulty there is in understanding the Word of God, is of the heart, and not of the head. It is because of the unwillingness to have the life conformed to the law of the Lord, that men find difficulty in understanding the Bible. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." (John 7:17)

God's Working is Beyond Man's Understanding

"Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid." (Isaiah 29:14)

Because men have been content with the wisdom of this world, and have despised the wisdom that comes from God only, because they have taken the commandments of

men instead of the commandments of God, the Lord will work in a way so wonderful that the wisdom of the wise shall fail; it will perish and disappear. That means simply that He will do such wonders that they will be compelled to stand in open-mouthed astonishment. Their science will be utterly inadequate to account for His working.

But mind that this inability comes because they have trusted in human wisdom. That indicates that if they had trusted the Lord, and had allowed Him to instruct them, they would understand His working. Why not? Those who faithfully learn the simple lessons that the Lord gives them, may well go on to deeper things. The Holy Spirit is given us in order that we may know the things that are freely given us 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 2:12)

But God give us all things. "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwells not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, seeing He gives to all life, and breath, and all things." (Acts 17:24-25)

Therefore the Holy Spirit will teach us all things, even "the deep things of God." (1 Corinthians 2:10)

But without the Spirit of God, no one can really know anything as he ought to know it. Do not forget that God does not arbitrarily deprive anybody of wisdom. No, He continues to give more light and knowledge, so that all may understand, and men lose their understanding solely because they have refused to let God teach them as children.

Hidden Deeds Exposed

"Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who sees us? and who knows us?" (Isaiah 29:15)
"Woe unto them, that are too deep for Jehovah in forming secret designs; whose deeds are in the dark; and who say, Who is there, that sees us; and who shall know us?" (Isaiah 29:15,Lowth)

A woe is pronounced upon those who think to hide their deeds from the Lord. What a terrible disappointment it must be for men who have imagined that they were

"too deep for Jehovah" to find out that "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." (Hebrews 4:13) "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 even as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to You." (Psalm 139:11-12)

For a time it seems as if everything were well concealed. But, "Every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it." (1 Corinthians 3:13)

When the Lord comes, "[He will] bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts." (1 Corinthians 4:5)

In the Judgment it will be as though every evil deed that has been done in secret had been performed in open daylight before all men. Ah, but many things that are done under cover of darkness would not be done if all men could see them; then let us remember that the light is always shining, and let us walk as children of the light. It is not wise to try to have any secrets from the Lord. Whatever secrets we have, let us share them with the Lord. "O what perversity!" (Isaiah 29:16)

That is what we have in many versions in place of "turning things upside down," in verse 16. The same idea is in Lowth's translation. Perverse means the same as turning upside down. This saying by those who think to hide their deeds from the Lord, "Who sees us?" is a turning of things upside down. It is as though God were inferior to man. It is as though the clay were greater than the potter. "Shall the work say of the workman, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He has no understanding?" (Isaiah 29:16)

There is nothing about the clay that the potter does not know; the carpenter understands all about the wood with which he works, and therefore understands to the full that which he has made; even so, and infinitely more, does God know the secrets of every man, and not only all that he does, but all that it is possible for him to do.

God to Set Things Aright

"Is it not yet a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed a forest?" (Isaiah 29:17)

God can in very deed turn things upside down, but when He does so, it is only the putting of things right. Things that men have perverted shall not be allowed to remain in that condition. See in chapter 24 how and when God turns the earth upside down. "In that day, the deaf shall hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness." (Isaiah 29:18)

Now the learned say that they cannot read the words of the book, (Isaiah 29:11; And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray you: and he says, I cannot; for it is sealed) but then even the blind shall read, and the deaf shall hear it. And the result will be that "The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel." (Isaiah 29:19) "The face of the covering that has been cast over all people, and the vail that is cast over all nations." (Isaiah 25:7) shall then be removed, and all will be able to see things just as they are. Now many are held in bondage, the bondage of the fear of men who are over them. Parents coerce children, husbands tyrannise over wives, and many who occupy the place of ministers of the Gospel lord it over God's heritage.

There are many who, through their very fear of God are held in bondage, because they mistakenly suppose that those who thus hold them are in the place of God to them. The very spirit which would make them obedient to the will of God, if they rightly understood it, hold them subject to those who have gained the mastery over them. But the time is surely coming when the terrible one shall be brought to nought: "For the terrible one is brought to nought, and the scorner is consumed, and all that watch for iniquity are cut off. That make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproves in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought." (Isaiah 29:20-21)

And even before the time comes that the scorner is no more and the vigilant in iniquity are utterly cut off, their influence will be so destroyed that all the honest ones whom they have held in bondage shall be set at liberty.

Condemning the Innocent

On verse 21 the Revised Version is better than the others. It reads, "That make a man an offender in a cause, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in a cause, and turn aside the just with a thing of nought." (Isaiah 29:21,RV)

Compare with: "You have condemned and killed the just, and he does not resist you." (James 5:6)

Snare will be laid for the men whom God has set to reprove the world for sin, the innocent will be made out to be offenders, and the just will be condemned without evidence. Thus it has been since sin entered the world, even so was Christ declared guilty, and so it will be until the Lord takes all power to himself and reigns.

An Abundant Harvest Promised

"Therefore thus says the Lord, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob, Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale." (Isaiah 29:22)

At that time the house of Jacob,--God's people,--shall not be afraid nor ashamed. No more will their faces grow pale with fear of the oppressor.

Verse 24 contains a great comfort for the faithful workers in the cause of God, who often feel, as they look at their work, "I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain." (Isaiah 49:4)

The promise is, "They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine." (Isaiah 29:24)

In the days following Pentecost thousands who had been led into error came to the knowledge of the truth. Many who had cried out, "Crucify Him," yea, and a great company even of the priests, some of whom had been the betrayers and murderers of Christ, were obedient to the faith. "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." (Acts 6:7)

But, "Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof." (Ecclesiastes 7:8)
"But when he sees his children, the work of my hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear the God of Israel."
(Isaiah 29:23)

If the early rain yielded such abundant fruits, much more will the latter rain bring forth. Let the children of God expect great things of Him, and great things will be done by Him who is "wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." (Isaiah 28:29)--
Present Truth, June 1, 1899--Isaiah 29:13-24.

Worldly Alliance a Failure

"Woe unto the rebellious children, says Jehovah; Who form counsels, but not from me; Who ratify covenants, but not by my Spirit: That they may add sin to sin. Who set forward to go down to Egypt; But have not enquired at my mouth: To strengthen themselves with the strength of Pharaoh; And to trust in the shadow of Egypt. But the strength of Pharaoh shall be your shame; And your trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion. Their princes were at Tsoan; And their ambassadors arrived at Hanes: 5 They were all ashamed of a people, that profited them not; Who were of no help, and of no profit; But proved even a shame, and a reproach unto them. The burden of the beasts traveling southward, Through a land of distress and difficulty: Whence come forth the lioness, and the fierce lion; The viper, and the flying fiery serpent: They carry on the shoulders of the young cattle their wealth; And on the bunch of the camel their treasures: To a people, that will not profit them. For Egypt is a mere vapor; in vain shall they help: Wherefore have I called her, Rahab the inactive. Go now, write it before them on a tablet; And record it in letters upon a book: That it may be for future times; For a testimony for ever. For there is a rebellious people, lying children; Children who choose not to hear the law of Jehovah: Who say to the seers, See not; And to the prophets, Prophecy not right things: Speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits. Turn aside from the way; decline from the straight path; Remove from our sight the Holy One of Israel. Wherefore thus says the Holy One of Israel: Because you have rejected this word; And have trusted in obliquity, and perversion; And have leaned entirely upon it: Therefore shall this offense be unto you, Like a breach threatening ruin; a swelling in a high wall; Whose destruction comes suddenly, in an instant. It shall be broken, as when one breaks a potter's vessel: He dashes it to pieces, and spares it not; So that there shall not be found a sherd among its fragments, To take up fire from the hearth, Or to dip up water from the cistern. Verily thus says the Lord Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel: By turning from your ways, and by abiding quiet, you shall be saved; In silence, and in pious confidence, shall be your strength: But you would not hearken." (Isaiah 30:1-15, Lowth)

One of the earliest things taught by the prophet Isaiah is that the name of the Mighty God,--the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, on whose shoulder the Government rests, and in whom alone there is stability and everlasting dominion,--is

Wonderful, Counsellor. (Isaiah 9:6-7) He only is "wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." (Isaiah 28:29)

Therefore it is easy to understand the woe pronounced upon those who do indeed take counsel, but not of the Lord. "Woe to the rebellious children, says the Lord, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin:" (Isaiah 30:1)

It is not an arbitrary curse captiously uttered, as though the Lord were angry because He has been slighted, but the simple statement of the inevitable result to those who despise the counsel of the Lord. There is no real counsel except from Him. "That walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt! Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion. For his princes were at Zoan, and his ambassadors came to Hanes. They were all ashamed of a people that could not profit them, nor be an help nor profit, but a shame, and also a reproach. The burden of the beasts of the south: into the land of trouble and anguish, from whence come the young and old lion, the viper and fiery flying serpent, they will carry their riches upon the shoulders of young asses, and their treasures upon the bunches of camels, to a people that shall not profit them." (Isaiah 30:2-6)

The text itself gives us the picture of the circumstances that called it forth. The Israelites, threatened by the Assyrians, were seeking help from Egypt, their ancient house of bondage. The Egyptians had evidently promised them assistance, which the prophet assured them would never be rendered. This is seemingly the sum of the transaction, but the case was not an ordinary one, and it has lessons for God's people to the end of time.

What is Egypt?

In the first place, we must consider what Egypt really is. We will not take time and space here to go into it in detail, but we find a key in Revelation 11, where we read that the dead bodies of God's "two witnesses," who are slain for the true testimony that they give, shall lie in the street of "the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified." (Revelation 11:8)

Now it was "this present evil world" (Galatians 1:4) that crucified Christ, because "it knew Him not." (1 John 3:1; Acts 13:27) "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: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." (1 Corinthians 2:7-8) "These things have I spoken unto you, that you should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time comes, that whosoever kills you will think that he does God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me." (John 16:1-3)

The cross of Jesus is that by which we are crucified unto the world, and since we are to be crucified with Him, it is that by which He was crucified unto the world. "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." (Galatians 6:14) "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)

By it we are delivered from this present evil world. "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)

We may therefore set it down as a fact that Egypt represents the world, as opposed to Christ. Christ as a little child went down into Egypt, that the saying might be fulfilled, "Out of Egypt have I called my Son." (Matthew 2:15)

Israel was brought out of Egypt in order that they might keep God's commandments: "And He brought forth His people with joy, and His chosen with gladness: And gave them the lands of the heathen: and they inherited the labor of the people; That they might observe His statutes, and keep His laws." (Psalm 105:43-45)

All the children of God,--therefore, all Christians,--must come out of Egypt; so long as they remain in Egypt they cannot render God the service due Him, for Egypt is "the house of bondage." (Exodus 20:2)

The recognition of God as the one, true God, to the exclusion of all false gods, means coming out of Egypt. Think what a marvelous change had taken place when the children of Israel could think of making the alliance with Egypt, and could deliberately seek help against their enemies, from the people who had made them "serve with rigor," (Exodus 1:13) and had "made their lives bitter with hard bondage ... all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigor." (Exodus 1:14) "And the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried," (Exodus 2:23) for the Egyptians "evil entreated" (Deuteronomy 26:6) them, "so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live." (Acts 7:19)

Turning to Human Power

Yet to this same people the Israelites were now turning for assistance in their time of need. What a change time had wrought. What and in whom was this change? Had the Egyptians become converted? Did they now acknowledge and worship the true God? Not at all. They were heathens the same as of old, and were as much opposed to God as their fathers ever were. They had crucified Christ in the days of Moses, for Moses esteemed it great riches to share "the reproach of Christ," (Hebrews 11:26) and that reproach is the cross. "Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach." (Hebrews 13:12-13) "Because for your sake I have borne reproach; shame has covered my face. ... For the zeal of your house has eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached You are fallen upon me. ... Reproach has broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." (Psalm 69:7,9,20-21)

What then did it mean when the people of Israel turned to Egypt for deliverance? It meant that they had forsaken God, the Rock of their salvation. The change was in the Israelites, not in the Egyptians. What blindness was there manifested! to go to the house of bondage to find deliverance! Listen to the talk of some of the "progressive" leaders of the people on those days: "Why shouldn't we make an alliance with the Egyptians, for mutual help? Why should we always keep in memory the ancient differences? The Egyptians are very good fellows, when you come to know them; in fact, they are not so very much different from us. The world has made much progress in the last thousand years, and we ought to be liberal-minded enough to make some concessions to it. It's all

very fine to talk about trusting in the Lord, but it isn't practical; 'God helps those who help themselves,' and common sense should teach us that our only hope of existence as a people is in joining our forces with the Egyptians. On some things we will 'agree to disagree,' and so we shall gain influence with them at the same time that they afford us material aid."

Ah yes, we have all heard them talk. What says the Lord? "The strength of Pharaoh shall be your shame, and your trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion." (Isaiah 30:3) "For Egypt is a mere vapor; in vain shall they help: wherefore have I called her, Rahab the inactive." (Isaiah 30:7,Lowth)

The help of the world is in vain, for, "The world passes away, and the lust thereof: but he that does the will of God abides for ever." (1 John 2:17) "It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in princes." (Psalm 118:9)

Notice the various readings of the 7th verse. The common version has it, "Their strength is to sit still." (Isaiah 30:7)

That expresses the idea very well, but we need to know the meaning of the word "Rahab," in order to appreciate the text. In Job 9:23 the word occurs, and is rendered "proud helpers;" and in Job 26:12 it occurs in the sentence rendered, "He smites through the proud." (Job 26:12)

In two or three other places in the Bible it is to be found, as in Psalm 89:10, and Isaiah 51:9, but always as something hateful to God. The idea, it is plain to be seen, is that of proud boasting. "Rahab" is connected with Babylon in Psalm 87:4, and we know that Babylon originated in pride, and boasting was its ruin. So Egypt is called the people which make great promises and boasts, but do nothing. So their strength of which they boast, is nothing but emptiness.

Recall the history of Pharaoh's haughty opposition to God in the days of Moses, and think how empty it was, and you will understand the force of this text, and will also better see the folly of Israel's going to the Egyptians for help. They say, and do not.

Going back to the first verse, we notice that where our version has "cover with a covering," Lowth has it, "ratify covenants." The margin of our Bibles has, however,

"weave a web," or "make a league." In some versions it is rendered, "pour out a drink offering," which was a common way of ratifying a league, and which is perpetuated to this day in the custom which many have of pledging friendship with a glass of wine.

The covenant which the Israelites were making with the Egyptians was designed as a covering, a protection; but the trouble was, it was not the covering of the Spirit of God. It was a flimsy web that they were weaving.

A Covenant People

Why was it wrong for Israel to make a covenant with the Egyptians or with any other people? Because such a covenant would have been a rejection of God, who had chosen them as His special people. He had made a covenant with them, to be their God, and to take them for His people. It was not because these people were better than others, that they were called God's people, but because they bore the name "Israel," and gloried in it. "Israel" means "a prince of God," a Christian, for all followers of Christ are kings and priests of God. "And has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." (Revelation 1:6)

Whenever a people bear that name,--no matter what the form, whether Christian or Israelite,--they thereby proclaim that Jehovah is their God and their protector; for such to make any alliance with the world is to be untrue to God, for: "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)

The children of Israel were expressly warned, on going into the land of Canaan, not to make any league with the inhabitants of the land. God's plan for them was this: "The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations." (Numbers 23:9)

Yet this did not mean that they should be exclusive and misanthropic. On the contrary, they were to be exponents of God's unselfishness and loving kindness to mankind. Any people might join them, and share the blessings God had for them, but in so doing these other peoples were to give up their distinct nationality, and become simply Christians; for in Christ. "There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor

uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all and in all."
(Colossians 3:11)

Christians are a peculiar people, a nation with an invisible Ruler. They have everything to give "to all people," (Luke 2:10) but no other people have anything to give them. For them therefore to make any alliance whatever with the world, is to deny their King and their profession. It is the same as saying that they do not receive all they need from the Lord, and to put the world in His place. It is to weaken the force of the Gospel to those other people, by conveying the idea that to be a citizen of any earthly country is as good or the same as being a Christian.

Rejecting the Law of God

All that is said in this chapter applies to us as much as to the people who lived when it was written, because it was written "for a testimony for ever. For this is a rebellious people, lying children; children who choose not to hear the law of Jehovah." (Isaiah 30:8-9,Lowth)

The rebellious people are those who do not choose to hear the law of Jehovah; they are not willing to hear the law. Jehovah is the rightful King of all the earth; all who do not regard His law are rebels and outlaws, no matter though they rank as kings on earth.

For Israel to make an alliance with Egypt,--for the professed Church of Christ to enter into any sort of alliance with the world,--is to declare that "the rudiments of the world" (Colossians 2:8) are as good as the law of God. God's law is the only law for all mankind; whatever is contrary to that law is rebellion and idolatry.

But the church has taken upon itself to make laws, calling them God's laws. "After their own lusts [have men] heaped to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they have turned their ears from the truth, ... unto fables." (2 Timothy 4:3-4) "[They] say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not right things: speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits." (Isaiah 30:10,Lowth)

Men choose their own teachers--those who will say the things that they like to hear--and then will quote the sayings of those teachers as authority, in opposition to the

law of God. This is identical with the course of the heathen, who makes his own god, and then says, "Deliver me, for you are my god." (Isaiah 44:17)

Yet these professed people of God will not believe that what the Bible says of the heathen applies to them. What will be the result of all this? Because men reject the word of the Lord, even "the Holy One of Israel," (Isaiah 30:11) "sudden destruction shall come upon them, ... and they shall not escape;" (1 Thessalonians 5:3) "They shall be broken in pieces like a potter's vessel," (Psalm 2:9) and their destruction will be complete.

Trust in God Alone

"Wherefore thus says the Holy One of Israel, Because you despise this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness, and stay thereon: Therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking comes suddenly at an instant. And He shall break it as the breaking of the potters' vessel that is broken in pieces; He shall not spare: so that there shall not be found in the bursting of it a sherd to take fire from the hearth, or to take water withal out of the pit." (Isaiah 30:12-14)

Compare verses 12, 14 with 1 Thessalonians 5:3 and Psalm 2. They who put their trust in men will come to nothing, while "They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides for ever." (Psalm 125:1)

"For thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel: In returning and rest shall you be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength." (Isaiah 30:15)

This, coming in the connection that it does, shows that the Lord affords practical, material aid. The Israelites were in great danger: the Assyrians were threatening their destruction; according to all human calculations they needed just such help as the Egyptians could afford,--men and horses and munitions of war. But God said, "No; they will be your ruin; your strength is in quietly trusting in me, in returning to me, and in absolute rest on my word, you will find complete deliverance."

They did not believe Him, and people do not believe it now. We know as a fact that they preferred to trust in men, whom they could see, rather than in God, whom they could not see, and that the Assyrians took them captive.

Why should we not learn the lesson? It is for each individual, as well as for the whole church. It is recorded for the purpose of teaching the church that its strength lies in strict adherence to the Word of God, and in departing from the world. Conformity to the world, whether for the avowed purpose of winning worldlings to the church, or to induce the world to lend the church material aid, is ruin. The world can do nothing for the church, except to corrupt it, but it cannot do that as long as the church trusts in God alone.

But the individual lesson is the one that concerns us most; for if the individuals are faithful, the church must be right. Each person has troubles of various kinds; in the Lord alone there is help. "Commit your way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass." (Psalm 37:5)

We all know the ways of the world:

- Self-assertion,
- Insisting on one's rights,
- Bitterness,
- Revenge.

Everybody who does not know the Lord, shows how he acts when he is in difficulty, when he is tempted, and when people irritate or injure him; and everybody who does know the Lord, can remember how he once did and how he is still tempted to do. Well, that is the way not to do; that is the way of the world; that is going down into Egypt for help--to the house of bondage for freedom. It is all in vain. "God is our refuge and strength; a very present help in trouble." (Psalm 46:1)

There is infinite strength in quietly giving up one's self, and resting in the Lord. "Trust in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." (Isaiah 26:4)--Present Truth, June 8, 1899--Isaiah 30:1-15.

Waiting to Be Gracious

"Verily thus says the Lord Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel: By turning from your ways, and by abiding quiet, you shall be saved; In silence, and in pious confidence, shall be your strength: But you would not hearken. And you said: Nay, but on horses will we flee; Therefore shall you be put to flight: And on swift coursers will we ride; Therefore shall they be swift, that pursue you. One thousand, at the rebuke of one; At the rebuke of five, ten thousand of you shall flee: Till you be left as a standard on the summit of a mountain; And as a beacon on a high hill. 18 Yet for this shall Jehovah wait to show favor unto you; Even for this shall He expect in silence, that He may have mercy upon you: (For Jehovah is a God of Judgment; Blessed are all they that trust in Him): When a holy people shall dwell in Sion; When in Jerusalem you shall implore Him with weeping: At the voice of your cry He shall be abundantly gracious unto you; No sooner shall He hear, than He shall answer you. Though Jehovah has given you the bread of distress, and water of affliction; Yet the timely rain shall no more be restrained; But your eyes shall behold the timely rain. And your ears shall hear the word prompting you behind: Saying, This is the way; walk in it; Turn not aside, to the right, or to the left. And you shall treat as defiled the covering of your idols of silver; And the clothing of your molten images of gold: You shall cast them away like a polluted garment; You shall say unto them, Be gone from me. And He shall give rain for your seed, With which you shall sow the ground; And bread of the produce of the ground: And it shall be abundant and plenteous. Then shall your cattle feed in large pasture; And the oxen, and the young asses, that till the ground, Shall eat well-fermented maslin, Winnowed with the van and the sieve. And on every lofty mountain, And on every high hill, Shall be disparting rills, and streams of water, In the day of the great slaughter, when the mighty fall. And the light of the moon shall be as the light of the meridian sun; And the light of the meridian sun shall be seven-fold: In the day when Jehovah shall bind up the breach of His people; And shall heal the wound, which His stroke has inflicted. Lo! the name of Jehovah comes from afar; His wrath burns, and the flame rages violently: His lips are filled with indignation; And His tongue is as a consuming fire. His Spirit is like a torrent overflowing; It shall reach to the middle of the neck: He comes to toss the nations with the van of perdition; And there shall be a bridle, to lead them astray, in the jaws of the people. You shall utter a song, as in the night when the feast is solemnly proclaimed; With joy of heart, as when one marches to the sound of the pipe; To go to

the mountain of Jehovah, to the Rock of Israel. And Jehovah shall cause His glorious voice to be heard, And the lighting down of His arm to be seen; With wrath indignant, and a flame of consuming fire; With a violent storm, and rushing showers, and hailstones. By the voice of Jehovah shall the Assyrian be beaten down; He, that was ready to smite with his staff. And it shall be, that wherever shall pass the rod of correction, Which Jehovah shall lay heavily upon him; It shall be accomplished with tabrets and harps; And with fierce battles shall He fight against them. For Tophet is ordained of old; Even the same for the king is prepared: He has made it deep; He has made it large; A fiery pyre, and abundance of fuel; And the breath of Jehovah, like a stream of sulphur, shall kindle it." (Isaiah 30:15-33,Lowth)

Although the selection of Scripture for study is rather long, we need not become confused by it. Do not expect to understand every expression in it at first. There are very few parts of the Bible where we cannot find things that are hard to be understood, even when the general matter is very plain. In all such cases work in the line of least resistance. Do not spend time working backwards; that is, do not begin at the end and try to work to the beginning.

In studying the Scriptures, always seize first upon that which is evident at first sight, such as simple promises. These will lead you gently along to the understanding of that which is not so obvious. Remember that the cross of Christ is the revelation of God to man, and that therefore it is through the promises that we are to understand all His sayings and dealings.

Our previous study of Isaiah has shown us that it applies to us as well as to the men who lived when it was written; therefore we must study it for our own personal benefit. If in any lesson we perceive one truth that is new to us, or one new setting of truth, which will lighten our pathway, and make it easier for us to lay hold of Divine strength and to overcome, we are doing well. Sometimes we shall be able to find many such things.

Strength in Quietness

For the sake of the connection we take in one verse that was in the preceding lesson. The fifteenth verse should be so firmly fixed in the mind of everyone that it can

never be forgotten. "In returning and rest shall you be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength." (Isaiah 30:15)

Resting in the Lord! What strength it affords. All power is then exerted in our behalf. "The Lord is my portion, says my soul; therefore will I hope in Him. The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeks Him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." (Lamentations 3:24-26) "But you were not willing." (Isaiah 30:15)

That was the case with Israel of old, and it is largely the case now. We show our heathenism by our unwillingness to trust the Lord. By fearing to trust the Lord, and thinking that in this case we must use our own skill to help us out of the difficulty, we show that we regard ourselves as gods, greater than the God of heaven. "But you said, No; for we will flee upon horses; therefore shall you flee." (Isaiah 30:16)

A horse is swift, and promises well as a means of escape from danger. For those who trust Him, God prepares a table in the presence of their enemies, (Psalm 23:5) where they can quietly sit down and eat while the enemy rages and spends its strength in vain: but people mostly become frightened at the roaring of the adversary, and fly from their place of protection. They think that there is greater safety in flight than in trusting the Lord. What is the consequence? "Therefore shall you be put to flight." (Isaiah 30:6,Lowth)

Certainly; that is what we have planned for; and if we are put to flight, there will surely be someone pursuing, and "they that pursue will be swift." (Isaiah 30:16)

We plan for defeat instead of victory. Notice the contrast between those who trust the Lord and those who try to "fight their own battles." God's promise to Israel was that if they trusted in Him, and kept His commandments, one man should chase a thousand, and two should put ten thousand to flight. "How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them, and the Lord had shut them up?" (Deuteronomy 32:30) "One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the Lord your God, He it is that fights for you, as He has promised you." (Joshua 23:10)

But what a change takes place when God is forsaken. Then, "One thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one;" (Isaiah 30:17) and, "at the rebuke of five, ten thousand shall flee." (Isaiah 30:17,Lowth)

The case is exactly reversed. Mind that it needs only a threat to make them flee when they do not trust in the Lord. "The wicked flee when no man pursues; but the righteous are bold as a lion." (Proverbs 28:1)

Everlasting, Unselfish Love

And now comes a most unexpected and gracious promise. It is unexpected, because it is so entirely unlike human nature, and therefore it is all the more gracious. After recounting the stubbornness of the people, how they have said, "cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from among us," (Isaiah 30:11) and have refused to rely on Him, choosing rather their own way, the Lord says, "Therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you, and therefore will He be exalted, that He may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for Him." (Isaiah 30:18)

Why will the Lord wait to be gracious? Because the people have been rebellious. The meaning of the word rendered "wait," is "to long for," "to desire;" and the statement is that although the people have rejected Him, there is nothing He is more anxious for, than to do them a kindness. "The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you." (Jeremiah 31:3)

Was there ever a more perfect example of unselfish love? "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13) "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)

Human love is selfish; people love for the pleasure that they derive from the object of their affection, and usually cease to love when they are slighted or neglected. With God it is entirely different. He loves, in order that He may give pleasure to the objects of His affections, and He finds His pleasure in the happiness which His love imparts to the loved ones. Hatred and abuse only call out greater manifestations of His everlasting,

unchangeable love. "Where sin abounds, grace does much more abound." (Romans 5:20)

He knows the mortal disease from which sinners are suffering, and He longs with all His infinite soul to deliver them from it. Was anything ever more wondrously gracious?

Oh, hope of every contrite heart!

Oh, joy of all the meek!

To those who fall, how kind You are!

How good to those who seek!

And those who find You, find a bliss Nor tongue nor pen can show;

The love of Jesus, what it is,

None but His loved ones know.

--Bernard of Clairvaux, Hymn: Jesus! the Very Thought of Thee, 12th c.

If we grasp this one truth it will be a most profitable lesson for us. To know the love of Jesus, which is but the manifestation of the love of God, is to know the wisdom of eternity.

But let us remember that to know it means to make a practical application of it. We must accept it in order to know it. And acceptance of the love of God does not mean mere selfish enjoyment of its blessings. There is no selfishness in the love of God, and therefore nobody can selfishly enjoy it. The acceptance of it drives out selfishness. If we indeed receive the love of God, then the hatefulness of others, instead of making us cold and hard towards them, will but increase our desire to do them kindness.

You say, "That is not natural, and no man can do it!"

No, it is not natural, but it is spiritual; and it is not possible for any human nature to manifest such love; the only way it can be done is by having "the love of God ... shed abroad in our hearts" (Romans 5:5) and this is done "by the Holy Spirit," (Romans 5:5) that is so freely given to all who are willing to receive. Shall we not learn this lesson of Divine love?

Judgment and Mercy

Why does the Lord show such marvelous loving kindness and mercy? Because "the Lord is a God of judgment." (Isaiah 30:18)

You thought that justice and judgment meant punishment? Oh no, not necessarily. "Justice and judgment are the foundation of God's throne," (Psalm 89:14) and His throne is a "throne of grace." (Hebrews 4:16)

God is just, in that He is the justifier of them that believe in Jesus. "To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believes in Jesus." (Romans 3:26)

That is a declaration of His righteousness, for God rests His claim to righteousness on the fact that He is faithful to forgive sins, and to cleanse 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) "He will be very gracious unto you at the voice of your cry." (Isaiah 30:19)

The Lord is looking for opportunities to do good. "He delights in mercy." (Micah 7:19)

He is hearkening to hear what His people will say to Him. "Then they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name." (Malachi 3:16) "No sooner shall He hear, than He shall answer you." (Isaiah 30:19, Lowth)

He bends down to earth, anxiously waiting to hear some cry. So intently does He listen that not only does He hear the faintest whisper, but the first impulse to call upon Him reaches His heart. He knows "the thoughts and intents of the heart," (Hebrews 4:12) and responds to them. He is not like the unjust judge, who must be importuned and besieged before he would grant the righteous request. (See Luke 18:1-8) God is a God of judgment, and is not unjust; therefore He hears and avenges speedily. Surely we have every encouragement that could possibly be given, to call on the Lord, that "we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:16)

This chapter abounds in gracious promises. "And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not your teachers be removed into a corner any more, but your eyes shall see your teachers." (Isaiah 30:20)

Although we have had affliction as the necessary result of our own waywardness, yet our teachers shall not be removed from us, but our eyes shall see them. "And 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)

The Lord will not leave us to wander in ignorance of the way, but our ears shall hear a word behind us, saying, "This is the way; walk in it." How strange it is that we are so apt to think that timely warning and instruction are a hardship instead of a blessing! "It is not in man that walks to direct his steps," (Jeremiah 10:23) therefore we do well to pray, "O Lord correct me, but with judgment." (Jeremiah 10:23)

Refreshing Teachers

In verse 20 we have an excellent illustration of the blessings of various translations of the Bible, instead of only one. All the languages of earth are only fragments of the perfect language of heaven. The blight of the curse is upon everything, so that even if we had all the languages combined we should still have only an imperfect reproduction of the original language.

God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, (Isaiah 55:8) but are very deep, (Psalm 92:5) and "higher than the heavens." (Hebrews 7:26)

Is it then impossible for us to understand the Word of God, because we have only one of the many imperfect languages at our command? No, not by any means. It would be impossible for us to understand it, even though we were master of them all, if we were left to our own wisdom; but the Holy Spirit is given us, in order that we may know the things that are freely given us 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 2:12)

Nevertheless we are to make use of every means that God has placed in our reach, and among these is a knowledge of various languages, or the use of various translations into the one tongue that we understand.

So in this instance we learn much from the fact that whereas in one translation we have the word "teachers," in another we have the word "rain" for the same thing. There is no contradiction in this, no lack of harmony; for the fact is that the Hebrew word is correctly rendered both "teacher" and "rain." This is not because of the poverty of the language, but rather because of its richness, each word being so comprehensive.

There is a lesson to be learned from it: a teacher is to be one who refreshes his pupils, as the rain refreshes the earth. There is no teacher like God, (Job 36:22) for He is "the fountain of living waters," (Jeremiah 2:13) "a place of broad rivers and streams," (Isaiah 33:21) and is "as the dew unto Israel." (Hosea 14:5)

God pours showers "upon him that is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground," (Isaiah 44:3) even His Holy Spirit, which is the water of life. "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 shall flow rivers of living water. (But this He spoke of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)" (John 7:37-39)

Therefore those who believe shall send forth streams of living water. Christ, the greatest of teachers, knows how to refresh the weary with a word. "The Lord God has given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakens morning by morning, he wakens my ear to hear as the learned." (Isaiah 50:4) "Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass: Because I will publish the name of the Lord; ascribe greatness unto our God." (Deuteronomy 32:1-3)

The Life-Giving, Consuming Breath

"Behold, the name of the Lord comes from far, burning with His anger, and the burden thereof is heavy: His lips are full of indignation, and His tongue as a devouring fire. And the Lord shall cause His glorious voice to be heard, and shall show the lighting down of His arm, with the indignation of His anger, and with the flame of a devouring fire, with scattering, and tempest, and hailstones." (Isaiah 30:27,30)

Gracious are the promises of God, and everlasting and infinite is His love; yet that does not mean that wickedness will be allowed to continue for ever. "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished." (Proverbs 11:21)

Those who persist in doing evil according to "the hardness of their own impenitent hearts, are but treasuring up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, Who will render to every man according to his works." (Romans 2:5-6)

But in the visitation of punishment, there is no change in God. He is still the same God of love. "His mercy endures for ever." (Psalm 136:1)

The destruction of the wicked is only the natural, inevitable result of the rejection of the infinite love of Him whose favor is life. Take notice that it is the breath of God that kindles the fires of Gehenna. "He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked," (Isaiah 11:4) yet, "Righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins." (Isaiah 11:5)

That breath which destroys the wicked, is the breath of life,--the very same breath which is now given to all mankind, wicked as well as righteous, and without which there would be no life on earth. How then can it be that it will finally consume the wicked? Simply because they will not accept it for what it is. Not recognizing God in the air that they breathe, they do not allow it to do the work for them which God designs, namely, to remove all iniquity from them.

The breath of God is at work every moment in all the earth, consuming impurity, and making it possible for men to live. Everywhere and all the time God is showing us

for what purpose breath is given: it is to purify and cleanse, and give life. Then when men identify themselves with vileness and sin, it is inevitable that they should be consumed by that which would be their life, if they were willing. "Our God is a consuming fire." (Hebrews 12:29)

The very same fire that purifies the gold burns up the dross. Everything therefore depends upon how we stand related to God. Shall we receive Him as our life indeed, by allowing Him to "redeem us from all iniquity," (Titus 2:14) or shall He be to us the devouring fire? "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." (Psalm 2:12)

A Literal Place of Punishment

"For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; He has made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, does kindle it." (Isaiah 30:33)

Tophet was a part of the valley of the son of Hinnom, near Jerusalem, where the abominations of the heathen had been practiced, and where the Jews also practiced them when they apostatized. It was here that they made their children to pass through fire. "And he [King Josiah] defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech." (2 Kings 23:10) "And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart." (Jeremiah 7:31)

It was thus regarded as an accursed spot, and was the place for burning up the refuse matter of the city. From this comes the word "Gehenna" in Mark 9:45,47, and elsewhere. (Revelation 20:9) The word simply means, "valley of Hinnom." When Jesus spoke of it as the place where the wicked should receive their punishment, the Jews would well understand that it meant utter destruction--the place where the unrighteous should be stubble, and should be burnt up "root and branch." (Malachi 4:1)

And it was not a mere figure of speech, either, for it is in that very place that the wicked will be gathered when the fire comes down from God out of heaven, and devours them. "And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp

of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them." (Revelation 20:9)

God does not speak at random, but means what He says.--Present Truth, June 15, 1899--Isaiah 30:15-38.

The Reign of Righteousness

"Behold, a King shall reign in righteousness; And princes shall rule with equity: And the Man shall be as a covert from the storm, as a refuge from the flood; As canals of waters in a dry place; As the shadow of a great rock in the land fainting with heat: And Him the eyes of those, that see, shall regard; And the ears of those, that hear, shall hearken. Even the heart of the rash shall consider, and acquire knowledge; And the stammering tongue shall speak readily and plainly. The fool shall no longer be called honorable; And the niggard shall no more be called liberal: For the fool will still utter folly; And his heart will devise iniquity: Practicing hypocrisy, and speaking wrongfully against Jehovah; To exhaust the soul of the hungry, And to deprive the thirsty of drink. As for the niggard, his instruments are evil: He plots mischievous devices; To entangle the humble with lying words; And to defeat the assertions of the poor in judgment. But the generous will devise generous things; And he by his generous purposes shall be stablished. O you women, that sit at ease, arise, hear my voice! O you daughters, that dwell in security, give ear unto my speech! Years upon years shall you be disquieted, O you careless women: For the vintage has failed, the gathering of the fruits shall not come. Tremble, O you that are at ease; be disquieted, O you careless ones! Strip yourself, make yourself bare; and gird yourself with sackcloth Upon your loins, upon your breasts; Mourn for the pleasant field, for the fruitful vine. Over the land of my people the thorn and the brier shall come up; Yea, over all the joyous houses, over the exulting city. For the palace is deserted, the populous city is left desolate; Ophel and the watch-tower shall for a long time be a den, A joy of wild asses, a pasture for the flocks: Till the Spirit from on high be poured out upon us; And the wilderness become a fruitful field; And the fruitful field be esteemed a forest: And judgment shall dwell in the wilderness; And in the fruitful field shall reside righteousness. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; And the effect of righteousness perpetual quiet and security. And my people shall dwell in a peaceful mansion, And in habitations secure, And in resting places undisturbed. But the hail shall fall, and the forest be brought down; And the city shall be laid level with the plain. Blessed are you, who sow your seed in every well-watered place; Who send forth the foot of the ox and the ass.

Kings and Princes

"Behold, a King shall reign in righteousness." (Isaiah 32:1)

What need to ask who this King is, who reigns in righteousness? Jesus Christ! He it is of whom the Lord says: "I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. 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 23:5-6)

He is supreme, but He reigns not alone, for it has pleased Him that others shall share His high state. He is "King of kings and Lord of lords." (Revelation 19:16)

With Him, "princes shall rule in judgment;" (Isaiah 32:1) for the Father has bestowed this love upon us, that we should also be called the sons of God, even as He himself is. "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knows us not, because it knew Him not. 2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God," (1 John 3:1) "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." (Romans 8:17) "[He has] loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, And has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father." (Revelation 1:5-6)

Yea, He has made us alive from our death in trespasses and sins, "And you has He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; ... And has raised us up together, and made us to sit together [with Him (Colossians 2:12)] in the heavenly places," (Ephesians 2:1,6) "at the right hand of God." (Romans 8:34) "Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him 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, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." (Ephesians 1:20-21) "The Lord ... lifts up. He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes," (1 Samuel 2:7-8) "even with the princes of His people," (Psalm 113:8) "and to make them inherit the throne of glory." (1 Samuel 2:8)

Hiding Places

"And a Man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." (Isaiah 32:2)

The Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, and French versions have it, "Every man shall be as a hiding place."

Lowth, as we see, has it, "the Man." This would make it refer especially to Christ, to whom it unquestionably has chief application; but all the renderings are correct, since He is pleased to make us whatever He is. Everyone whom Christ makes kings and princes and priests will be such only by virtue of His nature; and therefore they will share with Him the joy and honor of His salvation, not merely of being saved, but of saving others.

What a glorious prospect is this! Poor, fallen men, way-worn, famished, fainting, fallen, and helpless are themselves to be so transformed by the refreshing that they receive from the Fountain of life (Psalm 36:9) and the Rock of their salvation, (Deuteronomy 32:15) that they will be to others in like condition as a hiding place from the stormy wind, as rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. Yes, Jesus is a Rock in a weary land, (African American spiritual) but He has left representatives here on earth, to carry out His work, and to be in His stead to men. What is more refreshing than streams of water in a dry, hot day? and this is the place that every child of God is privileged to occupy, for whosoever believes in the Son, "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." (John 7:38)

Think also of the shadow of a great rock in a fainting land. How wonderfully cool it is! It not only excludes the rays of the sun, but imparts a refreshing coolness. Just such help is every Christian intended to be to some fainting souls in this world. For understand that these promises are not confined to the future. Even now Christ reigns in righteousness, and now we are the sons of God, and therefore princes. When should it apply if not at a time when there are souls fainting and weary?

Wise Judges

"Princes shall rule in judgment." (Isaiah 32:1)

Yea, for the heaven-inspired, and therefore to-be-answered, prayer for us is that our love should "abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment [or discernment]." (Philippians 1:9)

Also the promise is that we shall "be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." (Colossians 1:9)

The fact that the saints are to judge the world and angels, is given as a reason why they ought to be able to exercise good judgment now in all the affairs of life. "Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know you not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?" (1 Corinthians 6:2-3)

And well it may be; for this is the time of preparation for the duties of the world to come. This good judgment, the knowledge of what is right and fitting to be done on all occasions, does not come by any magic, but by giving good heed to the words of the Lord; "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." (Proverbs 2:1-6) "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." (Job 28:28)

Sight, hearing, speech, and understanding are the gifts of righteousness. "And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken. The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly." (Isaiah 32:3-4)

And more, it is the princes who rule in judgment with the King of righteousness, who are to be instrumental in giving sight to the people, and making the hasty to

understand knowledge. "And Him the eyes of those, that see, shall regard." (Isaiah 32:3,Lowth)

Only the difference of one letter changes "to him" to "not," in the Hebrew, and Lowth is undoubtedly correct in saying that this change has been made. True, "the eyes of them that see shall not be dim," and it will be because they will "regard Him" who is the light. They will see Him in those whom He has enlightened.

The Folly of Unrighteousness

"The vile person shall no more be called liberal." (Isaiah 32:5)

From 1 Samuel 25:25 we learn that Nabal means foolish; and that is the word that is used here in the Hebrew; so that it is correctly rendered "fool," as Lowth gives it: "The fool shall no longer be called honorable." (Isaiah 32:5)

And who is the fool? He is the one who does not regard the Lord, who acts as if there were no God. "The fool has said in his heart, There is no God." (Psalm 14:1)

Since "The fear of the Lord ... is wisdom," (Job 28:28) it follows what folly is unrighteousness. The fool is the one who bears false witness against God, and thereby tends to weaken the faith of men,--to make the hungry and thirsty after righteousness still more empty. In this connection it will be well to read what the Lord says by the prophet Ezekiel: "With lies you have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life." (Ezekiel 13:22)

Some have with lies made the heart of the righteous sad, and have strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not depart from his wicked way, by promising him life. They say, either by their actions or by their words, that it will be well with the wicked, and that no matter what a man does he will live to all eternity. Thus they put no difference between "him that serves the Lord and him that serves Him not." (Malachi 3:18)

The Curse on the Earth

"Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briars; yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city. For the palace shall be forsaken; the populous city shall be deserted; the hill and the watch-tower shall be for dens for ever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks." (Isaiah 32:13-14)

In these verse we have a description of the effects of the curse. Jerusalem is specially referred to, but the application is to all the earth. Because of man's sin, the earth was cursed. This was not an arbitrary curse, but God merely stated the inevitable consequence of Adam's sin. When he who was set to be master and lord of the earth fell, it could not be otherwise than that his dominion should go to waste. The field of the drunkard and the sluggard will bring forth thorns and thistles. "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down." (Proverbs 24:30-31)

This curse we see now, but it will increase rapidly as the end approaches, and "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." (2 Timothy 3:13)

At the last, the earth will be utterly desolate and waste, even as it was in the beginning before the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. "The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep." (Genesis 1:2) "Behold, the Lord makes the earth empty, and makes it waste, and turns it upside down, and scatters abroad the inhabitants thereof." (Isaiah 24:1)

The same Spirit that in the beginning brought order out of chaos, will effect the complete restoration after sin has completed its work of ruin. The Spirit of righteousness will undo the work of sin. "[When] the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, the wilderness will be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field." (Isaiah 32:15-16)

Although violence shall fill the earth, even as in the days that were before the flood, (See Genesis 6:11; Matthew 24:37) yet: "The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." (Isaiah 32:17)

And since righteousness is to dwell in the earth simply because there will be righteous men, made so by the Spirit of God, it follows that this restoration of all things, and the bringing back of the reign of peace is effected through men. God is the great Author of all things, but He works through men who fear Him, and yield themselves to Him as instruments of righteousness. "Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." (1 Corinthians 15:21)

In like manner, since by man came the curse, by man comes also the blessing; since by man came the desolation, by man comes also the restoration. In every good work does the Lord associate His people with himself, and He gives to them the glory. He gives them the glory, and they give it to Him.

The Time of Trouble

"But the hail shall fall." (Isaiah 32:19, Lowth)

Terrible commotions will accompany the work of restoration. Not without a struggle will sin be rooted out of the earth. There shall be "voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and ... a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great," (Revelation 16:18) and there shall fall "upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent." (Revelation 16:21)

Yet even at this time the people will "dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places." (Isaiah 32:18)

During the time of trouble the saints of God on this earth will be as safe as they will afterwards be in heaven, for that is even now their dwelling place. (See Psalm 91:1-16; 46:1-5) "Blessed are you that sow beside all waters, that send forth there the feet of the ox and the ass." (Isaiah 32:20)

This verse is based upon the manner of sowing rice, which grows upon wet soil, and is sowed even while the water covers the ground. Then the oxen and the horses are

driven upon it, and by them the seed is trampled into the ground. Thus most literally is bread cast upon the waters, to be received with increase after many days. "Cast your bread upon waters: for you shall find it after many days." (Ecclesiastes 11:1)

Blessed are they who have confidence enough in the Lord to sow the seed of righteousness, even the living Word of God, at morning and at evening, although the prospect is most forbidding. Sow beside all waters, and the harvest will reveal, instead of a watery waste, a land smiling with ripened grain, the fruit of righteousness.--Present Truth, June 22, 1899--Isaiah 32:1-20.

Dwelling with Consuming Fire

"O Jehovah, have mercy on us; we have trusted in You; Be our strength every morning; Even our salvation in the time of distress. From your terrible voice the peoples fled; When You did raise yourself up, the nations were dispersed. But your spoil shall be gathered, as the locust gathers; As the caterpillar runs to and fro, so shall they run, and seize it. Jehovah is exalted; yea, He dwells on high: He has filled Sion with judgment and justice. And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of your times, The possession of continued salvation; The fear of Jehovah, this shall be your treasure. Behold, the mighty men raise a grievous cry; The messengers of peace weep bitterly. The highways are desolate; the traveler ceases; He has broken the covenant; he has rejected the offered cities; Of men he makes no account. The land mourns, it languishes; Libanus is put to shame, it withers: Sharon is become like a desert; And Bashan and Carmel are stripped of their beauty. Now will I arise, says Jehovah; Now will I lift up myself on high; now will I be exalted. Ye shall conceive chaff; you shall bring forth stubble; And my Spirit like fire shall consume you. And peoples shall be burned, as the lime is burned; As the thorns are cut up, and consumed in the fire. Hear, O you that are afar off, my doings; And acknowledge, O you that are near, my power. The sinners in Sion are struck with dread; Terror has seized the hypocrites: Who among us can abide this consuming fire? Who among us can abide these continued burnings? He who walks in perfect righteousness, and speaks right things: Who detests the lucre of oppression; Who shakes his hands from bribery; Who stops his ears to the proposal of bloodshed; Who shuts his eyes against the appearance of evil: His dwelling shall be in the high places; The strongholds of the rocks shall be his lofty fortress: His bread shall be duly furnished; his waters shall not fail." (Isaiah 33:2-16,Lowth)

Mercy to the Trusting

"O Lord, be gracious unto us; we have waited for You: be their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble." (Isaiah 33:2)

The prayer with which this lesson opens is not a vain one, for we are assured, "He that trusts in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about." (Psalm 32:10)

Even in sinful man, the very fact of being trusted makes one kindly disposed; we cannot help being drawn to one who manifests confidence in us; it put us, as it were, on our honor. What then shall be said of God, whose nature is love, and who delights in mercy? He also cannot do otherwise than do kindness to them that trust Him.

Every Morning New

This mercy endures for ever, and is unlimited. We may draw on it at will. We are continually recipients of it, for "it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, ... They are new every morning." (Lamentations 3:22,23)

Yet we ourselves determine to a great extent how much of it we will enjoy. We often claim but little, although the amount that we may enjoy is limited only by our willingness to receive. Here is a prayer inspired by the Holy Spirit. "Let your mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we hope in You. ... The eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy." (Psalm 33:22,18)

Whatever the Spirit of the Lord tells us to ask for, we may be sure will be granted, for when "we know not what we should pray for as we ought," (Romans 8:26) the Spirit comes to our aid. Do you want unbounded mercy? Then trust in the Lord without reservation.

The Mercy of the Dayspring

"Trust in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." (Isaiah 26:4)

Yea, for the mercy of the Lord is strength: "As the heaven is high above the earth, so powerful is His mercy toward them that fear Him." (Psalm 103:11)

So as the Lord's mercies are new every morning, He is our strength every morning. Now, "Through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the dayspring from on high has visited us," (Luke 1:77)

He gives the knowledge of salvation unto His people "by the remission of their sins." (Luke 1:78)

Therefore every morning's dawn is an assurance to us that God is merciful to our unrighteousness. As the light springs forth from the east, it should be a reminder to us of "the dayspring from on high." The beams of the morning sun are to remind us of "the Sun of righteousness [who] arises with healing in His wings." (Malachi 4:2)

So every morning God in His endless mercy gives us the assurance of forgiveness of sin, and of overcoming grace. "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." (Ecclesiastes 11:7)

The Lord Our Arm

The word rendered "strength," in verse 2, is literally "arm." So the inspired prayer is, "be our arm every morning." (Isaiah 33:2)

What a wonderful promise! for every inspired prayer is a promise of God. God's mercies are new every morning, and His mercy is strength; but He does more than merely to strengthen our arm: He himself promises to become our arm. Truly, "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength." (Isaiah 40:31) "It is God that works in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure." (Philippians 2:13)

God has "a mighty arm;" His hand is strong: "You have a mighty arm: strong is your hand, and high is your right hand." (Psalm 89:13)

But think of the courage with which one could go forth to his work in the morning, who knew that God was not only at his right hand, but was indeed his arm. Well, this is only saying in another way what we learned in: "The Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation." (Isaiah 12:2)

It will not be difficult for us to see how literally true this is, if we but stop to consider the conditions of our life. God is our life, and the length of our days: "That you may love the Lord your God, and that you may obey His voice, and that you may cleave unto Him: for He is your life, and the length of your days: that you may dwell in the land which the Lord swore unto your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them." (Deuteronomy 30:20)

We have no life in ourselves; everything comes from above. We eat the Word of God, even the very life of Christ, in the grains and fruits. Thus all the strength that anybody has is the strength of God; for He alone has power. He is the Almighty. (Genesis 17:1) All power in heaven and earth is Christ's. (Matthew 28:18) Our lack of strength, therefore, is due to our failure to live by faith in God--to eat and drink the flesh and blood of Christ by faith. The prayer, "be our arm every morning," (Isaiah 33:2) should be prayed every morning, and that would mean that we propose to live only by the Word of God, as, like the manna, it comes to us fresh every morning. Thus our every-day life becomes to us the pledge of eternal salvation.

"While there's life there's hope,"--Heauton Timorumenos (The Self-Tormentor) by Publius Terentius Afer, 2nd century BC. because life itself is hope.

Wisdom is a Defence

"Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of your times." (Isaiah 33:6)

Knowledge is indeed power, provided it is right knowledge.

Wisdom is certainly power, for: "Christ, the wisdom of God, [is] the power of God." (1 Corinthians 1:24) "Wisdom is a defense, and money is a defense; but the excellency [the advantage] of knowledge is that wisdom gives life to them that have it." (Ecclesiastes 7:12)

How much stability does wisdom give? Consider the heavens and the earth, the works of God, and you will see; for: "He has established the world by His wisdom, and has stretched out the heavens by His discretion." (Jeremiah 10:12)

The last message, the last proclamation of the Gospel, calls upon men with a loud voice to give glory to God, "and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." (Revelation 14:7)

We are to recognize God in His works, to trust the power and the wisdom that are manifested in the tiniest flower or the smallest insect, as well as in the shining orbs of the sky. The knowledge of God is wisdom and strength and riches. "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, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, says the Lord." (Jeremiah 9:23-24)

That wisdom which made and upholds them will also sustain us, if we trust it.

That hand which bears creation up,
Shall guard His children well.

--Philip Doddridge, Hymn: How Gentle God's Commands, 1755.

A Vital Question

"Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" (Isaiah 33:14)

One would naturally say that such a thing is impossible; but the Lord says that some can and will do it. Who are they? "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." (Isaiah 33:15)

It is the one who walks in righteousness, even "the righteousness which is of God, by faith," (Philippians 3:9) who speaks right things, who will have nothing to do with anything gained by fraud, who cannot be bribed, and who will not hear of bloody deeds, or look upon evil. Such a one can live in eternal fire, and be at ease amid the devouring flame.

No Future for the Wicked

Take particular notice that only the righteous can dwell with everlasting, devouring fire. The wicked will suffer the vengeance of eternal fire,--they will be cast into the fire that never shall be quenched,--but they cannot abide there; the fire will consume them as chaff. "As thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire." (Isaiah 33:12)

There is therefore no eternity for the wicked. "The transgressors shall be destroyed together; the end [literally, "the future time"] of the wicked shall be cut off." (Psalm 37:38)

So to the oft-repeated question, "Where will you spend eternity?" there can be but one answer. Those who spend it anywhere will spend it in the presence of God, dwelling in Him and His light; those who do not live in His righteousness, dwelling in the secret place of the Most High, (Psalm 91:1) will spend eternity nowhere. "They shall be as though they had not been." (Obadiah 16) "For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be; yea, you shall diligently consider his place, and it shall not be." (Psalm 37:10) "For, behold, the day comes, that shall burn as an oven; and 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)

Yet the righteous will dwell in that same fire in safety, and will bask in its grateful warmth throughout eternity.

The Fire of God's Presence

By comparing Isaiah 33:14-16 with Psalm 15:1-5 and 24:1-5, it will be seen that the people who dwell with the devouring fire and the everlasting burnings, are the same people that "ascend into the hill of the Lord," (Psalm 24:3) and abide in His tabernacle. Thus it must be that the everlasting, devouring fire is in the tabernacle, the secret place, of God. That is exactly the case. Let us collect a few texts of Scripture that show this. Verse 11 of this chapter, according to Lowth's reading, says, "My Spirit, like fire, shall consume you." (Isaiah 33:11,Lowth)

This agrees with "He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked," (Isaiah 11:4) and 2 Thessalonians which says that the Lord shall consume "that wicked ... with the Spirit of His mouth." (2 Thessalonians:8) "Our God is a consuming fire." (Hebrews 12:29)

He descended on Mount Sinai in fire, (Exodus 19:18) and spoke to the people "out of the midst of the fire." (Deuteronomy 4:12) "From His right hand went a fiery law for them." (Deuteronomy 33:2) "The Lord ... sits between [or upon] the cherubims." (Psalm 99:1)

When He drove Adam and Eve out of the garden of Eden, "He placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword, which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." (Genesis 3:24)

This was the indication of His own presence; to this place Adam and his family came to worship, and from here Cain went out from the presence of the Lord. "The Lord reigns ... [in] righteousness, [and] A fire goes before Him, and burns up His enemies round about," (Psalm 97:1-3) [and] "The hills melt like wax at the presence of the Lord." (Psalm 97:5)

So when Christ comes, it is "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thessalonians 1:8)

So at the last, when the wicked are all gathered together to do battle against God and His people, fire comes down from God out of heaven, and devours them. "And [Satan] shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them." (Revelation 20:8-9)

In Isaiah 30 we have read that "the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone," (Isaiah 30:33) kindles Tophet. "[God] covers himself with light as with a garment," (Psalm 104:2) "[and] dwells in light that no man can approach unto." (1 Timothy 6:16)

When Isaiah saw the Lord, sitting on His throne, "the house was filled with smoke," (Isaiah 6:4) indicating the presence of fire; and this is still further indicated by the fact that the beings that stand above His throne are the "Seraphim," (Isaiah 6:2) that is, "the burning ones." Remember also that God went before Israel, to guide them, in a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day. (Exodus 13:21-22)

In this Presence, amid this fire, the saints of God will dwell throughout eternity, but in order that they may do this, they must here become accustomed to the glory of God, of which the whole earth is full. "The whole earth is full of His glory." (Isaiah 6:3)

By beholding it they become "changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Corinthians 3:18)

The presence of the Lord consumes everything that is evil, and so their dwelling with God in this time fits them for His unveiled glory. The sunlight, which destroys disease germs, is a daily proof to us of the fact that the glory of God consumes evil. But those who refuse to recognize God as He is now revealed, will not be able to abide the day of His coming, and will be consumed.

So it is indeed eternal fire that consumes the wicked, but it is not fire specially created for that purpose, nor does the fact that it is eternal prove that those who suffer from it will live eternally, but just the opposite. All, both saints and sinners, will be in the midst of it, so that all will be treated alike, and God cannot be accused of injustice; but the nature of the individual will determine how the fire will affect him.

Only those who have become transformed into the likeness of God, who have His life as their life, so that they are partakers of the Divine nature, sharers of the glory, will be able to come through the fire unscathed, and, in fact, to continue dwelling in it. They are of the same nature as the devouring flame, and hence can dwell in it and not be consumed. All others will perish.

The mercy of God endures for ever, and that which perpetuates the existence of those who become assimilated to it, ends the existence of the rebellious. How pertinent, therefore, the message, "Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come." (Revelation 14:7)--Present Truth, June 29, 1899--Isaiah 33:2-16.

The King in His Beauty

"Your eyes shall see the King in His beauty; They shall see your own land far extended. Your heart shall reflect on the past terror: Where is now the accomptant? where the weigher of tribute? Where is he that numbered the towers? You shall see no more that barbarous people; The people of the deep speech, which you could not hear; And of a stammering tongue, which you could not understand. You shall see Sion, the city of our solemn feasts; Your eyes shall behold Jerusalem, The quiet habitation, the tabernacle unshaken; Whose stakes shall not be plucked up for ever, And whose chords none shall be broken. But the glorious name of Jehovah shall be unto us A place of confluent streams, of broad rivers; Which no oared ship shall pass, Neither shall any mighty vessel go through. For Jehovah is our Judge; Jehovah is our Lawgiver; Jehovah is our King: He shall save us. Your sails are loose; they cannot make them fast: Your mast is not firm; they cannot spread the ensign. Then shall a copious spoil be divided; Even the lame shall seize the prey. Neither shall the inhabitant say, I am disabled with sickness: The people, that dwell therein, is freed from the punishment of their iniquity." (Isaiah 33:17-24,Lowth)

Before studying this lesson, do not fail to read again the first portion of the chapter, and recall the lesson we there learned. The people here addressed are those who are able to dwell with the devouring fire, and amid everlasting burnings. Only those who have been tried as by fire, and have stood the test, so that they can dwell in the fire, can behold Him who is Light itself, and who has His "fire ... in Zion, and His furnace in Jerusalem." (Isaiah 31:9)

The picture here presented is beyond question that of the new earth, after the fire from the Lord has consumed sin and sinners; when only those are left, who can dwell with the consuming fire. It is the time when in all the earth "There shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him: And they shall see His face." (Revelation 22:3-4)

They shall see the King in His beauty, and they shall also see the land stretching far to northward and eastward and southward and westward, as God promised to Abraham. "And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift

up now your eyes, and look from the place where you are northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: For all the land which you see, to you will I give it, and to your seed for ever. And I will make your seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall your seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto you." (Genesis 13:14-17)

The Beauty of the Lord

"And they shall see His face." (Revelation 22:4) "Your eyes shall see the King in His beauty." (Isaiah 33:17)

What is the beauty of the King, that to look upon it should fill up the measure of all happiness and bliss? Let us give it a little study, for when we know it, and can recognize it, we shall find the joy of life, even in this sin-cursed earth, marvellously increased. That the Lord is beautiful, the verse before us states. The prophet Zechariah, seeing in vision the Lord saving His people like a flock, was moved to exclaim, "How great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty!" (Zechariah 9:17)

His goodness and His beauty are linked together, for His beauty is the beauty of holiness. Now the goodness of God is infinite; it is the only goodness that there is in the universe; therefore the beauty of the Lord must be infinite. No tongue can possibly describe it; it must be seen to be appreciated, and seen not for a moment merely, but throughout eternity. "Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary." (Psalm 96:6)

Zion itself, His dwelling place, is "the perfection of beauty." (Psalm 50:2)

Even one of His creatures, the covering cherub that fell, is declared to have been "full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty." (Ezekiel 28:12)

What then must the Creator be? David "the sweet psalmist of Israel," (2 Samuel 23:1) the one by whom the Spirit of the Lord spoke, (2 Samuel 23:2) spoke of the things "touching the King," (Psalm 45:1) and he said, "You are fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into your lips." (Psalm 45:2)

To the psalmist, wonderful revelations of Divine things had been vouchsafed, and so great was his appreciation of the beauty of the Lord that he said, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple." (Psalm 27:5)

To see the beauty of the Lord was his sole desire, and that is to be the reward of the righteous. "The heavens declare the glory of God." (Psalm 19:1)

They tell of His glory by revealing it in their shining; for He has set His glory "upon the heavens." (Psalm 8:1,RV)

Remember that everything exists only by the power of the life of God. All things were created by the Word of God, and the Word is life. "In Him all things consist." (Colossians 1:17) "We are His offspring." (Acts 17:28)

But we are not the only products of His Being. The mountains and hills were "brought forth" by Him who from everlasting to everlasting is God. (Psalm 90:1-2) All are familiar with the term, "brought forth," so that it is scarcely necessary to say that in the Hebrew the word is plainly "born," and several translations have the text, "Before the mountains were born." (Psalm 90:2)

The everlasting power and Divinity of God are clearly 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; so that they are without excuse." (Romans 1:20)

The Father impresses His image on His offspring. So, "He has made everything beautiful in its time." (Ecclesiastes 3:11) "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see? He that chastises the heathen, shall He not correct? He that teaches man knowledge, shall He not know?" (Psalm 94:9-10)

In like manner we may continue, "He that has clothed the heavens and the earth with beauty, and has made all things beautiful, shall He not be beautiful?"

All these things show us that the beauty that we see in created things is but the reflection or the reproduction of the beauty of the Creator. Just as there is no goodness but from the Lord, so there is no beauty except that which comes from Him.

Take all the varied tints of all the beautiful flowers on earth (remember that, beautiful as they are, they are under the curse, and are but the shadow of what they were in the beginning, and of what they will be in the restoration), and add to these the richness of the meadows and the forest, and to this still the glory of the rainbow, and the dazzling splendor of the clouds kissed by the setting sun; let the telescope reveal to your admiring gaze a few of the star-clusters that shine with light of every color, and remember that when the most powerful telescope and the art of the photographer have revealed to us the presence of countless millions of suns that are invisible to the naked eye, awing us with glimpses of measureless space, "these are but the outskirts of His ways," (Job 26:4,RV) and a very small whisper of His power. Therefore all these things reveal to us only a very small portion of the beauty of the face of the Lord.

Think of all the beauty in earth and sea and the heavens, even the heaven of heavens, concentrated into one single Presence, and you have the measureless measure of the beauty of the Lord. And all this wondrous beauty the saints of God will be privileged to gaze upon, and they will be made able to endure the sight! Truly, the face of God will be enough to satisfy anyone. No wonder the psalmist exclaimed, "As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with your likeness." (Psalm 17:15)

What is the practical benefit of this study? Is it merely to inspire in us a desire to see that glorious sight, and thus stir us up to righteousness? Partly, but that is not by any means all. The chief thing is to let us know the possibilities set before us even in this life, as expressed in the inspired prayer, "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us." (Psalm 90:17)

If we but allow our hearts to be the sanctuary of the living God, then He that dwells between the cherubim will "[He] that dwells between the cherubims [will] shine forth." (Psalm 80:1) "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)

The beauty of the Lord is the beauty of holiness, (Psalm 29:2; 96:9) and just as He has laid up great goodness for them that trust in Him before the sons of men, (Psalm 31:19) so does He impart to them His beauty. The world will not recognize it, for they did not desire the beauty of the Lord when they saw Him; their standard of beauty is not the Lord's standard; nevertheless the beauty is present whenever righteousness is present; and it is beauty that will never fade. That is the true test of beauty.

By beholding the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, we become changed into the same image, (2 Corinthians 3:18) even in this life, and are thus prepared for the full revelation of the beauty of the world to come, when "the righteous shall shine forth as the sun." (Matthew 13:43)

Even now may we behold the beauty of the Lord, if our eyes are but anointed by the Spirit. In all His works, we may see the shining of His face. "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of your countenance." (Psalm 89:15)

So we may ever dwell in the house of the Lord; and ever behold the shining of His glorious face. "Blessed are they that dwell in your house: they will be still praising You." (Psalm 84:4)

Likewise in eternity, the saints, although privileged to roam throughout the entire universe, will always know themselves to be in the Presence of the King, everywhere beholding the beauty of His face. With this truth ever in our minds, we may realize to the full all that is contained in the expression "living near to the Lord."

A Peaceable Habitation

"Your heart shall meditate terror. Where is the scribe? where is the receiver? where is he that counted the towers? You shall not see a fierce people, a people of a deeper speech than you can perceive; of a stammering tongue, that you can not understand. Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: your eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken." (Isaiah 33:18-20)

Verses 18-20 make still more plain the fact that the time of which we are now studying is that after the wicked who have surrounded the camp of the saints, and the Beloved City, have been devoured by the fire from heaven. (Revelation 20:9) "Your heart shall reflect on the past terror," (Isaiah 33:18,Lowth) but only to magnify the wondrous power and mercy of the Lord. Where now are those who counted the towers, and who in the madness of wickedness had devoted the holy city to destruction? No more shall they be seen, for they are as though they had not been. Jerusalem, instead of falling a prey to them, as they had planned, will be seen as "the quiet habitation, the tabernacle unshaken: whose stakes shall not be plucked up for ever, and of whose chords none shall be broken." (Isaiah 33:20,Lowth)

The River of God

"But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams."
(Isaiah 33:21)

Is this literally true? Most certainly; for "[God is] the Fountain of living waters."
(Jeremiah 2:13)

From himself flows the river of water of life--His own life flowing forth for the everlasting refreshment of His people. But this is true now for those who have eyes to see spiritual things, and who know the reality of them. It is from the river of God that this earth is watered. "You visit the earth, and water it: You greatly enrich it with the river of God, which is full of water: You prepare them corn, when You have so provided for it." (Psalm 65:9)

It is full of water, even to overflowing, and never runs dry. The rain that falls from heaven to enrich the earth, is from that river. Consequently the streams of water on this earth are but branches of the same river. In the flowing streams and the waves of the sea we may see the life of God; then will it be no more a mere figure of speech that our peace shall be as a river, and our righteousness as the waves of the sea. (Isaiah 48:18; 66:12) Dwelling in the house of the Lord, we shall constantly see His face, (Revelation 22:4) "and drink of the river of His pleasure." (Psalm 36:8) "Jehovah is our Judge, Jehovah is our lawgiver; Jehovah is our King," (Isaiah 33:22,Lowth) and He is this by right, because He will save us. Only He who can save has the right to give laws, and

only to Him should we hearken. Our daily prayer is, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:10)

That means that we should now regard the Lord as our King just the same as though we were now in heaven. He is the only rightful King; our part is to recognize His right to rule over us. "And the inhabitants shall not say, I am sick," (Isaiah 33:24) or, as Lowth has it, "I am disabled with sickness."

That will be a glorious change from this present state. "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." (Revelation 21:4)

Why will there be no more sickness in that land? The reason is given in the text: "The people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." (Isaiah 33:24)

God, who forgives all iniquities also heals all diseases, and the healing is because of the forgiveness--a consequence of it. Few people realize the fullness of the blessing of forgiveness, and that is the reason so many Christians say that there is a much higher state in the Christian life than that of justification. They think that to live in the consciousness of sins forgiven is but a trifle compared with the blessings that God has for those who fully trust Him. But to live in the constant knowledge of sins forgiven is the highest possible for any creature. It is to live in fellowship with God. "But 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)

Our sins are forgiven by the substitution of the righteousness of Christ, which means that it is by God's giving us His life instead of ours. That means a complete transformation. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." (1 John 1:7)

The life of Christ, the stream from the throne of God, constantly flowing through us, and being our sole source of life, takes sin away. But when the Lord gives us His life, He gives us the whole of it. He gives us himself, and He is not divided. Therefore He gives us His health as well as His righteousness.

It is just as easy for the Lord to make a man perfectly whole as to forgive his sins, for it is all done by the same life. Indeed, if we but knew the extent of the gift of the righteousness which takes away sin, we should always take with it the healing of our bodies; it is ours, if we will but receive it.

Why is it that so many people who know the Lord as the One who forgives all their iniquities do not experience the blessings of health? Simply because they do not understand and comply with the conditions. They know 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) and so they confess their sins, and do not expect to continue them. They would not expect to be forgiven if they were not willing to cease from sinning. Well now, why not be as reasonable with regard to health? There are conditions of life and health. No one would expect the Lord to keep him from being burned, if he persisted in going into the fire. Even so we need not expect the Lord to keep us in health if we continually disregard the laws of health, any more than we should expect forgiveness if we ignored the ten commandments.

God has given us food, drink, air, rest, and clothing, to keep us in health. If we eat and drink only the things that He has indicated as good for us, and in proper measure, allow our lungs the utmost quantity of the purest air, and do not contaminate it with vile tobacco poison, and if we have the right relation between labor and rest, then, trusting in the Lord, we may expect strength sufficient for all our duties, so that even in this life we need not say, "I am disabled with sickness." (Isaiah 33:24,Lowth)

This is practical godliness, which is profitable for this life as well as for that which is to come.--Present Truth, July 6, 1899--Isaiah 33:17-24.

The Earth Desolated

"Draw near, O you nations, and hearken; And attend unto me, O you peoples! Let the earth hear, and all the fullness thereof; The world, and all that spring from it. For the wrath of Jehovah is kindled against all the nations; And His anger against all the orders thereof: He has devoted them; He has given them up to the slaughter. And their slain shall be cast out; And from their carcasses their stink shall ascend; And the mountains shall melt down with their blood. And all the host of heaven shall waste away; And the heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll: And all their host shall wither; As the withered leaf falleth from the vine, And as the blighted leaf from the fig tree. For my sword is made bare in the heavens: Behold, on Edom it shall descend; And on the people justly by me devoted to destruction. The sword of Jehovah is glutted with blood; It is pampered with fat: With the blood of lambs, and of goats; With the fat of reins of rams: For Jehovah celebrates a sacrifice in Botsrah, And a great slaughter in the land of Edom. And the wild goats shall fall down with them; And the bullocks, together with the bulls: And their own land shall be drunken with their blood, And their dust shall be enriched with fat. For it is the day of vengeance to Jehovah; The year of recompense to the defender of the cause of Sion. And her torrents shall be turned into pitch, And her dust into sulphur; And her whole land shall become burning pitch: By night or by day it shall not be extinguished, For ever shall her smoke ascend; From generation to generation she shall lie desert; To everlasting ages no man shall pass through her; But the pelican and the porcupine shall inherit her; And the owl and the raven shall inhabit there: And He shall stretch over her the line of devastation, And the plummet of emptiness over her scorched plains. No more shall they boast the renown of the kingdom; And all her princes shall utterly fail. And in her palaces shall spring up thorns; The nettle and the bramble, in her fortresses: And she shall become a habitation for dragons, A court for the daughters of the ostrich. And the jackals and the mountain-cats shall meet one another; And the satyr shall call to his fellow: There also the screech-owl shall pitch; And shall find for herself a place of rest. There shall the night-raven make her nest, and lay her eggs; And she shall hatch them, and gather her young under her shadow: There also shall the vultures be gathered together; Everyone of them shall join her mate. Consult the book of Jehovah, and read: Not one of these shall be missed; Not a female shall lack her mate: For the mouth of Jehovah has given the command; And His Spirit itself has gathered them. And He has cast the lot for them; And His hand has meted out

their portion by the line; They shall possess the land for a perpetual inheritance; From generation to generation shall they dwell therein." (Isaiah 34:1-17,Lowth)

The subject of this chapter is very easy to discern, and is manifestly that indicated in the title. The whole chapter is devoted to the one subject, so that it is easy of comprehension.

For All Nations

"Come near, you nations, to hear; and hearken, you people: let the earth hear, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come forth of it." (Isaiah 34:1)

Here is a proclamation of something that concerns the whole earth. All the earth, and all the nations on it are called to hear what the Lord has to say. It is nothing less than the proclamation of the wrath of God against all the nations. "For the indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and His fury upon all their armies: He has utterly destroyed them, He has delivered them to the slaughter. Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcasses, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood. And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falls off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree. For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment. The sword of the Lord is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness, and with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams: for the Lord has a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea. And the unicorns shall come down with them, and the bullocks with the bulls; and their land shall be soaked with blood, and their dust made fat with fatness. For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion. And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch." (Isaiah 34:2-9)

The most cursory reading of the chapter must convince anybody that the things here set forth are not limited to any one section of the earth, nor to any one people.

There is a strange idea very prevalent among readers of the Bible, and in religious circles, namely, that in ancient times God confined His attentions specially to one

people--the Jews; that He was shut up to them, and cared little or nothing for any other people. How anybody who reads the Bible could get such an idea is most strange. This chapter alone is enough to show the contrary; it is addressed to all the nations of the earth. The prophet is commissioned to preach to all mankind, and so understands his mission.

Think how much of the book of Isaiah is directly addressed to other people than the Jews. Chapters 15 to 23 are entirely devoted to other nations, who are directly appealed to by name: Moab, Tyre, Egypt, Assyria, and all the great nations are addressed one by one. And then other chapters mention the whole earth, showing that the events with which the prophet had to deal were not local. Indeed, the book begins with an appeal to the whole earth, and to heaven as well.

From the earliest times God has showed himself the God of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews. There were no Jews at all until more than two millenia of the world's history had passed, yet in all that time God had faithful men, a proof that He was revealing himself to whomsoever would accept Him. The Jews themselves originated from a man taken from the midst of heathendom.

People in these days seem to think that they must perpetuate the blindness of people of other days. Because the Jews in their national conceit imagined that the Lord did not care for any other people than themselves, most Bible readers have thought that it must have been so. But the fact was very evident from the beginning, to any person who would use his eyes and reason, that: "God is no respecter of persons, But in every nation he that fears Him and works righteousness is accepted with Him." (Acts 10:34-35)

The book of Isaiah, as indeed the books of all the other prophets, was addressed to the nations at large as well as to the Jews. And it concerns all the nations on earth today.

If one follows the book of Revelation in connection with Isaiah, it will be very apparent that the prophet John had no new message given him for the people. The Apostle Peter testifies that the message given to the ancient prophets was the same that the apostles had to give. "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified

beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into." (1 Peter 1:10-12)

Compare for instance verse 4 of this chapter with Revelation 6:12-14.

"And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falls off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree." (Isaiah 34:4) "And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places." (Revelation 6:12-14)

In many cases the words in Revelation are but a repetition of those used by the earlier prophet. That does not show that he was a mere borrower of the message of other men, but that the Holy Spirit had the same message to give by the two men. Both had a message for the last days.

Order of Last Day Events

A few facts gleaned from various parts of the Bible will help us to read this chapter more understandingly. First, we must remember that when the Lord comes the second time it is for the consummation of the salvation of His people, and this is effected by the destruction of the wicked, who will be on the point of exterminating them. For, "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." (2 Timothy 3:13)

This statement immediately following the one that "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution," (2 Timothy 3:12) shows that at the last day the people of God will be in more bitter persecution than at any other time in the world's history. Before the flood, the earth was filled with violence, and at the coming of the Lord it is to be in the same condition as then. "The earth also was corrupt before God,

and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth." (Genesis 6:11-12) "But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." (Matthew 24:37)

Remember also that both righteous and wicked live together on this earth until the end of the world: "Another parable put He forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? from whence then has it tares? He said unto them, An enemy has done this. The servants said unto him, Will you then that we go and gather them up? But he said, 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. Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and His disciples came unto Him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, 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. Who has ears to hear, let him hear." (Matthew 13:24-43)

There is no secret coming of the Lord, but that when He comes it will be openly, so that all can see Him, and the pomp and awful majesty will be such that none can help giving heed. "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. Even so, Amen." (Revelation 1:7) "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11) "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. 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. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, He is in the desert; go not forth: behold, He is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning comes out of the east, and shines even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." (Matthew 24:23-27)

At that time the wicked who still remain alive after the plagues that have come on the earth, will be destroyed by the brightness of Christ's coming, and the righteous, both dead and living, will be caught up, immortal, to be ever with the Lord. "And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming." (2 Thessalonians 2:8) "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)

This is the first resurrection. "Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: on such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years." (Revelation 20:6)

But the rest of the dead, that is, the wicked, will not live again until the thousand years are finished. At the end of that time they will be raised, and will be deceived by Satan into thinking that they can capture the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, which has come down from God out of heaven, and while surrounding it will be destroyed. "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. ... And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them." (Revelation 20:5,7-9)

This is in brief the outline of events in connection with the coming of the Lord, as set forth in the Scriptures.

During this thousand years, in which the saints are reigning with Christ in heaven, sitting in judgment on the earth and on fallen angels, (1 Corinthians 6:2-3) the earth will be a desolate waste, as set forth in the chapter before us. In the 20th chapter of Revelation we read of "the bottomless pit." (Revelation 20:1-3) Now the word there used in the Greek corresponds exactly with the Hebrew word in the 1st chapter of Genesis, where we are told that: "In the beginning ... The earth was without form, and void." (Genesis 1:1-2)

It was chaos. The Septuagint has exactly the same word: "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the abyss." (Genesis 1:2)

In the 11th verse of chapter 34 of Isaiah, we have, in "the line of confusion, and the stones of emptiness," the exact words that occur in Genesis 1:2. So we find that during the thousand years the earth will be desolate, uninhabited by man, and unfit for human habitation. This is the time described in this chapter. In the 18th chapter of Isaiah the condition is set forth, in the account of the judgment upon Babylon.

For Ever and Ever

This condition of things is said to last for ever and ever: "It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever: from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever." (Isaiah 34:10)

Yet the very next chapter describes a condition of Eden beauty on this earth. In 2 Peter 3:10-13 we read of the destruction of the earth in the day of the Lord, yet we are assured that there shall be, "according to His promise, ... new heavens and a new earth." (2 Peter 3:13)

So we learn that the duration of that which is spoken of as being "for ever and ever," depends on the nature of the thing spoken of. When God is the subject, or the saints whom He has made immortal, then we know that there is never any end; but when it is something that is contaminated by sin, then we know that there will be a limit to its continuance. "Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities round about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire," (Jude 7) yet the places where they once stood are now a desolate plain.

One special lesson must be indicated before we leave the chapter. Notice how the vilest and most loathsome creatures are described as inhabiting the desolate earth. "But the cormorant and the bittern shall possess it; the owl also and the raven shall dwell in it: and He shall stretch out upon it the line of confusion, and the stones of emptiness. They shall call the nobles thereof to the kingdom, but none shall be there, and all her princes shall be nothing. And thorns shall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof: and it shall be an habitation of dragons, and a court for owls. The wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the wild beasts of the island, and the satyr shall cry to his fellow; the screech owl also shall rest there, and find for herself a place of rest. There shall the great owl make her nest, and lay, and hatch, and gather under her shadow: there shall the vultures also be gathered, everyone with her mate. Seek out of the book of the Lord, and read: no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: for my mouth it has commanded, and His spirit it has gathered them. And He has cast the lot for them, and His hand has divided it unto them by line: they shall possess it for ever, from generation to generation shall they dwell therein." (Isaiah 34:11-17) "But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there." (Isaiah 13:21)

They hold sway over it while it is destitute of men. This is the natural end of the first sin, and of all that have succeeded.

In the beginning man was given complete dominion over the earth, and over everything on it. That dominion was the rule of righteousness. But man sinned, and the dominion and the glory departed from him. More and more has he been losing his control over the earth and its creatures. Instead of governing the lower orders of animals, he is exterminating them as fast as possible. Wherever man goes, destruction marks his course.

Finally, when sin has come to the full, and has ripened to the harvest, the condition that existed at the first will be utterly reversed, and only vile and hateful creatures--scavengers--will rule where once man had sway. All this terrible fall is involved in every sin. This is what the rule of man brings the earth to. Then will be seen in its fullness, or rather, in its emptiness, the result of man's having his own way.

Shall we not be warned in time, and submit ourselves to the rule of the One who has power to govern with stability?--Present Truth, July 13, 1899--Isaiah 34:1-17.

Chapter 35

The Earth Restored

"The desert, and the waste, shall be glad; And the wilderness shall rejoice, and flourish: Like the rose shall it beautifully flourish; And the well-watered plain of Jordan shall also rejoice: The glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, The beauty of Carmel and Sharon: These shall behold the glory of Jehovah, The majesty of our God. Strengthen the feeble hands, And confirm the tottering knees. Say to the faint-hearted: Be strong; Fear not; behold your God! Vengeance will come; the retribution of God: He himself will come, and will deliver you. Then shall be unclosed the eyes of the blind; And the ears of the deaf shall be opened: Then shall the lame bound like the hart, And the tongue of the dumb shall sing: For in the wilderness shall burst forth waters, And torrents in the desert: And the glowing sand shall become a pool, And the thirsty soil bubbling springs: And in the haunt of dragons shall spring forth The grass, with the reed, and the bulrush. And a highway shall be there; And it shall be called the way of holiness: No unclean person shall pass through it: But He himself shall be with them, walking in the way, And the foolish shall not err therein. No lion shall be there; Nor shall the tyrant of the beasts come up thither: Neither shall he be found there; But the redeemed shall walk in it. Yea, the ransomed of Jehovah shall return: They shall come to Sion with triumph; And perpetual gladness shall crown their heads. Joy and gladness shall they obtain; And sorrow and sighing shall flee away." (Isaiah 35:1-10,Lowth)

Restoration of the Earth

"The thing that has been, it is that which shall be." (Ecclesiastes 1:9)

This is most emphatically true of the things that God has made. For, "I know that, whatsoever God does, it shall be for ever; nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it." (Ecclesiastes 3:15)

When God made the world, and all things beautiful, "He created it not in vain." (Isaiah 45:18)

The fact that God made the earth perfect, is proof that it will be perfect. Not one of God's plans can ever fail. To man's short sight it may seem as though everything had

failed; but God has eternity for His own, and can afford to be misunderstood and yet to wait. A few years, or a few thousand years are not a finger's breadth compared with eternity.

So although sin brings complete desolation upon the earth, the end of sin,--which is destruction,--will be self-destruction; and death,--the last enemy,--having been swallowed up in victory, the earth will be renewed, and "the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God." (Isaiah 35:1-2)

The places once most fertile are now most desolate. The earth is waxing old like a garment; but like an old garment, it is soon to be changed, (Isaiah 51:6; Psalm 102:26) and then it will reflect to perfection the excellency and beauty of Jehovah. We have learned something of the beauty of the Lord; that wondrous beauty will yet be seen even in the most desolate and barren portions of this earth. Is it not a glorious prospect?

What assurance have we of this? Is not the assurance of God's Word sufficient? But we have ample demonstration of it in the fact that man, who was made to rule over a perfect earth, and was therefore himself made perfect, but who fell, and thereby caused the desolation of the earth, is himself by the Word of God made a new creature even now in this present time. When the king is restored to his kingly state, is that not proof that he will have back his dominion? In view of this, what is said? "Strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, Fear not." (Isaiah 35:3-4)

When does this apply? Is it in the time spoken of in the first two verses? Most certainly not; for in the earth renewed there will be no occasion to say to anybody, "Fear not!"

The people shall then "dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places." (Isaiah 32:18)

No; now is the time when the assurance of what God will certainly do for even this sin-cursed earth, must be set before the faint-hearted, to encourage them. "[The] blessed

hope [is] the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." (Titus 2:13)

Behold Your God

"Behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; He will come and save you." (Isaiah 35:4)

What else should be said to them that are of a fearful heart? This: "Behold, your God!" (Isaiah 35:4; Isaiah 40:9)

Where? Everywhere. "Do not I fill heaven and earth? says the Lord." (Jeremiah 23:24)

When Christ appears in the clouds of heaven there will be no fearful ones among His people. That will be the moment of the joy of deliverance. No one will then need to say, "Behold your God!" for, "every eye shall see Him." (Revelation 1:7)

"And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: This is the Lord, we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." (Isaiah 25:9)

Therefore this exclamation, "Behold your God!" is to be uttered now in the ears of all the fainting ones of earth. "That which may be known of God is manifested in them; for God manifested it unto them. 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 1:19-20)

He upholds all things by the Word of His power. "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 1:3)

To be able to see God in all the things that exist, to know that He has not forsaken the earth, is enough to put courage into any man.

What means it that He is here? Nothing less than that He claims all things as His own, and is determined to stay by them. Though they be marred, and the Divine image may be almost effaced, yet He does not become disheartened or disgusted with them, but will by His presence restore them as at the first. If He did not claim them as His own, and did not intend to make them again worthy of himself, He would not remain in them; the fact that He tarries even amid the curse, is sufficient proof that He means salvation; and what He purposes He will surely perform.

Therefore, behold your God in the lowest and meanest created thing, that you may know that He has not forsaken man, His crowning work. Be of good courage; He will come and save you.

The Gospel of Health

"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing." (Isaiah 35:5-6)

When shall all this be? Well, it will certainly be when the Lord comes to save His people, for then the dead themselves will be raised incorruptible, and the living will be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, to immortality. "Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." (1 Corinthians 15:51-53) "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)

At that time there will surely not be a saint of God with any blemish either of soul or body. Christ will have "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." (Ephesians 5:27)

But we are warranted in believing that a restoration will take place even before the appearing of the Lord, not indeed to immortality, but to soundness of mortal bodies. When Jesus comes "every eye shall see Him." (Revelation 1:7)

But there is even stronger evidence than this. Christ's presence here on earth brought healing to all that were diseased in any way. The proof of the Divinity of His ministry was this, that "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached unto them." (Matthew 11:5)

Now there was never a time in the world when there was more need of convincing proof of the genuineness of the Gospel than now. When Satan works with "all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness," (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10) as he sees the end near, God will not leave himself without witness among men, but will also work with many miracles and wonders and signs. The Christ who once walked among men, revealing the Father, will be reproduced in all His people, so that no particle of evidence will be lacking.

So as He then healed all who were sick and blind and lame, wherever He went, we may be sure the same thing will be done again, when all His people learn to behold Him still among them and in them.

Marvellous Signs to be Manifest

"In the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert." (Isaiah 35:6)

That will be fulfilled when the wilderness and the solitary place are made new, and the desert blossoms as the rose; but we may expect to see it fulfilled even before the coming of the Lord. "And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes." (Isaiah 35:7)

When Israel went out from Egypt, water was brought from the flinty rock for them in the desert: "[God] turned the rock into standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters." (Psalm 114:8)

When God sets His hand again the second time to deliver His people, "There shall be a highway for the remnant of His people, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt." (Isaiah 11:16)

Therefore we may expect to see the same wonders, and even greater ones, repeated. "Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that they shall no more say, The Lord lives, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; But, The Lord lives, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land." (Jeremiah 23:7-8)

The wonders of the last days will entirely eclipse the miracles of the exodus from Egypt.

A Holy Highway

"A highway shall be there." (Isaiah 35:8)

Where? Without doubt in the new earth, in the holy city; but we should miss the joy of the Scripture if we put it all off till the future. Christ is the way, the way of holiness, and the way is plain. "The way you know." (John 14:4)

Anyone can find it; it is revealed unto babes; and the most simple cannot make any mistake in it. "The redeemed shall walk there." (Isaiah 35:9)

Even now "God ... has visited and redeemed His people." (Luke 1:68)

Therefore now the redeemed must have a place in which to walk. And they shall walk in the way, and they "shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads." (Isaiah 35:10)

Mark that it is with singing that they come into Zion. They do not wait until they get there to sing; they sing now. It is because they sing that they get there. Read 2 Chronicles 20:1-30, and note verses 21 and 22: "And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the Lord, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the Lord; for His mercy

endures for ever. And when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten." (2 Chronicles 20:21-22)

It was when Israel began to sing and to praise the Lord, that they gained the victory. Then let the desert resound and be made glad with singing.

Let those refuse to sing
Who never knew our God;
But children of the heavenly King
Must speak their joys abroad.

--Isaac Watts, Hymn: Marching to Zion, from Hymns & Sacred Songs, 1707.

This they must do, because they "are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, which speaks better things than that of Abel," (Hebrews 12:22-24) and,

The hill of Zion yields
A thousand sacred sweets,
Before we reach the heav'nly fields,
Or walk the golden streets.
--Ibid.

--Present Truth, July 20, 1899--Isaiah 35:1-10.

A Prayer for Healing Answered

"At that time Hezekiah was seized with a mortal sickness: and Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amos, came unto him, and said unto him: Thus says Jehovah: Give orders concerning your affairs to your family; for you must die; you shall no longer live. Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall; and made his supplication to Jehovah. And he said: I beseech You, O Jehovah, remember now, how I have endeavored to walk before You in truth, and with a perfect heart; and have done that which is good in your eyes. And Hezekiah wept, and lamented grievously. Now [before Isaiah was gone out into the middle court (2 Kings 20:4)] the word of Jehovah came unto him, saying: Go [back], and say unto Hezekiah, thus says Jehovah, the God of David your father: I have heard your supplication; I have seen your tears. Behold [I will heal you; and on the third day you shall go up into the house of Jehovah. And (2 Kings 20:5)] I will add unto your days fifteen years. And I will deliver you, and this city, from the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will protect this city. [And Hezekiah said: By what sign shall I know that I shall go up into the house of Jehovah? And Isaiah said: (2 Kings 20:20)] This shall be the sign unto you from Jehovah, that Jehovah will bring to effect this word which He has spoken. Behold I will bring back the shadow of the degrees, by which the sun is gone down on the degrees of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. And the sun returned backward ten degrees, on the degrees by which it had gone down." (Isaiah 38:1-8,Lowth) "And Isaiah said: Let them take a lump of figs; and they bruised them, and applied them to the boil; and he recovered." (2 Kings 20:21,Lowth)

In studying this lesson, reference should be made to the record in 2 Kings 20:1-11. It will be noticed that the Lowth's Translation, which we have reprinted here, two sections are inserted in brackets in the fourth and fifth verses, from the corresponding verses of the account in 2 Kings.

Also, in order that the record of the event may be complete in one lesson, verses 21 and 22 are brought into the narrative in the regular course, instead of being left, as in our common version, at the close of Hezekiah's song of thanksgiving.

Let the student diligently compare this reading with that in his Bible. There is no alteration, but only a bringing of the different parts of the narrative into one. "At that time." (Isaiah 38:1,Lowth)

At what time? For an answer read chapter 36 and 37. The lesson itself (verse 6) indicates that it was at the time that the king of Assyria was besieging Jerusalem. Read also the accounts in 2 Kings 18 and 19 and 2 Chronicles 32.

The first thing that claims our attention in this study is the kindness of God in giving Hezekiah timely warning of his approaching death. For what reason Hezekiah was to die at that time, is not stated, and we have no business to conjecture. It would do no good if we should. Of one thing we may be sure: it was not because Hezekiah was a bad man. The record concerning his reign is that "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father had done." (2 Chronicles 29:2) "[He] wrought that which was good and right and truth before the Lord his God. And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered." (2 Chronicles 31:20-21)

No king has ever had a better testimony given him than that. One of the most common things when a kind, benevolent, and good person dies, is to hear people say,

"What had he done, that he should be taken away? if it had only been such and such a one, I could understand it, for he would never have been missed; but to take away so useful a member of society,--it is inexplicable."

Or sometimes a parent says, when a devoted and pious child is taken, "What have we done, that she should be taken from us?"

Just as though God never thought of anything but devising some means of punishing people, and trying to make them miserable! Just as though it would be a mark of greater mercy on the part of God if He should allow all the unprepared ones to die, leaving behind only those who are ready either for life or death! God has "No pleasure in the death of him that dies." (Ezekiel 18:32) "The righteous perishes, and no man lays it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come." (Isaiah 57:1)

The death of a good man, indispensable as he may seem to be, is often the greatest mercy that could befall both him and those who are left behind. Indeed, we may be sure that whatever takes place, the mercy of God endures for ever. "For He does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men." (Lamentations 3:33)

Death a Costly Thing

Let no one, however, think that it is a light matter to the Lord that any person, whether good or bad, dies. Death is not in God's plan for men. He is the living God, and the God of life. (Matthew 16:16; Psalm 36:9) He is the Father of all, and from Him all parental love comes. There is no fatherly love on earth that is not simply a little fragment of the love of God for all men.

Then let any father think of his own sorrow at the death of a loved child, and he will have an exceedingly faint idea of the sorrow that moves the heart of God when one of His children dies. See Jesus shedding tears at the grave of Lazarus, even when He knew that in a few minutes He would call His friend back to life. (John 11:34-36) Read the 116th Psalm. Note especially the fifteenth verse: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." (Psalm 116:15)

That word "precious" is from the same word that is often rendered "costly," and it always has that meaning, as anyone will know, who considers its origin. So we should read the verse as it appears in several versions, "Costly in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." (Psalm 116:15)

It costs the Lord more than the human mind can compute, for Him to allow one of His saints to die, even though it be necessary. Death is an expensive thing to the Lord. It costs Him many a heartache. It is a personal loss to Him; He feels it, because every creature is a part of himself. "We are His offspring, [and] in Him we live, and move, and have our being." (Acts 17:28)

But more, it is a loss to Him in the great work that He has to do in the earth. It is a common thing for men to say that God could get along without any of us, as though He were so self-contained and so self-satisfied and so far above all human feelings that nothing can move Him; when the fact is that everything moves Him.

God has given the earth to man, and has never recalled the gift. Through man He has purposed to rule the world, and although we in our selfishness may not be able to understand it, it is a fact that God cannot get along without man. He showed this in that He gave His life for us. He could not live without man. He desires man to be His constant companion. It is for that purpose that He created man.

Therefore we may be sure that it was not with a light heart that God said to Hezekiah, "you shall die, and not live." (Isaiah 38:1)

Death an Enemy

Hezekiah did not wish to die; the thought of it was most painful to him. "Hezekiah wept sore." (Isaiah 38:3)

Was it because he felt that he had been a bad man, and therefore dreaded to meet his God? No; for he had so little consciousness of guilt that he could recount to the Lord the integrity in which he had walked before Him.

If dying means, as the theologians tell us, to be with the Lord, why should Hezekiah have felt so sorrowful at the thought of dying? Ah, he knew better. There is no man in his senses that would not rather live than die. The tears that people shed over the dead, even while they try to make themselves believe that death is a friend, show that it is impossible for anybody to believe that lie. Every funeral train and every tear are testimonies to the effect that death is an enemy, and not a friend. Death speaks of the devil, the adversary of mankind. "The righteous has hope in his death," simply because he has the assurance through Christ that death shall be destroyed, and he be delivered from its grasp. Death is always and everywhere a thing for tears, and not for joy.

"No" as an Answer to Prayer

"Then came the word of the Lord to Isaiah, saying, Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus says the Lord, the God of David your father, I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears: behold, I will add unto your days fifteen years." (Isaiah 38:4-5)

The Lord heard Hezekiah's prayer, and allowed him to live a little longer. Yes, "He heard his prayer." How natural it is for us to say that, when we have prayed for something, and have got it. But suppose we do not get it, what then? Then we shake our heads mournfully, and say, "The Lord didn't see fit to hear us."

Just as if there were ever anything that God did not hear. People in their selfishness generally have the idea that the universe is run for their own individual benefit, regardless of anybody else, and each one thinks that his own wishes should be attended to in every detail, and at once, no matter how many others may be distressed by it. So if God does not say "Yes" to every request of theirs, they feel that they have been greatly abused, and even insulted, because, say they, "I prayed to the Lord, and He did not answer me."

Haven't they ever heard that "No" is as much an answer as "Yes" is? And has not God as good a right to say "No" once in a while as any earthly parent has, who knows several things that his child does not know? Many a child has lived long enough to find out that the answer "No," to a request for some much-longed-for thing, which seemed to him almost like a death blow, was the greatest blessing that could have been given him. It is always so when God says it, for He gives everything that is good, and He gives nothing that is not good.

Hezekiah Gained Nothing

But Hezekiah received "Yes" as an answer to His prayer. We will not say that he received "a favorable answer." He got what he asked for, although it was directly contrary to what God had said he should have. Did he really get it, though? "Certainly he did," you say.

Let us see. What did he ask for? He asked for a reversal of the decree that had gone forth, that he should die, and not live. "And he did live," you say.

How long? Fifteen years. That is not very long, and when that time had elapsed, what then? Why, then he died. Yes, that was what God had said concerning him. He had to die just the same as if it had happened fifteen years before; death is just the same one time as another.

But how much better off was Hezekiah after the close of that fifteen years than he was at the beginning? What had he gained by trying to overthrow the word of God? Ah, God works all things after the counsel of His own will; His word will be fulfilled sooner or later, and it is well for mankind that it is so.

Hezekiah's Healing a Public Calamity

Whatever Hezekiah may have gained personally in his own feelings by the result of his prayer, it is certain that the people lost by it. We do not hear very much of Hezekiah after that incident. He appears only once, and then in a circumstance that is not greatly to his credit. But we know that in that fifteen years Manasseh was born, for Manasseh was only twelve years old when he succeeded him at his death. Read a little about him: "Manasseh was twelve years old when he began his reign, and he reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem: And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom the Lord had cast out from before the children of Israel. For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down, and he reared up altars for Baalim, and made groves, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them. Also he built altars in the house of the Lord, whereof the Lord had said, In Jerusalem shall my name be for ever. And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord. And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom: also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger. And he set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the house of God, of which God had said to David and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen before all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever: Neither will I any more remove the foot of Israel from out of the land which I have appointed for your fathers; so that they will take heed to do all that I have commanded them, according to the whole law and the statutes and the ordinances by the hand of Moses. So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen, whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel." (2 Chronicles 33:1-9) "Moreover Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; beside his sin wherewith he made Judah to sin, in doing that which was evil in the sight of the Lord." (2 Kings 21:16)

Surely the people of Israel had no reason to be very jubilant over the result of Hezekiah's prayer.

Right and Wrong Praying

When we look at what followed, it seems quite evident that it would have been better if Hezekiah had kept still and allowed things to take the course pointed out by the Lord. "What! Isn't it always right to pray to the Lord for what we want, especially for life and health?"

Yes; provided we pray in accordance with the will of God. That is always the rule. We must allow that God knows best. He sees the end from the beginning; and when God tells a man that he is to die, and sends a special messenger, a holy prophet, to bear the message, the very best thing for that man, and for everybody else, is that he should die. There is "A time to be born, and a time to die," (Ecclesiastes 3:2) and knowing how much the death of one of His children costs the Lord, we may be sure that the time for a man to die is when God says so. "Shall we then not dare ask the Lord for a continuance of life?"

Why not? We have not received any message from the Lord, telling us that we are to die, and not live. On the contrary we are told, "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." (James 5:13-15)

That is for us, unless we have received some direct intimation from the Lord that we are to be an exception. But let us remember that it is the prayer of faith, that saves the sick, and that "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." (Romans 10:17)

Then we must not ask for anything contrary to the Word of God, and we must know the Word of God as personally addressed to us.

The Use of Remedies

"And Isaiah said: Let them take a lump of figs: and they bruised them, and applied them to the boil; and he recovered." (Isaiah 38:21,Lowth)

Someone will say, "Why, Hezekiah was healed by natural means, after all; it was a strange and unusual remedy, to be sure, but it was a remedy, nevertheless."

Well, what of it? "Oh, when the Lord heals, He does not use remedies."

Ah, how did you learn that? Does not the Lord use instruments for the performance of His will? He uses things that are, and even things that are not, for the accomplishment of His purpose. Do not imagine that a thing is any the less a work of God, because He has done it through some agency, human or otherwise.

Know this, that there was never a person healed of any disease in this world except by the Lord, and that He always uses some means, visible or invisible. The means is none the less real, if it is invisible.

Do not get the idea that when you see a thing done, and see the thing that does it, it is not from the Lord; and that the miracle occurs only when you cannot see anything but the result. The words of the Lord are medicine, whether they are in visible form, or are invisible. "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 medicine to all their flesh." (Proverbs 4:20-22,margin)

It is His Word that He sends to heal the afflicted: "He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions." (Psalm 107:20)

Remedies are always in place when people are sick, and are always perfectly consistent with fervent prayer for their recovery, even with the course that is set forth in the 5th chapter of James. But remember that they must be only the Lord's remedies. They must be remedies which are the embodiment of the living Word of God. They must not be things which contain death, and are themselves but the agencies of death. God heals by imparting life, not by giving death. "Men ought always to pray," (Luke 18:1) but that does not mean that they should sit still and do nothing. We ought to pray

for our daily bread; but the command to do that comes from the same source as the command that "If any would not work, neither should he eat." (2 Thessalonians 3:10)

When we have done an honest day's work, and have received food as the reward, we are to thank God for the gift just as much as if the ravens had been sent to feed us while we sat by the brook. It is from His hands just the same.

And so we are always to pray for the recovery of the sick, and at the same time to make use of every means that God has made known to us as serviceable. This does not include poisonous drugs, for they are not life-bearers, but death agents.

And then if, after applying the means that God himself indicated, the patient recovers, we are to thank the Lord just as heartily for the performance of a miracle of healing as if we had heard Him speak with an audible voice, and tell the disease to depart.

The Lord is the Great Physician, and there is not a medical man in the world that cannot learn things from Him that will astonish him.

A Sign from the Lord

"And this shall be a sign unto you from the Lord, that the Lord will do this thing that He has spoken; Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sun dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down." (Isaiah 38:7-8)

The Lord gave Hezekiah a sign by which he might know that he should recover. We notice by reading 2 Kings 20:8-10 that Hezekiah was very particular as to the sign. He did not want any doubt about it. "And Hezekiah said unto Isaiah, What shall be the sign that the Lord will heal me, and that I shall go up into the house of the Lord the third day? And Isaiah said, This sign shall you have of the Lord, that the Lord will do the thing that He has spoken: shall the shadow go forward ten degrees, or go back ten degrees? And Hezekiah answered, It is a light thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees: nay, but let the shadow return backward ten degrees." (2 Kings 20:8-10)

So the shadow on the dial was made to go backward ten degrees. Wonderful! Yes; but no more so than the healing of Hezekiah. Nay, it was no more wonderful than is the daily going forward of the shadow. Everything is wonderful, for in everything the eternal power and Divinity of God are manifest.

We have known professed Christian men who had the audacity to attempt to explain the miracle of the going backward of the shadow on the dial, as well as the standing still of the sun in the days of Joshua. Some people think that they are in duty bound to seem to know as much as the Lord; but all will at the last be obliged to admit that the Lord knows many things that we do not.

We would not minimise the going backward of the shadow, or the standing still of the sun, but would magnify the miracles that are taking place every day, and which are unnoticed because of their frequency. The fact that the sun keeps its place in the heavens, and that all the heavenly bodies move in their courses so exactly that men who watch them closely can tell to a second when to expect them at any particular point, is a stupendous miracle. God placed them in the heavens "for signs," (Genesis 1:14) as well as "for seasons, and days, and years." (Genesis 1:14)

They are signs to all men that the power and mercy of the Lord are everlasting. They are signs of the faithfulness of God, which is established in the very heavens. "Your mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and your faithfulness reaches unto the clouds." (Psalm 36:5) "For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: your faithfulness shall You establish in the very heavens." (Psalm 89:2)

When we see the shadow moving forward we may be as sure of the fulfillment of the Word of God to us as Hezekiah was when he saw it going backward. No word of God can fail, and every sunbeam is proof of it. God has not left himself without witness, and we are not obliged to ask for something special in our case. All we have to do is to look round us.--Present Truth, July 27, 1899--Isaiah 38:1-8, 21, 22.

Hezekiah's Tribute of Thanksgiving

"The writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had Been sick, and was recovered from his sickness: I said, when my days were just going to be cut off, I shall pass through the gates of the grave; I am deprived of the residue of my years! I said, I shall no more see Jehovah in the land of the living! I shall no longer behold man, with the inhabitants of the world! My habitation is taken away, and is removed from me, like a shepherd's tent: My life is cut off, as by the weaver; He will sever me from the loom; In the course of the day You will finish my web. I roared until the morning, like the lion; So did He break to pieces all my bones. Like the swallow, like the crane did I twitter; I made a moaning like the dove. My eyes fail with looking upward: O Lord, contend for me; be my surety. What shall I say? He has given me a promise, and He has performed it. Through the rest of my years will I reflect on this bitterness of my soul. For this cause shall it be declared, O Jehovah, concerning You, That You have revived my spirit; That You have restored my health, and prolonged my life. Behold my anguish is changed into ease! You have rescued my soul from perdition; Yea, You have cast behind your back all my sins. Verily the grave shall not give thanks unto You; death shall not praise You; They that go down into the pit shall not await your truth: The living, the living, he shall praise You, as I do this day; The father to the children shall make known your faithfulness. Jehovah was present to save me: therefore will we sing our songs to the harp, All the days of our life, in the house of Jehovah." (Isaiah 38:9-20)

Death is not the Gate to Life

In this writing we learn why it was that Hezekiah was so much troubled when he learned that he must die. It was because it did not mean an entrance into a larger life with greater possibilities, as some would have us believe. Death is not life, in any sense of the word. The message to Hezekiah was, "You shall die, and not live." (Isaiah 38:1)

If death had meant life under far better conditions than are possible on this earth, then we may be sure that Hezekiah, who all his life had "walked before the Lord," would not have had any objection to it. But he knew better. When the word came to him, he said, "I am deprived of the residue of my years." (Isaiah 38:10)

It was not that he was going to live in another place, under somewhat changed circumstances, much as one will go to a distant country; a man does not weep sore over that, even if the country be not quite so good as the one he is leaving. Hezekiah wept because he was not going to live anywhere any more. "I said, I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord, in the land of the living: I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world." (Isaiah 38:11)

But this could not be if at death Hezekiah were going to be with the Lord. He had learned to see the Lord in His works and ways, but now this delight was to be cut off. He could no longer behold God or man. The same thought was expressed by David, when he had been delivered from death. He said, "I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living." (Psalm 116:9)

It is a fact that "God has given to us eternal life," (1 John 5:11) so that the life that we now live, if it be by faith, is but the beginning of that which we shall live in the world to come. The future life will be but a continuation of this, so that while we live, whether in this world or that which is to come, we may walk before the Lord. At this present time we may walk in the light of His countenance, (1 John 5:11) and in the new earth His servants "shall see His face;" (Revelation 22:4) but, "In death there is no remembrance of the Lord;" (Psalm 6:5) only by the resurrection, at the coming of Christ, can the righteous dead "ever be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:17) "My age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent: I have cut off like a weaver my life: He will cut me off with pining sickness: from day even to night will You make an end of me." (Isaiah 38:12)

In verse 12 Lowth has it, "My habitation is taken away," while our common version has it, "My age is departed."

The Revised Version has the same, with "habitation" in the margin as an alternative reading. The Hebrew allows both renderings, and both are in reality the same, since so long as a man lives he must live somewhere. When a man's life is taken away, his habitation is taken away; and if there is absolutely no place for him to live, it is because he has no life any more. Most vivid expressions are used to indicate the great change that death brings. "My life is cut off, as by the weaver; He will sever me from the loom; in the course of the day You will finish my web." (Isaiah 38:12,Lowth)

Life is likened to a web in the loom, the threads of which are composed of moments; Hezekiah's web was about to be cut off from the loom incomplete. An end was to be made of him. This explains the reason of his great sadness at the thought of death.

Dying in Christ

It does not, however, excuse Hezekiah's lack of resignation to the message of the Lord. Death is an enemy, and always hateful, and the fact that God himself allows one of His servants to suffer it, does not in the least make it any more attractive. But the fact that the Lord himself does allow His servants to die, and that even in death they do not suffer anything that He has not suffered, should make them resigned, and even happy, in the face of it. "The righteous has hope in his death." (Proverbs 14:32)

Christ, who died, is alive for evermore, and has the keys of death and the grave, so that, although Satan has the power of death, he can hold no one except at the pleasure of the Lord. The grave can no more hold a child of God beyond God's will than it could hold Jesus after the third day. Therefore although the grave is indeed a hateful, terrible place, no one whose life is hid with Christ in God need fear it. "You have in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for You have cast all my sins behind your back." (Isaiah 38:17)

What kind of place is the grave? It is "the pit of corruption."

That is where people go at death. The patriarch Job said, "If I wait, the grave is my house: I have made my bed in darkness. I have said to corruption, You are my father: to the worm, You are my mother, and my sister." (Job 17:13-14) "The land of darkness, and the shadow of death, [is] 22 A land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness." (Job 10:21)

Yet the Christian, who knows the Lord, to whom the darkness and the light are both alike, may "fear no evil, [even in] the valley of the shadow of death." (Psalm 23:4)

The Reason for Living

We must not think that Hezekiah's prayer for deliverance from the grave was wholly selfish. No; the reason why he wished to live, and not go into the grave, is thus told by him to the Lord, "For the grave cannot praise You, death cannot celebrate You; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for your truth." (Isaiah 38:18) "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence." (Psalm 115:17)

The psalmist also said, "I cried to You, O Lord; and unto the Lord I made my supplication. What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise You? shall it declare your truth?" (Psalm 30:8-9)

Thus we see that it is not wrong to ask the Lord to keep us from the grave: much of the Psalms, which are given for our guide in the matter of prayer and praise, is composed of this very petition. Again we read, "My eye mourns because of my affliction: Lord, I have called daily upon You, I have stretched out my hands unto You. Will You show wonders unto the dead? shall the dead arise and praise You? Selah. Shall your loving kindness be declared in the grave? or your faithfulness in destruction? Shall your wonders be known in the dark? and your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?" (Psalm 88:9-12)

From this we get the facts as to the nature of the grave, and the conditions there. Who that has ever looked into an open grave cannot appreciate the description? "The living, the living he shall praise You, as I do this day." (Isaiah 38:19)

In this there is something more than a point of doctrine for us. Notice in all the scriptures that have been quoted, that the inability to praise the Lord in the grave is the reason why these faithful servants of the Lord wished to be delivered from it. The matter of praising the Lord makes all the real difference between death and life. The man who does not praise the Lord is as dead.

Idols of silver and gold, the work of men's hands, which are in every respect the farthest removed from any likeness to the God that is in the heavens working all things after the counsel of His own will, are thus described: "They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not; They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not; They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but

they walk not; neither speak they through their throat. They that make them are like unto them; so is everyone that trusts in them." (Psalm 115:5-8)

That is to say, that everyone who does not trust in the Lord is like a dead piece of metal. The man who sees nothing in the world for which to praise the Lord, does not see anything, for all His works praise Him, and is the same as though he had no eyes. And he who does not speak to the praise of God is as though he had no mouth at all; and if his feet and hands do not move in the service of the Lord, then he is as though he had no life. "dead in trespasses and sins." (Ephesians 2:1)

The same Psalm that tells about the deadness of idols and of those who trust in them, tells us that "the dead praise not the Lord." (Psalm 115:17)

See a man that does not praise the Lord?--he is dead, and needs to be made alive. As surely as a man is alive he will praise the Lord. "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord." (Psalm 150:6)

Redemption from Sin and Death

One thing more must not be overlooked in reading this tribute of thanksgiving. Hezekiah said to the Lord, "You have in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for You have cast all my sins behind your back." (Isaiah 38:17)

Sin and death are inseparable. "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) "[God] redeems our life from destruction, and heals all our diseases," (Psalm 103:4) because it is He that "forgives all our iniquities." (Psalm 103:3)

In the directions for prayer for the sick, given by the Apostle James it is said that: "The prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." (James 5:15)

Not that we are to understand by this that everybody who dies is a sinner: far from it: "the righteous is taken away from the evil to come," (Isaiah 57:1) and a blessing is pronounced upon those who die in the Lord. "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, says

the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them."
(Revelation 14:13)

Yet if it were not for sin, there would be no death. We have inherited mortal bodies, and they are allowed to go into the grave; but it is the power by which sins are forgiven, and the very forgiveness itself, that insures our resurrection from the dead.

There will be a people, however, in the last days, just before the unveiled revelation of the glory of Christ in the heavens, who will represent Christ so completely that death will have no power over them, and they will be translated to heaven without seeing death. "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." (1 Corinthians 15:51)

Therefore, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." (Psalm 32:1-2)--Present Truth, August 3, 1899--Isaiah 38:9-20.

Going to Babylon

"At that time Merodach Baladan, the son of Baladan king of Babylon, sent letters, and ambassadors, and a present to Hezekiah; for he had heard that he had been sick, and was recovered. And Hezekiah was rejoiced at their arrival: and he showed them his magazines, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and his whole arsenal, and all that was contained in his treasures: there was not any thing in his house, and in all his dominion, that Hezekiah did not show them. And Isaiah the prophet came unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him: What say these men? and from whence came they unto you? And Hezekiah said: They are come to me from a distant country; from Babylon. And he said: What have they seen in your house? And Hezekiah said: They have seen every thing in my house: there is nothing in my treasures, which I have not shown them. And Isaiah said unto Hezekiah: Hear the word of Jehovah God of Hosts. Behold, the day shall come, when all that is in your house, and that your fathers have treasured up unto this day, shall be carried away to Babylon: there shall not any thing be left, says Jehovah. And of your sons, which shall issue from you, which you shall beget, shall they take: and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon. And Hezekiah said unto Isaiah: Gracious is the word of Jehovah, which you have delivered! For, added he, there shall be peace, according to His faithful promise, in my days." (Isaiah 39:1-8,Lowth) "And Hezekiah had exceeding much riches and honor; and he made himself treasuries for silver, and for gold, and for precious stones, and for spices, and for shields, and for all manner of pleasant jewels; Storehouses also for the increase of corn, and wine, and oil; and stalls for all manner of beasts, and cotes (2 Chronicles 32:27-31) for flocks. Moreover he provided him cities, and possessions of flocks and herds in abundance; for God had given him substance very much. This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper watercourse of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all his works. Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to enquire 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 32:27-31)

Exhibitions of Self

This lesson is very short, and very simple, yet it is one of the most important in the whole Bible. Everybody stands in need of it.

The tendency to "show off" seems to be inherent in human nature, and it is most assiduously cultivated. The baby in its mother's arms must exhibit its infantile attainments to every visitor, besides a hundred times a day to its admiring friends, until the child as soon as it begins to think, very naturally concludes that whatever he does must be of exceptional merit and interest, simply because it is he that does it.

At home he must show off his accomplishments, in order that the parents may be complimented on having so wonderful a child. At school he must be put on exhibition for the benefit of the school and the teacher; and in Sabbath school he is used for the same purpose. No wonder that so many continue through life to exhibit themselves on their own account.

The good housewife gratifies her pride, and awakens the envy of her neighbors, by showing them all her stores of household goods; and the merchant and the farmer do the same.

It is true that one may very often show another some of his possessions, in order to help that other one,--to give him some ideas as to how to get something for himself, or simply to bring some freshness and change into the life of one whose range is very limited. That is all right; but everyone who reads this will know that very often there is in the exhibition of one's attainments or possession merely the gratification of pride, and the desire to receive compliments, to excite astonishment, and to be the subject of conversation.

See My Zeal for the Lord

It is this same spirit that leads religious societies and churches to publish many of the statistics that are continually being given to the world. So much of a business has this become that in many instances men are kept constantly employed to make note of every step of progress, or of supposed progress, so that no time may be lost on any occasion in impressing visitors with the amount of work done, the liberality of the

donations, and the vast sums expended in buildings, etc. All this is done of course "for the good of the cause," in forgetfulness of the fact that since even "a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses," (Luke 12:15) much less does the cause of God consist in material wealth. It is not what a man has, but what he is, that God looks at; even so progress in the Lord's work is not indicated by numbers of professed converts, by large amounts of money contributed, or by huge piles of buildings in which church work is done, but in soul growth, which can be measured by the Lord alone. "[Its] praise is not of men, but of God." (Romans 2:29)

None of us are aware of how much emulation there is in our work for the Lord. We may not always say in so many words, with Jehu, "Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord," (2 Kings 10:16) but the feeling is present, nevertheless. Where there are hundreds who are willing to engage in even the most disagreeable work, provided it comes before the eyes of the public, there are very few who are willing to work for the Lord unknown, except by Him, and with none to recognize and applaud. In fact, we must all plead guilty to more or less selfishness in our work for the Master, who is unselfishness itself.

The Babylonish Spirit

Now all this is evidence that God's people have not yet got free from Babylon. It was at least a striking coincidence that it was to the ambassadors from Babylon that Hezekiah made this exhibition of his wealth and grandeur; for that was the very spirit of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar had received from the Lord "a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory." (Daniel 2:37)

It was He who made Babylon "the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees excellency." (Isaiah 13:19)

But he did not in humility of heart give God the glory, but as he walked in his palace he said, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" (Daniel 4:30)

This is the spirit of Babylon, derived from Lucifer, the real king of Babylon, who thought only of exalting himself, and gave not God the glory. (Daniel 4:30) Since the possessor of the treasures that were shown to the messengers from Babylon had the

Babylonish spirit, it was very fitting that they should be taken to Babylon. They belonged in Babylon as much as in Jerusalem. They were in reality Babylonish possessions, although gathered by the kings of Israel. But Hezekiah did not know this at the time.

A Lost Opportunity

What a wonderful opportunity Hezekiah had to teach those Babylonian ambassadors the truth of God. They had heard that he had been sick, and had recovered, and they knew of the great wonder in the heavens, the sign of God's healing power, and they came to enquire about it, and at the same time congratulate Hezekiah. What better preparation of the way could anyone ask than that to make known the saving power of God? It was for that very purpose that God had put it into their hearts to come.

But instead of improving the time by telling them of the God that made the heavens and the earth, and making Him known as the sole Healer of the souls and bodies of men, Hezekiah magnified himself in their eyes, by showing them his own treasures. What a mistake he made! But we must not condemn Hezekiah; our part is simply to note the facts, that we may see ourselves in his picture.

Do not get the idea that there was conscious self-exaltation in Hezekiah's act. The treasures were not his own personal property, but belonged to the kingdom. He had not gathered them all himself, but they had been accumulated through many prosperous reigns. It was not his personal wealth that he was showing to the ambassadors from Babylon, but he was impressing them with the greatness of the Jewish kingdom, to the throne of which he had been called. In this exhibition of the royal treasures, Hezekiah was trying to advance the cause of God among the heathen; for "When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language; Judah was His sanctuary, and Israel His dominion." (Psalm 114:1-2)

We may be sure that Hezekiah thought he was impressing those heathen ambassadors with a sense of the greatness of God's cause and people, and preparing the way for the Babylonian people to be favorably impressed with the truth. He did not know that he was preparing the way for the captivity of Israel.

Robbing God of the Glory

Hezekiah's course has been repeated thousands of times to this day. Christians who would not boast of their own possessions, take great pride in telling what "our church" has done, how much it has contributed, and how great facilities it has for carrying on the work of the Lord. They forget that the only impression that can possibly be made on the world is that the men who have been engaged in this work are shrewd business men; for the world is full of instances of poor boys who have amassed great property, without any thought of Christianity.

It is true that it is God who gives men the power to get wealth; (Deuteronomy 8:18; 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) but the possession of property is not by any means an evidence that God is pleased with a person or a society, or that He has any special connection with them over other people. If it were, then it would show that God's favor is specially with the world, for more property is in the hands of the world than in the church.

Babylon had greater riches than Jerusalem had, so that while the ambassadors might be impressed with the progress of the Israelites, they really could only think that their gods were greater than the God of the Jews. But there were none of their gods that could heal diseases or forgive sins, and in telling of that, Hezekiah might have led the proud heathen to worship in spirit and in truth.

But why should God say that for this error on the part of Hezekiah, all the people and treasures of Israel should be taken to Babylon? Ah, there was nothing arbitrary in this; it was a necessity, and the natural consequence of the king's act. God had sent the ambassadors to Jerusalem to learn the truth, and since they did not get it, He had to send His people to Babylon to teach it to them there. This was the necessary consequence of Hezekiah's act.

That the cupidity of the ambassadors should be aroused at the sight of the treasures, was a most natural thing. When the king of Babylon afterwards took it into his head to besiege Jerusalem, he knew what he was after. The treasurers in which Hezekiah had taken so much pride,--"honest pride," rejoicing to think that he was

connected with so great a people,--were scattered, and the treasure-houses destroyed, but the truth of God remained the same.

That in which men can boast will all pass away, and God will make it plain to His own people as well as to the whole world, that His truth does not depend upon, and cannot be measured by, anything that men can make or gather together. It is "not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of God," (Zechariah 4:6) that His work is to be accomplished, and therefore no display of wealth or power, but only the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, can draw men to Him and His truth.

Hezekiah was a good man, one who sincerely loved the Lord. God was with him, and prospered him. God loved him, and He loved him none the less when he fell into the error concerning the visit of the ambassadors. But God left him to himself for a while, "that he might know all that was in his heart." (2 Chronicles 32:31)

And it was written for our learning, that we might know what is in our hearts; for the hearts of all men are alike, and what is in one, is in all. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9)

Pride of every kind is in the hearts of all men; when they turn to the Lord, then it is apt to exhibit itself in other forms. God has left this case on record for us, that we, knowing that it is in our hearts, may allow Him to cleanse us from it. May He deliver us all from Babylon and the Babylonish spirit, and fill us with His own Spirit, "the Spirit of meekness." (Galatians 6:1)--Present Truth, August 10, 1899--Isaiah 39.

The Last Loud Gospel Cry

"Comfort, comfort my people, says your God; Speak to the heart of Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she has received at the Lord's hand double for all her sins. A voice cries: In the wilderness prepare the way of Jehovah! 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 a smooth plain: And the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see together the salvation of our God: for the mouth of Jehovah has spoken it. A voice says, Cry! and I said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all its glory like the flower of the field: The grass withers, the flower fades, because the breath of Jehovah blows upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withers, the flower fades: but the Word of our God shall stand for ever. Get up upon a high mountain, O you that tell glad tidings to Sion. Exalt your voice with strength, O you that bring glad tidings to Jerusalem. Lift it up, be not afraid; say to the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Behold, the Lord Jehovah shall come as a Mighty One, and His arm shall prevail for Him. Behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him. Like a shepherd shall He feed His flock: in His arm shall He gather up the lambs, and He shall bear them in His bosom; the nursing ewes shall He gently lead." (Isaiah 40:1-11)

In these first eleven verses of the 40th chapter of Isaiah we have not followed any one translation, but have combined several, in order to present the best and most vivid rendering; for the passage is a very vivid one. The student can compare the variations with his own Bible. Nothing is given that is not strictly literal.

Although we have printed eleven verses at this time, we shall not try to cover them in this lesson. All we propose to do in this lesson is to give an outline, so that we may be perfectly sure of the nature of the message, and the time to which it applies, and may know to whom it is addressed, and who is to give it. We therefore request all who may be using these lessons in Sabbath schools to confine themselves at this time to these things; for the details of the verses will be considered in subsequent lessons.

Preparing the Way of the Lord

Not a single reader of the Bible will have any difficulty in connecting this message with the work of John the Baptist, for the connection is plainly made in the Bible. John came "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 3:3-6)

Our lesson therefore has direct reference to the work of John the Baptist. What was the work committed to him? To prepare the way of the Lord. "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)

Thus spoke the angel Gabriel. John's father, filled with the Holy Ghost, spoke these words to him: "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)

If anything were needed to convince any reader that we have the Gospel in Isaiah, we have it here. It is that Gospel which:

- Preaches the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, and makes known salvation through this remission;
- Brings men from the darkness of death to the light of life,
- Guides their feet in the way of peace and righteousness, and
- Prepares them for the coming of the Lord.

And that is just the Gospel for this time. Then it would seem as though the work of John the Baptist did not end with his death. Most certainly it did not; and the scripture before us teaches us that it did not. Indeed, it was only begun when he died.

Most people have obtained the idea that John's work was simply to prepare the way for, and announce, the coming of Jesus as a Preacher and Teacher in Galilee and Judea; but it was much more than this. The same portion of scriptures which tells us of his work, to prepare the way of the Lord, 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)

Now compare this with Revelation 22, where Christ says, "Behold I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be," (Revelation 22:12) and we cannot fail to see that the work of John the Baptist reaches to the second coming of Christ in glory; "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)

Swelling to a Loud Cry

Notice that this message is to be given with a loud voice. The voice that cries is to be lifted up with strength, and the crier is to get up upon a high mountain, in order that the sound may reach to the furthest possible extent. Now read: "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." (Revelation 14:6-7)

This message, as might be expected from its nature, is followed by the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven to reap the harvest of the earth, which is the end of the world. "And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in your sickle, and reap: for the time is come for You to reap;

for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And He that sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped." (Revelation 14:14-16) "The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels." (Matthew 13:39)

Every message of importance must be earnestly proclaimed. One cries with a loud voice in order to make many people hear; and this message preparing the way for the coming of the Lord is to be proclaimed so extensively that all the world shall hear. The Gospel of the kingdom is "to all people," (Luke 2:7) and is to be "preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." (Matthew 24:14)

But the nearer one comes to the end, the louder must the message be proclaimed. If you saw a man approaching a precipice, you would cry out, to warn him of his danger. If he did not pay any attention, you would cry louder; and the nearer he approached, unconscious of his danger, the louder you would cry.

Even so the nearer we come to the end of the world, which will be the destruction of those who are not looking for it, the louder and more clear must the Gospel message announcing it ring forth. So the scripture which we are studying has a more direct application to the people of this time than to any other people that ever lived. It is emphatically present truth.

Many Prophets--One Message Who shall give this message? "Let him that hears say, Come!" (Revelation 22:17)

Remember that John the Baptist was but a voice. "The Word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness." (Luke 3:2)

John was called "the prophet of the Highest." (Luke 1:7)

A prophet is one who speaks for another. Compare: "And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses, and he said, Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he comes forth to meet you: and when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. And you shall speak unto him, and put 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 he shall be, even he shall

be to you instead of a mouth, and you shall be to him instead of God." (Exodus 4:14-16)
"And the Lord said unto Moses, See, I have made you a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet." (Exodus 7:1)

A prophet of God is therefore the mouthpiece of God, proclaiming the Word of God. Everyone to whom the Word of the Lord comes is to sound it forth, that people may be saved from their sins, and be ready for the second coming of Christ.

From this it follows that the last message of the Gospel is preeminently a prophetic message. It is given by the power of the Spirit of God, which is the Spirit of prophecy. God's people are a kingdom of priests," (Exodus 19:6) and the holy wish for them is that "all the Lord's people might be prophets, and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them." (Numbers 11:29)

Those who proclaim the Gospel and the coming of the Lord, must do so with authority "as the oracles of God." (1 Peter 4:11)

But there must be the most perfect unity, and there will be when the true message is given; for it is nothing but the unchangeable Word of God that is to be given. The voice is God's; the people furnish only the mouth; so that although there be tens of thousands of mouths, only one voice is heard.

In the days of the coming of the Lord the admonition of the Apostle Paul will be perfectly heeded: "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) "Your watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion." (Isaiah 52:8)

Summary

Let us now sum up what we have learned from this first part of the 40th chapter of Isaiah:

1. It is the message of John the Baptist.

2. It is the Gospel of the kingdom, the Gospel of salvation.
3. It prepares the way for the coming of the Lord, even for His coming in glory, that is, to the end of the world.
4. This part of the scripture has special reference to the last days, because then the imminence of the coming of the Lord makes a loud cry especially imperative.
5. It consists simply of the preaching of the Word of God.
6. It is to be proclaimed by everyone who hears it, if he will.
7. There are many mouths concerned in the proclamation, but only one voice.
8. The Spirit of prophecy is in it, and it goes with power.

Finally, let it be noted that the whole of the remaining portion of the book of Isaiah is but the continuation of this message. Therefore as we proceed in our study let us not forget the setting of any portion of the text.

There is no part of Scripture more important at this time than this book, and none that can more thoroughly furnish the student to good works, and fit him for the presence of "the King in His beauty." (Isaiah 33:17)--Present Truth, August 17, 1899--Isaiah 40:1-11.

The Comfort of the Gospel

Comfort

"Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she has received at the Lord's hand double for all her sins." (Isaiah 40:1-2)

"My little children, these things I write unto you, that you may not sin. And if any man sin, we have a Comforter with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous: And He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." (1 John 2:1-2,RV,margin)

"I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it sees Him not, neither knows Him: but you know Him; for He dwells with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." (John 14:16-18)

"The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." (John 14:26) "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) "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; Who comforts us in all our affliction, that we may be able to comfort them that are in any affliction, through the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound unto us, even so our comfort also abounds through Christ." (2 Corinthians 1:3-5)

Warfare Ended

"These things I have 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) "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in heavenly places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." (Ephesians 6:11-13) "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) "And having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in himself." (Colossians 2:15,margin) "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) "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you." (John 14:27) "Whatsoever is begotten of God overcomes the world: and this is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith." (1 John 5:4,RV)

Double for Sin

"God ... has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son ... who ... when He had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." (Hebrews 1:3) "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." (Romans 5:20) "And of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace." (John 1:16) "Our God ... will multiply to pardon." (Isaiah 55:7,margin)

Speaking to the Heart

Recall the marginal rendering of the second verse, as given in the study last week, which is literal: "Speak to the heart of Jerusalem." (Isaiah 40:2)

When God speaks words of comfort to His people He speaks to the heart. A great many people have an abundance of words at their command, which they can pour into the ears of the afflicted, but which do not really comfort, although they may all be true, and very appropriate to the occasion. Only those who have shared the same experience as the sufferer can speak to the heart; and they may do this without many words.

The Lord's People

Doubtless someone will say, "But I am not one of the Lord's people, and therefore His words of comfort are not addressed to me."

Do not allow the devil to cheat you out of your comfort in that way. It may be that you have not acknowledged the Lord, but He has never cast you off; He claims you as His own. The prodigal son is a son nevertheless, no matter how far away he has wandered. (Luke 15:11-32)

The whole of the book of Isaiah shows that it is not merely the good people whom God claims as His own. Read the 1st chapter, and that alone is sufficient to show that the comfort here offered is for those who are "laden with iniquity." (Isaiah 1:4)

Comfort for All

"Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted." (Matthew 5:4)

There is no exception. Christ does not specify a certain class, and say that they that mourn in a certain way, or for certain things, shall be comforted. His comfort is for all that mourn. Christ was anointed with the Holy Ghost, and sent "to comfort all that mourn." (Isaiah 51:2)

Doubtless the words from the talk on the mount are generally applied to those who mourn departed friends. Well, they apply there, but they go deeper. Death and pain are but the consequence of sin. It is sin that has caused all the sorrow and mourning in the earth. Therefore the Lord sends comfort to all who mourn because of sin, that is, to all whom sin has in any way caused to mourn. His comfort is as boundless as His life and His love.

Who is the Comforter?

God is "the God of all comfort," (2 Corinthians 4:3) and, "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." (John 1:18)

So Christ is the Comforter which we have with the Father. Note the close connection of the statement that He is the Comforter with the one that: "He is the propitiation for our sins, ... and for those of the whole world." (1 John 2:2)

It is the comfort of pardon, and freedom from the bondage of sin, that He gives. He comforts us by giving us himself.

The Holy Spirit is Christ's Representative. He is Christ present in the flesh of all men, and not simply in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. He comes in the name of Christ; not merely taking His name, but revealing the living Christ. Therefore He is another Comforter. His comfort is the comfort of Christ. The comfort of the Holy Ghost has the effect to multiply believers: "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judæa and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." (Acts 9:31)

This is because the Holy Ghost teaches all things that pertain to Christ.

The Comfort of Reproof

Comfort does not always consist merely of smooth words. The surgeon has sometimes to use a knife, and for a time add to the pain, before he can give a sufferer complete relief. So when the Holy Ghost comes to us, He reproofs us of sin the first thing. He comes with conviction. In this way He often causes pain where there was before only numbness and insensibility. Shall we complain of this?

Shall we say that we do not wish any such comfort? By no means. Is it not a good thing to rouse the man who is fast becoming insensible through cold? When a man is freezing to death he falls into a condition of insensibility to the cold. He feels as though he were falling into a delicious sleep. But it is the sleep of death.

When the rescuer finds him, and begins to restore him to life, he experiences great pain. It may be that he will wildly say that it would have been far better to leave him in his former painless condition; but when he comes to himself, and understand what has been done, he will forever thank the one who brought him to life at the cost of much suffering. Just as much comfort as there is in life, so much comfort was the rescuer giving the frozen man when he was causing him the pain of experiencing his condition.

Let us never forget, therefore, that the Holy Spirit is always the Comforter. In convicting of sin, He is imparting comfort. If the way of life leads by the cross, then there is just as much comfort in the cross as there is in the life that is gained by it. We must never think that God is angry with us because He makes us know how greatly we have sinned. He is not doing it to taunt us, but to comfort us.

Conviction Not Condemnation

Remember that conviction does not mean condemnation. This is true even in an earthly court. A man may stand convicted of a crime, and still not be under sentence. But this is but a feeble illustration; for we are all condemned already. We are "born under the law." (Galatians 4:4,RV)

Therefore the conviction of the sin--the bringing home to our consciences the fact that we are sinners--does not make matters any worse than they were. That conviction is but the first and the necessary step towards our freedom from the sin; for we must know and acknowledge the sin before we will accept the remedy for it.

Convicted by the Revelation of Righteousness

It is by the revelation of the righteousness of God, that the Holy Spirit convicts of sin. "By the law is the knowledge of sin." (Romans 3:20)

But the law is not sin: "Is the law sin? God forbid." (Romans 7:7)

On the contrary, it is "holy, and just, and good." (Romans 7:12)

No man could ever become convicted of sin by looking at sin. It is by looking at the righteousness of God that we may become conscious of the fact that we are sinners. He who knows nothing of any better state than the one he is in, never desires anything better. Dissatisfaction with one's condition comes only with the knowledge of something better. God produces a feeling of dissatisfaction with our sinful condition, by revealing to us His own perfect righteousness.

No Condemnation From God

This is a most wonderful and blessed thing. That which causes the conviction is that which saves. Therefore we need not be condemned at all. Neither need we go a long time mourning under conviction of sins. If we will but grasp God's way of working, we shall in the very moment of conviction find the comfort of pardon.

The righteousness that is revealed for the purpose of taking away the sin, is that which makes it known to us; therefore if we will but believe God's word, our suffering for sin may be but as the lightning's flash; the moment of the revelation of sin may be its departure.

To be sure the Spirit abides with us as the continual reprover of sin; but since He does this by the revelation of the righteousness of God, we may be in a state of continual justification, although continually conscious of the fact that we are sinners. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. ... It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns?" (Romans 8:1,33-34)

Every soul that is condemned is self-condemned; and even wherein our heart condemns us, we may have confidence, and may "assure our hearts before Him, [Because] God is greater than our hearts, and knows all things." (1 John 3:19-20,RV)

And by His knowledge He justifies. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities." (Isaiah 53:11) "Tribulation works patience; And patience, experience." (Romans 5:3-4)

Patience means suffering, endurance. No man has patience unless he has something to suffer, for without suffering there is no need of patience. The word is from the Latin word that means, to bear, to suffer. Therefore the possession of patience necessarily imposes suffering. It is not suffering that makes people impatient; it is the lack of faith that does that; suffering works patience, when our faith in Christ makes us suffer with Him.

The Object of Comfort

Patience works experience. If we wish experience, we must not shun suffering, nor refuse to bear burdens. No matter how great the tribulation, God has comfort enough to enable us to endure it. He comforts us in all our affliction and tribulation. Do not forget this; His comfort is inexhaustible. "My grace is sufficient for you." (2 Corinthians 12:9)

And why does He comfort us? In order that we may be able to comfort those who are in any sort of tribulation with the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. We are to accept God's comfort, and pass it along. God thus makes us sharers in His own work. The Holy Spirit takes us into co-partnership, as it were. He makes us comforters.

Rejecting Comfort

Nobody can give to another that which he himself does not possess. We cannot comfort another unless we have been comforted. And if we never have any tribulation, then we have no need of comfort. There are burdens and tribulations enough in this world for everybody, and we do not need to seek them; but the fault with us is that we often refuse to bear those that naturally and legitimately fall to us; and thus we refuse the comfort that God would bestow upon us.

But when we reject the comfort of the Holy Ghost, we reject the possibility of comforting others. Thus we see that by refusing to bear burdens, and by refusing to face tribulation, we are simply refusing to be fitted for the work of helping those who are in trouble.

What would be thought of a man who should see people in great distress, perishing before his eyes, and should have the means wherewith to help them, but should turn away, saying, "It is none of my business; I don't care; I shall not lift a finger to help them."

We can scarcely conceive of so heartless a man; and yet that is what we virtually say whenever we refuse to bear some burden that falls to our lot. We are saying, "I do not wish to be a helper of the poor and needy; I do not care to comfort those that mourn."

Invincible Armor

"Speak comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished." (Isaiah 40:2)

God comforts us by telling us that our warfare is accomplished. We are enjoined to: "Fight the good fight of faith;" (1 Timothy 6:12)

But we do so by "laying hold on eternal life." (1 Timothy 6:12)

We are to fight only in the armor of God, which is Christ himself; and He has overcome the world. (John 16:33) Note the various pieces of armor. "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." (Ephesians 6:14-17)

1. We are to have our loins girt about with truth; and Christ is the truth: "Jesus said unto him, I am the ... truth." (John 14:6)
2. Next comes the breastplate of righteousness; and Christ is made unto us righteousness: "But of Him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us ... righteousness." (1 Corinthians 1:30)
3. Our feet are to be shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace; and Christ is our peace: "For He is our peace." (Ephesians 2:14)
4. Most important of all is the shield of faith. Now, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God;" (Romans 10:17) and Christ is the Word. (John 1:1)
5. It is by the faith of Christ that we are saved. (Galatians 2:16) Then we must have the helmet of salvation; and God in Christ is become our salvation. "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." (Isaiah 12:2)

Jesus Christ is the Saviour. (Philippians 3:20)

6. The sword of the Spirit: "And the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." (Ephesians 6:17)

Christ is the Word.

So we see that to put on the whole armor of God is but to put on Christ. That armor has been tested in the fiercest fight, and has been proved invincible. We have to fight with principalities and powers and wicked spirits; (Ephesians 6:12) but Christ has "spoiled principalities and powers," (Colossians 2:15) and has led them openly in His triumphant procession. He triumphed over them in himself. He is the Conqueror. He has won the victory. Therefore the foe with whom we wage our warfare is already defeated. What is it then but that our warfare is accomplished? We have but to share in the victory already gained.

We are promised tribulation in this world, but in the midst of it we may be of good cheer. "These things I have 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)

What we have already learned as to the use of tribulation should be enough to make us cheerful; but here we have additional reason: "I have overcome the world."

We are in danger of forgetting that all that Jesus did and suffered was for us. He did not need to come to this earth on His own account. It was our sins that He bore, our battle that He fought. Therefore the victory that has overcome the world is the faith that lays hold of Jesus Christ: "For whatsoever is born of God overcomes the world: and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith." (1 John 5:4)

He is our peace, because He is our victory. "Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty." (1 Chronicles 29:11)

Because Christ is our peace, in Him we have peace. But peace means a victory won. The fact that in Christ we have peace, shows that the warfare is accomplished. When we fight in the strength of Christ, the battle is won before it is begun.

Read the 20th chapter of 2 Chronicles. See how Israel gained the victory by faith. They began to sing a song of victory, and, lo, the battle was won. There is therefore no need of ever being defeated. Who would run from a defeated foe?

Moreover, Christ has disarmed the principalities and powers; for that is the meaning of the statement that He "spoiled them." In some versions it is so rendered. Surely there is no excuse for defeat, when we have invincible armor, and the foe has none at all. Is not this comfort enough for anybody in any tribulation whatsoever?

Our Sins Conquered

"Her warfare is accomplished." (Isaiah 40:2)

Remember that it is through our own sinful disposition that the devil works, and therefore it is our own sins, our sinful nature, that we have to contend with; and it is this that has been overcome. Do you doubt this? Then tell me whose sins it was that Jesus bore? With whose sinful nature did He contend? Was it with His own? Did He have sins of His own, that He must overcome? "You know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin." (1 John 3:5)

All that He suffered was altogether for our sakes. It was our sins that He bore, our sinful nature that He took upon himself. Therefore the victory that He gained was gained over our own personal sins, our own peculiar besetments. So whenever we are tempted by our own lusts, and enticed, we have only to remember that this particular sin has been overcome. What then? Why, we have only to give thanks to God, who "gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 15:57)

What glorious comfort the Lord gives us!

The Double

"But what about the double that we are to receive?"

How many people have been troubled over that, and in their trouble they have consulted doctors who did not heal their hurt even slightly. Some translators have even gone to the length of inserting the word "punishment" in the passage. It is not there, and nobody has any right to put it there, or to think of it as being there.

Poor souls stand appalled at the thought that they must suffer punishment equal to double the amount of their sins, and of course they see no hope of escape. Strange comfort that! Can anybody extract any comfort from the thought that they are to receive double punishment for their sins? Certainly not. But this is a message of comfort, and therefore there can be in it no such thought.

Even if it were punishment that is referred to, bear in mind that the text does not say that we are to receive double. A good deal is lost by a too hasty reading of the Word. "She has received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." (Isaiah 40:2)

Suppose it is punishment; we are alive, and the subjects of the mercy of God; therefore if we have already received double punishment for our sins, we have abundant cause for rejoicing. Surely that is enough, and we are entitled to go free. There is in this the key to the mystery. "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. ... He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." (Isaiah 53:6,4-5)

Christ has suffered in His own body all that any unrepentant sinner will ever have to suffer; therefore there is no need that any sinner should suffer for sin. If we but accept the sacrifice of Christ, that is, accept the person of Christ in our own lives, we are freed from all the consequences of sin. We are "dead to the law by the body of Christ." (Romans 7:4)

We are counted as having already received our punishment, and therefore are free.

Multiplied Pardon

"Comfort, comfort my people. ... She has received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." (Isaiah 40:1-2)

Thus it is that in Christ grace and peace are multiplied to us. "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord." (2 Peter 1:2)

And it is "the grace of God that brings salvation;" (Titus 2:11) therefore we have received of the Lord's hand double salvation. Grace abounds over all sin. God is not niggardly. He gives "good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over." (Luke 6:38)

He has enough, and to spare, and: "Of His fullness have all we received." (John 1:16)

Let us then accept it, and rejoice in the Lord. That this is not in the least a straining of the text, is provided by the text itself. "Her iniquity is pardoned." (Isaiah 40:2)

Of whom is this spoken? Of a people "laden with iniquity." (Isaiah 1:4)

Has God already pardoned my sins? Certain He has; He says so; can you not believe Him? You never heard of such a thing? Well, then hear it now, and rejoice as you never did before.

Let me recall to your mind something that you surely have heard at some time in your life. It has come into your own experience. You have, willfully or otherwise, committed a wrong against somebody. Afterwards you have gone and confessed it, begging pardon, and have been stopped before you could finish your confession, with the words, "Don't mention it; it was forgiven long ago."

Perhaps you have yourself used just such language, and have spoken from the fullness of your heart. If you have, then you know the free pardon of God, for it was only His love in your heart that could have made you do so. Can you not admit that God

is better than any man, even though that man be a saint? If a man can refuse to hold a grudge, cannot God do the same?

Is it so strange a thing that the God who is love should forgive our sins even before we ask forgiveness, and should be longing for us to come and accept the reconciliation? He took all our sins on himself, and in giving His life for us, He made a purging of sins. "[Christ] His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes you were healed." (1 Peter 2:24) "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift." (2 Corinthians 9:15) "Now thanks be unto God, which always causes us to triumph in Christ.

Christ has for sin atonement made;
What a wonderful Saviour!
We are redeemed!--the price is paid;
What a wonderful Saviour!

He gives me overcoming power;
What a wonderful Saviour!
And triumph in each trying hour;
What a wonderful Saviour!
--E. A. Hoffman, Hymn: What a Wonderful Savior, 1891.

--Present Truth, August 24, 1899--Isaiah 40:1-2.

Preparing the Way of the Lord

"A voice cries: In the wilderness prepare the way of Jehovah! Make straight in the desert a highway for our God! Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill be brought low: and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places a smooth plain: And the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see together the salvation of our God: for the mouth of Jehovah has spoken it." (Isaiah 40:3-5) "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord. Blessed are they that keep His testimonies, and that seek Him with the whole heart. They also do no iniquity: they walk in His ways." (Psalm 119:1-3) "As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity: but peace shall be upon Israel." (Psalm 125:5) "He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel." (Psalm 103:7) "The meek will He guide in judgment: the meek will He teach His way." (Psalm 25:9) "As for God, His way is perfect." (Psalm 18:30) "The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works." (Psalm 145:17) "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) "Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God?" (Psalm 77:13) "Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16) "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. ... 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 1:76-79,16-17) "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse [or "utter destruction"]." (Malachi 4:5-6) "Righteousness shall go before Him; and shall make His footsteps a way to walk in." (Psalm 85:13,RV) "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right,

rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes."
(Psalm 19:7-8)

Let us not forget, in studying this lesson, that while all Scripture is always true, and the Gospel is always applicable, this prophecy of Isaiah has special application in these last days. This message is one:

- to make ready a people prepared for the coming of the Lord in glory,
- to give reward to His servants, and
- to give every man according as his work shall be.

Do not make the mistake of thinking that because it was written twenty-five hundred years ago, it does not specially concern us. The Word of the Lord is living, and never loses any of its force. Its exhortations are more emphatic "as we see the day approaching." (Hebrews 10:25)

Remember also what we have learned concerning the message of John the Baptist. It reaches till the coming of the Lord in glory, and all who love the Lord and His coming are commissioned to proclaim it. John the Baptist therefore stood not as a single individual, having a work to do that ended with his death, but as the type of a great movement embracing tens of thousands of people, and reaching till the end of time.

A People Prepared

The command to the voice is, "Prepare the way of Jehovah!" (Isaiah 40:3)

It is to prepare the way for the Lord's coming. Well, what hinders His coming now? Why could He not have come at any time in the past? Simply because the people were not prepared for His coming. The condition of His professed followers hindered His advent. The way of the Lord is in the sanctuary, (Psalm 77:13) and His sanctuary is His people, (Psalm 114:2) therefore we see that the way of the Lord is prepared only by the preparation of His people,--by the cleansing of the sanctuary. "Make straight in the desert a highway for our God." (Isaiah 40:3)

The words "straight" and "right" are really the same. The Latin word *rectus*, from which we derive our word "right," as seen in the word "rectitude," the meaning of which everybody knows, means literally, "straight," as can be seen from the word "rectilinear." A "right" line is a straight line, just as a "rectangle" is a right or straight angle. To make the way of the Lord straight is therefore to make it right. But "[all] the ways of the Lord are right;" (Hosea 14:9) "His way is perfect." (Psalm 18:30)

Therefore there is nothing about the Lord that needs correcting. Everything with which He has to do is as good as it can be. But we have refused to allow the Lord to have His way, for: "We have turned everyone to his own way." (Isaiah 53:6)

His rightful way is in us, but we have kept Him back by our unrighteousness. (Romans 1:19-32) We have made our ways crooked. So the Lord sends His messengers to straighten us out--to make us right before Him, so that there may be nothing to hinder His complete possession of us.

Straight Lines

"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." (Isaiah 40:4)

God is light. The characteristic of light is that it proceeds in straight lines. So with God, who is "the Father of lights, [there] can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning." (James 1:17,RV)

Consequently all in whom He has His way must be sincere, that is, clear and transparent, so that the beams of the Sun of righteousness may not be hindered in their course. The work of this Gospel message is to "give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death." (Luke 1) "You were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord: walk as children of light." (Ephesians 5:8) "He made known His ways to Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel." (Psalm 103:7)

Ways and acts are the same. When we say of a person that we do not like his ways, we mean that we do not like his habits, his actions. So the way of the Lord is His manner of life. He made His ways or acts known to Moses and the children of Israel, in revealing to them His law. "You came down also upon Mount Sinai, and spoke with

them from heaven, and gave them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments: And made known unto them your holy Sabbath, and commanded them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses your servant." (Nehemiah 9:13-14)

The law of the Lord is His way, as we learn from: "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord. Blessed are they that keep His testimonies, and that seek Him with the whole heart. They also do no iniquity: they walk in His ways." (Psalm 119:1-3)

The way of the Lord is prepared, therefore, by putting His law into the hearts of the people.

The Glory of the Lord

"And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh will see it together." (Isaiah 40:5)

When the Lord comes in the clouds of heaven, it will be with glory. "The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth. The heavens declare His righteousness, and all the people see His glory." (Psalm 97:5-6)

Since God is light, and dwells in light, being clothed with light as a garment, it follows that wherever He goes the glory must be revealed. So we read that when the way of the Lord is prepared, the glory of the Lord shall be revealed. This will be because that when His way is prepared, He himself will go in it.

The way of the Lord is in the sanctuary, (Psalm 77:13) and His sanctuary is His people. (Psalm 114:2) The idea prevails that the coming of the Lord is an arbitrary affair; that He will come when He is ready, regardless of the condition of people on this earth. That is a great mistake. The coming of the Lord is but the consummation, the crowning act, of a great work. It is the natural and inevitable result of what has preceded.

Christ came to reveal God to men, so that they might know His will concerning them. It is God's will that men shall be like Him, so as to be fit companions for Him,

and to this end Christ was once manifested, to reveal God to men, in man; and the possibility of this was secured by His death. His coming to this earth was the emptying of himself, really His death, so that it is only by the death of Christ that God can be manifest in the flesh.

The whole work of the Gospel is to secure this revelation of God in man. It is the work that God began at the creation, when He made man in His own image; and to restore this image is the work of the Gospel. "The new man is after God created in righteousness and true holiness." (Ephesians 4:24)

But the heavens must retain Christ, "until the times of restoration of all things." (Acts 3:21,RV)

His coming means the restoration of the earth; but this cannot be until the new man is made ready for it--until it has a ruler,--and so before the coming of the Lord in the clouds of heaven, He must be fully revealed in His people. The shining forth of the Lord from heaven is but the fullness of His revelation. "He shall come to be glorified in His saints." (2 Thessalonians 1:10)

He cannot come, therefore, until in the church the ways of God are seen as perfectly as they were in Jesus of Nazareth.

The Whole World Lightened

"And all flesh shall see it together." (Isaiah 40:5)

When the way is prepared, the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all flesh will see it. This is because as soon as the way is prepared, the Lord goes in it, and wherever He goes the glory must be revealed. But His way is in His people, therefore His glory is to be seen in them. "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 4:6)

Why has God shined in our hearts? To give the light of the knowledge of His glory. To give the light of the knowledge of His glory to whom? To others, of course; for no candle shines for the purpose of giving light to itself. God shines in our hearts in

order that others may take knowledge of His glory. "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)

Good works are the light, according to these words of Christ. So again we see that God prepares the way by putting His law in our hearts by His Spirit; "For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light." (Proverbs 6:23)

The preaching of the law of God as revealed in the life and character of Christ, must precede the coming of the Lord. When the last message shall have been completed, these words will be uttered: "Here is the patience of the saints, here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." (Revelation 19:12)

When the glory is revealed, it will be seen. That will be the testimony to the saving power of our God. In the inanimate things that God has made, His power and Divinity 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; so that they are without excuse." (Romans 1:20)

Although man has proved unfaithful, and has even imposed his evil traits upon the creation that was given into his care, God has not left himself without witness. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork." (Psalm 19:1)

But that is not enough. Man, the highest creature of God, ought to give the most perfect testimony to His power and goodness, and this will be the case before the Lord comes. Not only must all the works of God praise Him, but His saints must bless Him.

When the voice in the wilderness has completed its message, then will the work for which Christ ascended to heaven, namely, "that He might fill all things," (Ephesians 4:10) be accomplished, and He will come. Then all creatures, animate and inanimate, will unite in saying, "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sits on the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever." (Revelation 5:13)--Present Truth, August 31, 1899--Isaiah 40:3-5.

All Flesh is Grass

"The voice of one saying, Cry. And one said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades; because the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people is grass. The grass withers, the flower fades; but the Word of our God shall stand forever. O you that tell good tidings to Zion, get up into the high mountain; O you that tell good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!" (Isaiah 40:6-9,RV) "As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children." (Psalm 103:15-17) "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away." (Psalm 90:10) "Let the brother of low degree glory in his high estate: And the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. For the sun arises with the scorching wind, and withers the grass: and the flower thereof falls, and the grace of the fashion of it perishes: so also shall the rich man fade away in his goings." (James 1:9-11,RV) "Why are you anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: Yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?" (Matthew 6:28-30) "Cursed be the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good comes; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusts in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is." (Jeremiah 17:5-7) "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwells no good thing." (Romans 7:18) "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) "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) "Love one another from the heart fervently: Having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the Word of God, which lives and abides. For, all flesh is grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of

grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls: But the Word of the Lord abides for ever. And this is the Word of good tidings which was preached unto you." (1 Peter 1:22-25,RV)

Remember that this is part of the message of comfort. God tells us that our iniquity is pardoned, and we accept the comfort. He tells us that our warfare is accomplished, since He has overcome the world, and we rejoice for the consolation.

Connection Between Grass and Flesh

"The voice of one saying, Cry. And one said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades; because the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people is grass. The grass withers, the flower fades; but the Word of our God shall stand forever." (Isaiah 40:6-8,RV)

We ought to be equally glad when He goes on with His comforting words, and says that "All flesh is grass," that is, that we have no might nor power nor wisdom in ourselves. That is really what is involved in the announcement that our warfare is accomplished, that Jesus has fought the battle for us; for the only reason why He has fought and overcome for us is that we had no power to fight and overcome for ourselves.

The first impulse one has on reading the Lord's words, "All flesh is grass," is to say, "That does not mean actually that all flesh is grass; I know that I am not grass, for I do not resemble grass at all; there is scarcely any likeness between me and grass."

The words are of course used in a figurative sense. It is thus that men make of none effect the words of the Lord, and keep themselves from learning anything. When God tells us something which is entirely new to us, and which we do not understand, the wisest thing for us to do is believe it, and then we shall learn the new thing. He who believes nothing but what he already knows and understands, will have a very limited range of knowledge, and his store of knowledge will continually diminish.

It is astonishing what a wide field opens up to us when we accept some statements of the Lord's as actual fact, and proceed on that basis. Things that before were obscure,

suddenly become plain. In the statement that "All flesh is grass," we have in a nutshell the whole science of botany and of physiology, as well as the first part of the key to salvation. "And why take you 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. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?" (Matthew 6:28-30)

From these verses we learn that the term "grass" is very comprehensive, including many plants not commonly classed as grass. The lilies of the field are by the Lord called grass. There are, however, very many different kinds of grass, that are so called by botanists. Every species of grain is but a kind of grass. A little thought and observation and comparison will show this fact to any who have not known it before.

Man is What He Eats

When this is recognized, it is not difficult to see that all flesh is grass. In fact, the wonder is that anybody should need to be told so simple a thing. Thus, we well know that any animal is composed of what it eats. "Der Mensch ist was er isst," says the old German proverb.

That is, man is what he eats. Now not only all that we eat, but everything that is on the face of the earth, comes from the ground. Most men eat both vegetables and flesh of animals; but the animals which they eat feed only on vegetables, or grass, so that in every case a man's body is composed only of that which he derives from the vegetable creation. Only in the vegetable world can man find the elements prepared for the sustenance of his body; the ox makes no change whatever in the food elements which he finds in the grass; so that when a man eats the ox he is simply taking his food second hand, after it has done service in another body. He gets nothing that he would not get in a purer form if he took it direct from the plant. Therefore, it is a literal fact that: "All flesh is grass." (Isaiah 40:6)

The stream can rise no higher than its source. Nothing can be any better than the material out of which it is made. A strong garment cannot be made out of rotten cloth. The whole cannot be any greater than the sum of all its parts. Therefore since a man's body is composed only of grass, or the fruit of grass, it is evident that there is in man no

more power or wisdom than there is in the grass. How can there be, when man himself is but grass? He is not the grass of the field, but he is grass, nevertheless. "Well, this is anything but a comforting doctrine, I must say," I hear somebody exclaim. "If I have no more power or wisdom than the grass, there is no use in my trying to do or be anything; there is no hope for anybody."

God's Power Revealed

Not so fast, please. You have not heard the whole of the story, or at least have forgotten a part of it. "The Word of our God shall stand for ever." (Isaiah 40:8) "[It] lives and abides." (1 Peter 1:23)

It is almighty and everlasting. The comfort of the fact that all flesh is grass is based on the accompanying fact that God's Word, which is the life of the grass, lives and abides, all-powerful. Do not separate these two facts. Let them always be as closely united as the Lord has made them.

Nevertheless someone will say, "I know that I have power that grass has not. I can move at will, and I can do many things that are impossible for grass."

What is the conclusion? Oh, simply this, that you will prove that the Bible is not true. There is not enough prospect of gain in that to make it worthwhile trying. But let us examine your statement. "I can move," you say.

Well, so can the plant. Some plants can even move from place to place, and every plant has certain movements that may be seen by anybody who will take the trouble to look.

Did you ever watch a plant growing in the window? You know how it will turn towards the light. Turn it half-way round, so that it leans away from the window, and you will very soon see that it has turned round, and is reaching out to the light again.

Plant a tree half-way between a well and a dry sand-bank, and watch how the roots grow. Instead of reaching out in every direction, the most of them will turn towards the water. The roots of a plant always set toward the place where there is nourishment for it

in solution, and they always go right the first time, and they go the most direct way. They lose no time in "prospecting," and they do not miss the way.

What is the plant doing? Just what the man does--trying to get into the best possible circumstance for living; and it accomplishes its purpose more successfully than the man does.

Watch the plant, and you will also see that it is capable of bearing a great burden. In the first place, the seed must often exert wonderful power, in order to escape from the shell that encases it. Then think how great a weight of earth the tender shoot must push out of its way before it can reach the surface of the ground. Think how great a weight the growing tree lifts up every year. Then above all, remember that the strength of which you are wont to boast is derived from these same despised plants.

You have often been hungry and faint. You have often felt so weak that you could not think of working any longer, and have had your strength and courage come back to you after eating a bit of bread. Did you not connect your increased strength with the bread that you ate? Of course you did, for you said, "I cannot do anything more until I have had something to eat."

Yet for all that, you did not think that all the new strength that you received from eating was formerly in that which you ate. If it had not been, how could you have derived any strength from eating it? "Speak well of the bridge that carries you over."

Instead of being so much superior in power to the grass of the field, you are absolutely dependent upon it. Shall we then worship the grass of the field, as being superior to us? By no means, for you were right in a sense, that the grass has no power. It is used as a symbol of weakness and frailty. Today it is and tomorrow it is not. Whence then comes that wonderful power that is manifested in its growth, and which we derive by eating and assimilating it? From the word of God, which lives and abides. "The word of God is living and active." (Hebrews 4:12,RV)

It is force and energy. It is wisdom. "Christ upholds all things by the word of His power." (Hebrews 1:3)

His word in the beginning said, "Let the earth bring forth grass," (Genesis 1:11) and in obedience to that word the earth brings forth grass to this day. All the life and energy that is manifested in the growing plant is the life of the word that is in it. The everlasting power and Divinity of God are clearly seen in every living plant. "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 seeds of the grass, which we eat made into bread, are but the means of conveying to us the life and power of God.

Give Glory to Him

Only God is great: "For You are great, and do wondrous things: You are God alone." (Psalm 86:10)

Only He has life, and wisdom and strength: "Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have strength." (Proverbs 8:14) "Worship God." (Revelation 19:10)

This is the lesson that we are to learn from the statement that all flesh is grass. It is the simple truth, and there is no comfort in anything but the truth. A lie may deceive us, and make us think that all is right, but it can give no real comfort. The man who tells us that there is no danger, when there is danger, is not a comforter. The comforter is the man who points out the danger and the way of escape.

Now as the result of not recognizing the fact that we are grass, we are all engaged in making gods of ourselves. We imagine that we have power in ourselves. The fact is that: "Power belongs to God." (Psalm 62:11)

Just to the extent that we think that we have any power, do we regard ourselves as God. We propose at the very best to divide honors with God, saying, "I have so little strength," and think that we have made a wonderfully humble confession. In reality we have said, "I am not so great a god as the One in heaven."

That is not fearing God, and giving glory to Him. God tells us the plain truth, that we have no strength at all, in order that we may learn to say, "Behold, God ... is my strength." (Isaiah 12:2)

Variety of Expression

"That which you sow is not quickened, except it die: And that which you sow, you sow not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat or some other grain: But God gives it a body as it has pleased Him, and to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh; but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another in glory." (1 Corinthians 15:36-41)

Even so there is a difference in plants. Indeed, that is what the text says, for God gives to every seed such a body as pleases Him. All plants have not the same purpose. There is infinite variety in the vegetable world, yet the same life is in all plants. The same life in all brings each to the state of perfection which God designs for it. Even so the same life in the human plant will, if given free course, bring the man to the state of perfection designed for him.

Nothing is too hard for the Lord, and nothing is too small to escape His attention. The grass of the field is passive in the hands of God, for Him to do with it as He will, and wonderful things are accomplished. If we will but be as passive in God's hands, He will do infinitely greater things for us, inasmuch as He created us for a higher place.

But we cannot reach that higher place by striving to lift up ourselves, any more than the ivy could by its own wisdom and power climb to the top of the tower, or split the walls asunder. "It is God that works in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure." (Philippians 2:13)

Salvation by Creation

"This is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you." (1 Peter 1:25)

The Gospel presents God as Creator, as supreme. It presents an Almighty Saviour, who saves by His power to create, inasmuch as He saves by creating us anew. Therefore we must expect that the nearer we approach the end, the plainer will this Gospel be presented. More and more loudly must the cry be uttered, which shows men that they are in themselves absolutely nothing, but that God is everything. In Him is all fullness, "For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell," (Colossians 1:1) "And of His fullness have all we received." (John 1:16)

We are nothing, but He gives us everything in giving us himself. The Gospel does not tell us to look at ourselves, but at God. It tells us what we are, and then says, "Behold your God!" (Isaiah 40:9)

We are to accept God's statement of what we are, and that is not difficult when we have it so patent to our senses. But knowing that we are nothing, we do not need to waste any time looking at ourselves, for it is certainly a waste of time to look at nothing. Our charge is, "Behold your God!" (Isaiah 40:9)

Where shall we look, in order to see Him? Look at everything that He has made,-- at the heavens, the seas, the earth, and all that is in them. When we see ourselves, as we must every day, let it be only to recognize the fact that "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." (Acts 17:28)

Let no flesh glory in man, but instead, "Fear God, and give glory to Him ... and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." (Revelation 14:7)--Present Truth, September 7, 1899--Isaiah 40:6-9.

The Lord God Will Come

"O you that tell good tidings to Zion, get up into the high mountain; O you that tell good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, 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. 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 40:9-11,RV) "You Bethlehem, land of Judah, are in no wise least among the princes of Judah: for out of you shall come forth a Governor, which shall be shepherd of my people Israel." (Matthew 2:6,RV) "I am the good Shepherd: the good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. ... My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." (John 10:11,27-28) "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." (Revelation 22:12) "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works." (Matthew 16:27) "It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; And to you who are troubled rest with us, when 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." (2 Thessalonians 1:6-8) "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people. Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." (Psalm 50:3-5) "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 bright beams coming out of His side [margin]: 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. ... The sun and moon stood still in their habitation; at the light of your arrows they went, and at the shining of your glittering spear. You marched through the land in indignation, You threshed the heathen in anger. You went forth for the salvation of your people, even for salvation with your

anointed." (Habakkuk 3:3-6,11-13) "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18) "Behold, I show you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." (1 Corinthians 15:51-53) "Our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who 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 3:20-21,RV/KJV) "Strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; He will come and save you." (Isaiah 35:3-4) "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matthew 15:24) "For thus says the Lord God: Behold I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock in the day he is among the sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country." (Ezekiel 34:11-13)

Second Advent in the Gospel Plan

The preaching of the second coming of Christ, in glory, is as much a part of the preaching of the Gospel--the good news--as is the preaching of the cross of Calvary. In fact, the preaching of the cross is not complete without the preaching of the second advent.

Nothing so awful as the coming of the Lord to judgment has ever taken place on this earth. The earth will quake, and be removed like a cottage, the heavens will depart as a scroll when it is rolled together, every mountain and island will be moved out of their places, and: "The kings of the earth, and the great men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman and every freeman, hid themselves in the dens and

in the caves, And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" (Revelation 6:15-17)

Yet the announcement of the coming of that great day is part of the message of comfort which God sends to His people. How marvelous is the comfort of God, when even the most terrible judgments are comfort! The comfort is that Christ is coming to save His people. The prophet Habakkuk, to whom a view of the terrors of the last day were given, said, "You went forth for the salvation of your people." (Habakkuk 3:13) "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)

When the hearts of the people grow fearful, and the knees tremble, and the hands hang down, the Lord tell us to strengthen them with the words, "Your God will come with vengeance." (Isaiah 35:4)

The coming of Christ is the "blessed hope" of the Gospel. (Titus 2:13) When He shall come, His saints will say, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." (Isaiah 25:9)

The announcement of the coming of the Lord is the same comfort as the announcement of the pardon of sins. Whoever preaches the remission of sins, does it only partially if he does not preach the coming of the Lord in glory. The texts quoted in this lesson shows this.

The Crowning Work of Salvation

"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 40:11)

Jesus Christ is the good Shepherd. He is "the Chief Shepherd." (1 Peter 5:4)

He came to earth for the purpose of seeking His lost sheep, and He seeks them out, and saves them by giving His life for theirs. On the cross He suffered all the agonies of

the lost: "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46)

He endured everything that men would have been obliged to endure if He had not come, and that the rejecters of Him will have to endure at the last. He took all on himself, in order to save men. The terrors of the last day, the day of Judgment, were present in full on Calvary. Even so the blessedness and joy of Calvary will be present at the coming of the Lord the second time, in glory.

It is only by the power of the cross that Jesus will come again. He will be seen coming in the clouds of heaven "with power and great glory," (Matthew 24:30) but that will be but the power and glory of the cross. The fire that devours before Him will come from the pierced side. "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 bright beams coming out of His side: and there was the hiding of His power." (Habakkuk 3:3-4,margin)

From the side whence flowed the healing stream of life, comes the power to render to the wicked according to their deeds. The power manifested at the coming of the Lord is the power of salvation; it is the power by which Jesus now saves His people from the hand of the enemy. "His mercy endures for ever." (Psalm 136:1)

In wrath He remembers mercy. (Habakkuk 3:2) The waters that will overflow the hiding place of the wicked, will be the waters of salvation that flow from the wounded side of Jesus. "He will swallow up death in victory," (Isaiah 25:8) and then those who have made a covenant with death, seeking to hide in its shadow, must necessarily be swallowed up with it. "Therefore thus says the Lord God, 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. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then you shall be trodden down by it." (Isaiah 28:16-18)

So although the last day will be the most terrible, it will contain nothing but joy for those who have accepted the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Do not the righteous joy in the cross of Christ?

Is it not the one thing in which to glory? "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." (Galatians 6:14)

Yet the crucifixion of Christ was a most terrible event, and all the terrors of the wrath of God raged round the cross where Christ died. But for His death on the cross, the Son of man would not have the power to sit in judgment and to execute judgment on the ungodly.

From Bethlehem comes the Governor that is to be the Shepherd of Israel. (Matthew 2:6) He rules His people as a shepherd rules his flock. He feeds them, and the food that He gives them is himself. (John 6:53-58) He gives himself for the sheep. "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep." (John 10:11)

When the Lord comes, it will be at a time when the wicked will have gathered to make an end of the righteous ones on the earth. A decree will have gone forth that whosoever will not worship the beast or his image, shall be killed. "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)

Just at the moment when Satan has stirred up all the forces of evil against the just, and to all human sight it looks as though the righteous were to be cut off from the earth, Christ will appear to save them. "Now also many nations are gathered against you, that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion. But they know not the thoughts of the Lord, neither understand they His counsel: for He shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor." (Micah 4:11-12)

It will be but the crowning act in the great drama of the cross. It will be the demonstration to the whole earth that Christ is the Saviour. Then those who have rejected Him, and have mocked at His offers of salvation, will be forced to acknowledge

that Jesus saves. But the present comfort to the people of God lies in the fact that all that great power to salvation is theirs now. It is all in the cross.

Mighty to Save

He comes with strong hand, as a Mighty One. "Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him." (Isaiah 40:10)

But it is that same arm with which He gathers the lambs of the flock. "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 who are with young." (Isaiah 40:11)

He is gentle, because He is strong. His strength to destroy the wolves and lions that would devour the flock, is His power to feed the flock, and to make the sheep lie down in green pastures. (Psalm 23:2) Strange that so many preachers of the Gospel have so little to say about the coming of the Lord, which contains so much comfort for the people of God!

There is in this lesson valuable instruction as to the return of Israel. Jesus is the Shepherd of Israel, and when He comes the second time, "with power and great glory," (Matthew 24:30)--He comes as a Shepherd. It is then that He will gather together all His people,--the flock that has been scattered and torn, "and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers." (Ezekiel 34:13)

When He was here the first time, He said that He had come to seek and to save that which was lost, (Luke 19:10) and He also declared that He was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; (Matthew 15:24) they were the ones whom He came to seek and to save. But everybody knows that there has not yet been any gathering of Israel. The lost sheep have not yet been gathered together into their own land. Moreover He himself tells us that it will be when He comes the second time that He will say, "Gather my saints together unto me." (Psalm 50:5)

It is then that He will gather out His sheep from all the lands whither they have been scattered. (Compare Ezekiel 34 and Matthew 24:30) Then there shall be one fold and one Shepherd. (Ezekiel 34:22-31; John 10:16) That fold will be the fold of Israel, for all the saved will constitute the Israel of God. "And so all Israel shall be saved: as it

is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." (Romans 11:26)

The Comfort of the Gospel

The Apostle Paul describes the coming of the Lord in glory, when the dead shall be raised, and the living caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, thus ever to be with Him, and says, "Comfort one another with these words." (1 Thessalonians 4:18)

This is comfort for those who mourn departed friends, who have been laid in the dark grave. They need not sorrow as those who have no hope, for "the righteous has hope in his death." (Proverbs 14:32)

But this is not all the comfort that there is in this announcement. It is the same comfort that the Lord in the 40th chapter of Isaiah tells His servants to give to His people. It is the comfort of the Gospel of salvation from sin.

Notice: When Christ comes with the sound of the trump of God, all the saints of God, both sleeping and waking, will be changed. In the twinkling of an eye the change from mortality to immortality, from corruptible to incorruptibility, will take place. All will then be given bodies incapable of disease and decay. What a wonderful change that will be! But mark: This change of our bodies is "According to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto himself." (Philippians 3:21)

We are rebellious by nature, and our minds are not subject to the law of God, "neither indeed can be." (Romans 8:7)

But He is able to change our minds, giving us a new mind, and a new nature, so that we shall be subject to Him, and shall delight in the law of the Lord; and His power to do this is according to the power by which He will at the last change our bodies from corruption to incorruption. And note that this change will take place "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." (1 Corinthians 15:52)

The Lord is able to do marvelous things in a very short time. Therefore we may know that if we are but willing, He can in an instant effect this wonderful change in our natures.

Is it not worthwhile to have a belief in the resurrection of the dead? Is there not great comfort in the knowledge of the coming of the Lord? All this shall take place as surely as "the mouth of the Lord has spoken it." (Isaiah 40:5)

Therefore, "be not afraid." (Isaiah 40:9)--Present Truth, September 14, 1899--
Isaiah 40:9-11.

The Mighty God

"Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand; And has meted out the heavens by His span; And has comprehended the dust of the earth in a tierce; (Tierce: an old English unit of measure (volume); a cask of that size--about 42 gallons) And has weighed in the scales the mountains and the hills in a balance? Who has directed the Spirit of Jehovah; And, as one of His council, has informed Him? Whom has He consulted, that he should instruct Him, And teach Him the path of judgment; That he should impart to Him science, And inform Him in the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are as a drop from the bucket; As the small dust of the balance shall they be accounted; Behold, the islands He takes up as an atom. And Lebanon is not sufficient for the fire; Nor his beasts sufficient for the burnt offering. All the nations are as nothing before Him; They are esteemed by Him as less than nought, and vanity. To whom therefore will you liken God? And what is the model of resemblance that you will prepare for Him? The workman casts an image: And the smith overlays it with plates of gold; And forges for it chains of silver. He that cannot afford a costly oblation, chooses a piece of wood that will not rot; He procures a skillful artist, To erect an image, which shall not be moved. Will you not know? will you not hear? Has it not been declared to you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is He, that sits on the circle of the earth; And the inhabitants are to Him as grasshoppers: That extends the heavens as a thin veil; And spreads them out, as a tent to dwell in: That reduces princes to nothing; That makes the judges of the earth a mere inanity. Yea they shall not leave a plant behind them, they shall not be sown, Their trunk shall not spread its root in the ground: If He but blow upon them, they instantly wither; And the whirlwind shall bear them away like stubble." (Isaiah 40:12-24,Lowth)

The All-Sufficiency of God

The psalmist sang, "Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth." (Psalm 124:8)

In contrast with the gods of the heathen, that cannot see nor hear nor smell nor talk nor walk, and must needs be borne, is our God, who is in the heavens, who "has done whatsoever He has pleased." (Psalm 115:3)

King Jehoshaphat said, when he sought help from the Lord in a time of great danger, "Are not You 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)

This was his comfort. God is in the heavens, above all, the Creator and upholder of all. It is this fact that gives us strong confidence in coming to Him for help in time of need. In this lesson we have the utter nothingness and helplessness of man, and the infinite greatness and power of God emphasized. This is the special message for the last days. Man is nothing; God is everything. "[He] has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand." (Isaiah 40:12)

Think of all the waters on the face of the earth, and under the earth, as well as the oceans of waters in the sky,--all held in the hollow of God's hand. In reading this verse we almost always think only of the oceans and seas on this earth. Well, it is a great thing that God holds them in His hand; but when we think of the expanse of waters in the heavens, we shall get a still more comprehensive idea of His power. A rain cloud capable of sending a shower of water to the depth of an inch over the surface of London, would weigh about one million tons. What an inconceivable mass and weight of water is therefore constantly floating about overhead, waiting God's command to fall upon the earth! "He binds up the waters in His thick clouds; and the cloud is not rent under them." (Job 26:8)

All these are gathered in the hollow of His hand. With this in mind, what comfort there is in reading the words of Christ, who comes as a shepherd, gathering the lambs with His arm, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. My Father, which has given them unto me, is greater than all; and no one shall snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and my Father are One." (John 10:27-30)

With what confidence God's people may rest in that mighty hand!

That hand which bears creation up,
Shall guard His children well.

--Philip Doddridge, Hymn: How Gentle God's Commands, 1755.

He has also "meted out the heavens with His span." (Isaiah 40:12)

Take this in connection with His holding the waters in the hollow of His hand. Were you ever on the ocean in a storm, when the great steamship, the mightiest creation of man's skill and power, is but the plaything of the waves? If you are ever in such a place, and feel any sensation of fear, then comfort yourself by gathering up all the water you can hold in the hollow of your hand, and seeing what an insignificant little drop it is. You can move your hand, and thus agitate the surface of the water, but the movement is but trifling. Well, that represents the size of the ocean, and the extent of the storm in the sight of God.

No, it does not represent the size of the ocean, either, for you are on only a small part of the waters which He measures in the hollow of His hand. That thought will give you comfort and peace. And then, even if He should allow the ship with all on board to go to the bottom, you would still be in the hollow of His hand. Nothing can snatch you out of that secure hiding place. "Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being His counsellor has taught Him? With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of judgment, and taught Him knowledge, and showed to Him the way of understanding?" (Isaiah 40:13-14)

What striking questions are asked in verses 13 and 14. Who is there who could act as counselor to the Lord? With whom could He consult in making the earth and heavens? When we consider the heavens of God, the moon and stars which His fingers have made, we can only say, "What is man, that You are mindful of him? and the son of man, that You visit him?" (Psalm 8:4)

They are not large enough to make any account of, in comparison with the great works of God's hands, much less to be consulted in the making of them. Surely, it would be very becoming in man to be still before the Lord, and listen when He speaks.

The Folly of Man

But proud man is not willing to do this. On the contrary, he wishes to be heard, and that on the very things of which God has spoken. How many there are who presume to teach God science. "The Bible," say they, "is not an authority in science; its sphere is religion."

But religion is the sum of all science. The Gospel includes all the sciences, and only in it can we learn the exact truth of science. Thus: To know God is the sum of all wisdom.

"Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, ... But only in that he understands and knows God." (Jeremiah 9:23-24)

If he does not know God, he has nothing in which to glory, for:

"The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain." (1 Corinthians 3:20)

Now eternal life, salvation, is but the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ, whom He has sent.

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

So we see that all science is in eternal life. The Bible is pre-eminently a book of science. To be sure it does not deal in all the unpronounceable names and endless classifications with which so called scientists delight to puzzle the uninitiated; but it gives the reason and the origin of all things. It takes man into a realm of fact concerning things of which the boasted man of science can only fancy. It gives positive knowledge where books of human science give only theory. Let it be set down as a fact that God's Word is true from the beginning. He has not mingled eternal truths with errors which puny man is to rectify.

In one of our previous lessons (See chapter 8, God Alone is Great) we read, "Cease from man whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?" (Isaiah 2:22)

To get a proper idea of the littleness of a man, go to the well or stream and let down a bucket for water. Fill it full, and then draw it up as carefully as you can. Do not spill any. You will notice, however, with all your care, that some drops fall from the bucket as it rises. But what of them? The bucket is full, and no one takes any account of the few drops that dripped from the sides as it came up. Now only one of those unconsidered drops represents, not one man merely, but "the nations"! "All the nations are as nothing before Him; they are esteemed by Him as less than nought, and vanity." (Isaiah 40:17,Lowth)

What presumption it is for one of these men to think to correct his Maker on a matter of science! Does not the very fact that man can be so presumptuous, show that he is very deficient in true science? that he has no adequate sense of the greatness of the creation of God, and consequently of the greatness of God's wisdom? And how can a man pose as a scientific man if he does not know anything about creation?

Men are wont to speak lightly of the learning of the ancients, especially as regards what is known as "science," although the word "science," really embraces all learning, since it means knowledge. The reason why the learning of the ancients is so lightly esteemed, is that many of their theories concerning nature are now known to have been but nonsense. But men forget that the same thing may be said concerning the theories which scientists held but a few years ago.

The theories which men hold today, are only theories, and none know better than the men themselves that in a few years these theories will give place to others. Therefore in that respect the men of old were as well off as are the men of today.

But in all matters of practical science, the ancients were the equals, if not the superiors, of the men of the present generation. They were masters in the art of building. In the "fine arts" and in literature, their works serve as models for students today. Thus we see that in keenness of perception, and in range of intellect they were the equals of any.

Yet these same men made idols of wood and metal. They well knew that these things were not God, but they were made as likenesses of God. "To whom therefore will you liken God? And what is the model of resemblance that you will prepare for Him?"

The workman casts an image: and the smith overlays it with plates of gold; and forges for it chains of silver. He that cannot afford a costly oblation, chooses a piece of wood that will not rot; he procures a skillful artist, to erect an image, which shall not be moved." (Isaiah 40:18-20,Lowth)

Think of the folly of making an image of wood as a likeness of the God who is so great that the forests of Lebanon and all the beasts are not sufficient to make a burnt offering to Him. "And Lebanon is not sufficient for the fire; nor his beasts sufficient for the burnt-offering. All the nations are as nothing before Him; they are esteemed by Him as less than nought, and vanity. ... [He] reduces princes to nothing; [and] makes the judges of the earth a mere inanity." (Isaiah 40:16-17,23,Lowth)

The princes of the earth are as nothing to Him, and all the wisdom of the judges of earth is but the mutterings of an idiot, compared with the wisdom of God. "If He but blow upon them, they instantly wither; and the whirlwind shall bear them away like stubble." (Isaiah 40:24,Lowth)

If He but blows upon them they instantly wither, and the wind will bear them away as the chaff of the summer threshing floor, so that no place is found for them. "Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them." (Daniel 2:35)

For Our Encouragement

Why does the Lord tell us all these things? Is it to humiliate us, to taunt us with our own littleness in comparison with Him? Not by any means. He does not wish us to become despondent. But these are facts, and cannot be other than they are.

Remember that God is not like a man who is puffed up with an undue sense of his own importance, and who looks with contempt on those whom he imagines to be inferior to himself. Far from it. The Lord is great, and cannot be any other than what He is. The relation which is here set forth as existing between God and man is that which actually is, and it cannot be different. He is infinitely greater than man, yet He does not despise man on that account. "Though the Lord be high, yet has He respect unto the lowly." (Psalm 138:6)

So much does He regard man, that He gave himself to redeem him. He gave himself for us, not for what we are, but for what He is able to make of us. Suppose we are but nothing; God is able to make that which is not bring to nought that which is. "For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men 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 nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in His presence." (1 Corinthians 1:26-29)

He tells us these things that we may know how easily He can do what He will with us. And this is for our comfort. Who is a God like unto our God?--Present Truth, September 21, 1899--Isaiah 40:12-24.

The Power that Keeps

In that wonderful chapter, the 40th of Isaiah, we have a most vivid representation of the power of God, and the greatness of His creation. Take, for instance, the fifteenth verse: "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." (Isaiah 40:15)

More literal and more forcible is the rendering in the margin of the Revised Version, "The isles are as the fine dust that is lifted up."

That is, the islands are no greater to God than the fine dust is to us; more than this, they are no greater to God than the dust, because with God there is no such thing as comparison; nothing is hard for Him. "Darkness and light are both alike to Him;" (Psalm 139:12) great and small have no difference between them in His sight. The greatest thing in our eyes is as easy for Him as that which seems to us easy. What an idea of the immensity of the universe is given by that expression, "Behold, the isles are as the fine dust that is lifted up." (Isaiah 40:15,RV,margin)

All the islands of the sea are no greater, in comparison to the universe of God, than the fine dust that every breeze lifts up is to the whole earth. Truly, "The Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In His hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is His also. The sea is His, and He made it; and His hands formed the dry land. O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand." (Psalm 95:3-7)

But this is not all. Our minds are directed to another evidence of His greatness. "Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these, 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 40:26)

With the natural eye innumerable stars can be seen; the telescope reveals innumerable others, but even the most powerful telescope reveals only an exceedingly small fraction of the number of stars. Photography, however, enlarges our ideas. By

exposing plates for several hours, the light is accumulated so that stars too distant to be discovered even by the telescope, record their existence. In a photograph of a very small section of the heavens in which no stars could be seen, many thousands were revealed. If our camera were placed on the most distant of the stars, we doubtless should have the same thing repeated.

Millions upon millions in number are the stars of heaven; yet God calls them all by name, because He made them; and the word of His power keeps them from falling. (Hebrews 1:3) They hang upon His word. Well might the psalmist exclaim, "O Lord, how manifold are your works! in wisdom have You made them all." (Psalm 104:24)

All this shows the power of God; for the Lord by the Apostle Paul assures us that ever since the creation of the world, the invisible things of God, namely, His eternal power and Divinity, are clearly seen through the things that He has made. (Romans 1:20) It is because He is great in power that none of the host of heaven fall from their places. They do not collide, because His hand guides them in their various orbits.

With this view of the power and wisdom of God, how forcible are the words that follow: "Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, Israel, my way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed away from my God? Have you not known? Have you not heard? 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)

No one need fear that he is in danger of being forgotten by the God to whom the names of the infinite number of worlds are as familiar as the names of children are to their parents. The stars are God's flock, which He guards and we are His flock also. That is one point of encouragement. The other is that all this power is for the use of the man who is in need. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. The power by which God is able to keep the soul from falling, is the power by which He keeps the host of heaven in their proper places. "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)

By that same word they are kept. (See 2 Peter 3:5-7) And this is the word of the Gospel which is preached unto us. (1 Peter 1:25) Therefore we may know that all the power of the universe is pledged for the redemption of those who believe God. The

existence of the universe depends upon the fulfillment of God's promises to us; for the same word that brings the promises to us, is the word that upholds all things; and if that word were broken, everything would return to chaos, and vanish from existence.

And this comfort is for the poorest and the weakest and most sinful; for God's word would be broken just as surely if it failed to the least, as if it failed with the greatest. So the existence of the stars in the heavens is a pledge to even the weakest soul, that God has not forgotten His promises, and that every prayer of faith will be answered.

Thus it is that God's people in the last days, when troubles thicken, and wicked men and persecutors become more rampant, are directed to "Look up." (Luke 21:28)

Strength comes from looking up. Therefore, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fades not away, preserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." (1 Peter 1:3-5)--Present Truth, January 4, 1894--This article was not part of the series on Isaiah, but is included because it fits well into this collection.--Isaiah 40:15, 26-29.

Strength for the Helpless

"To whom then will you liken me? And to whom shall I be equalled? says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high; And see, who has created these. He draws forth their armies by number; He calls them all by name: Through the greatness of His strength, and the mightiness of His power, Not one of them fails to appear. Wherefore say you then, O Jacob, And why speak you thus, O Israel, My way is hidden from Jehovah, And my cause passes unregarded by my God. Have you not known, have you not heard, That Jehovah is the everlasting God, The Creator of the bounds of the earth? That He neither faints, nor is wearied; And that His understanding is unsearchable! He gives strength to the faint, And to the infirm He multiplies force. The young men shall faint and be wearied; And the chosen youths shall stumble and fall: But they that trust in Jehovah shall gather new strength; They shall put forth fresh feathers like the moulting eagle: They shall run, and not be wearied; They shall march onward, and shall not faint." (Isaiah 40:25-31,Lowth)

In the verses just preceding, in this chapter, we have a vivid presentation of the weakness and insignificance of man. As compared with God, he is less than nothing, and vanity. He is only emptiness. All nations together are but as the fine dust of the balance, which makes no perceptible difference in the weight of any article, and which cannot be seen, to be brushed off. A breath from God would blow away the whole race; and yet these very men presume to make gods for themselves, that is, they presume to make a likeness of the God of heaven. But whatever a man makes must be less than himself; therefore his gods are nothing.

A Likeness of God

"To whom then will you liken me? and to whom shall I be equalled? says the Holy One." (Isaiah 40:25,Lowth)

Who can make a likeness of the true God? God manifested himself to the children of Israel as He never did to any other people, (Deuteronomy 4:7; 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?) but Moses, speaking of the time when the Lord spoke to them

from Sinai, said, "You heard the voice of the words, but you saw no similitude; only you heard a voice. ... Take therefore good heed unto yourselves; for you saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spoke unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire." (Deuteronomy 4:12,15)

Nobody has ever seen God, so that he could make a likeness of His form; whatever image anyone makes, therefore, professing to be a likeness of God, is but his conception of the power and attributes of God.

But if men would but use the reason that God has given them, and learn the very first and simplest lesson from creation, they would at once see how impossible it is to make any representation of the living God. How can such a thing be done, when He is in all things? He fills heaven and earth. "Do not I fill heaven and earth? says the Lord." (Jeremiah 23:24)

Every created thing reveals His everlasting power and Divinity; every tint of rose or rainbow exhibits a little of the loveliness of His face. In order to get a representation of God, one would need to bring together every separate phrase of strength and beauty in the entire universe; and even then he would not have a representation of God, because what he would have would be dead, and God is life itself. No one can make an image of life. Therefore there can be no likeness of God. God is, and that is the sum of the matter. Beside Him there is nothing. "But men need something to keep God in mind," say some, as an excuse for the making of images of the Lord; "something to aid their devotion."

Very true; and since that is so, God has provided for it. Do you think that God needed to depend on man to make something as a memento to himself? Was God so thoughtless that He forgot an important need of mankind? What a libel upon God all such "aids to devotion" are! No; lift up your eyes to the heavens, and see "the work of God's fingers, the moon and stars which He has ordained," (Psalm 8:3) and there you can always have an aid to devotion. "Lift up your eyes on high; and see, who has created these." (Isaiah 40:26,Lowth)

Someone has said that: "An undevout astronomer is mad."--Edward Young, Night Thoughts, Night IX: The Consolation, 1745.

Why so? Because a man who is continually turning his eyes to the heavens, and exploring their depths, and gazing on their wondrous beauty, beholding the glory of God, which they declare, and yet does not worship their Creator, must be devoid of reason. So it is indeed with anyone who does not worship the God of heaven. Whoever does not recognize and worship the true God, has less sense than his ox or his ass. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord has spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel does not know, my people do not consider." (Isaiah 1:2-3)

Moreover, God has given us the Sabbath, in which the works of His hands are specially to be remembered. God's created works are the reminders of His power and goodness, and the Sabbath, the last day of every week, is for contemplation of the works of creation, so that none need forget God. Plenty of aids to devotion has God provided. If all kept the Sabbath of the Lord in truth, the knowledge of the glory of God would cover the earth. "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is your name in all the earth! who have set your glory upon the heavens." (Psalm 8:1)

Individual Care

"[He] brings out their host by number." (Isaiah 40:26) "He tells the number of the stars; He calls them all by their names." (Psalm 147:4)

How many are there of them? Only God knows. Look up on a clear starry night, and you become lost as you try to count them; yet you see only a few of them. Visit an observatory, and the attendant will turn the huge telescope to some part of the heavens where your eye can discern nothing. Now look, and you will see swarms of suns blazing where it seemed as though there were only empty space. But you have not yet exhausted the possibilities, although such a thought as trying to count them would make you wild.

We can see nothing more with the telescope, and now we resort to photography. We make the stars tell their own story. The sensitive plate is exposed for hours, and the light which is too faint, on account of infinite distance, to be taken into account even with the aid of the telescope, gradually accumulates until it makes a tiny speck. Now we have a photograph of that space which appeared to be vacant even when viewed through

the most powerful telescope, and lo, there are thousands of spots, each one indicating the presence of a star. The same thing done from any part of the sky would give a similar result.

Thus we see that the stars within man's reach, so to speak, that is, the stars of which he is able to detect the existence, are many thousand times more in number than what can be seen with the naked eye. But we have not yet reached the end. We have no more reason for supposing that the limit has been reached by our telescope and camera than the child has for saying that there is nothing beyond the horizon--that his eyes take in the bounds of the universe. The more powerful the instrument through which we look into the heavens, the greater the suggestion of infinite depths beyond.

So we may be sure that if we could transport our telescope and photographic apparatus to the farthest star that has yet sent us a glimpse of itself, and should gaze on in the same direction, we should but have the same experience, and so on indefinitely. We are utterly lost in the contemplation of such infinite creation, and can only say, "O Lord, how manifold are your works! in wisdom have You made them all." (Psalm 104:24)

Now we have some sort of appreciation of the expression, "the host of heaven." (Deuteronomy 4:19) "He draws forth their armies by number; He calls them all by name." (Isaiah 40:26,Lowth)

It is said that Caesar knew the names of all the men under his command. That, if true, was a most wonderful accomplishment; few men could retain in memory the names of so many men. Yet there were only a few tens of thousands, whereas God's host is tens of thousands of myriads.

We can liken it to a vast flock, of which God is the Shepherd. As the Eastern shepherd, who spends all his life with his flock, becomes so well acquainted with them that he knows each one, so God knows the name of everyone of His star flock.

Constant Sustenance

And as the shepherd by his faithful watchfulness and his power against the wild beasts, keeps everyone of his sheep safe, so God, by His power and wisdom, guards His

starry host so that not one of them is ever lacking. "For that He is strong in power; not one fails." (Isaiah 40:26)

Man thinks of his work as great, yet it is at the greatest but a very small part of this earth that it has to do with. Compared with what we can see on this earth, man's work is puny; but what shall we say when we consider the heavens? What an inconceivably vast work God has on His hands! And God has this work literally on His hands. "He metes out the heavens with His span." (Isaiah 40:12)

They are "the work of His fingers." (Psalm 8:3)

What is it that keeps all these vast bodies in their proper places so that there is never any clashing, although all of them are constantly in motion? "Gravitation," they tell us. Take our solar system, for instance. Men leave God out of the question, and speak as though the force exerted was inherent in the heavenly bodies themselves. "The sun," say they, "keeps the planets in their orbits."

Very good, we know that since God's everlasting power and Divinity are seen in everything that He has made, (Romans 1:20) there is force in the sun and all other bodies; but let us think long enough to make sure that it is only God's power. See the earth revolving round the sun. Now it is flying with marvelous rapidity directly away from the sun. "The attraction of the other planets is drawing it," they tell us.

Very well, why does it not keep on? Why does it stop in its career, and turn back towards the sun? "Oh, the sun draws it!"

Yes, but why did not the sun keep it from going? It had just as much power when the earth was flying away from it, as it had when it turned to go back. Why then did it allow it to go so far away? There is no other answer to this question, but the statement-- that the hand of God is on the things that He has made. God's own personal presence sustains and controls His works.

The fact that astronomers can calculate the relative power manifested through the various heavenly bodies, so that they can tell when to expect any given planet or star at any given place, does not at all destroy the fact that it is God who is personally working. There is no such thing as blind force. There is intelligence directing all power. God has

not gone away and left His works to take care of themselves; there would soon be chaos if He should. No, He himself stays by, "upholding all things by the Word of His power." (Hebrews 1:3)

What therefore is the conclusion? Is it the common complaint that God has too much to attend to, to be mindful of our little cares? O foolish and blind unbelief! Why will men persistently put comfort away from themselves?

The Least and the Greatest

"Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed away from my God? Have you not known? have you not heard, that the everlasting God, Jehovah, the Creator of the ends of the earth, faints not, neither is weary? there is no searching of His understanding." (Isaiah 40:27-28)

If you have not heard it, then consider the heavens, and learn it. "Who has despised the day of small things?" (Zechariah 4:10)

Certainly not God, who warns man against such foolishness. Just because God is so great, He is able to keep the most accurate account of your case. Not a detail escapes His notice or His care. He who numbers the stars, also numbers the very hairs of your head. "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered." (Matthew 10:30)

Suppose there is here a great mathematician. He can make the most abstruse calculations. The largest numbers are handled by him with ease. Someone asks, "Can he count? Does he know that two and two are four?"

What foolish questions! Of course he can. "Well, I thought that he dealt in such great matters that he would not be able to bother with such small affairs."

Know then that the greater includes the less. The power to do great things implies the power to do that which is least. How surprised we are to find a great man of earth to be ignorant of some simple thing. "Is it possible you do not know that?" we exclaim in wonder.

But no one can ask any such question concerning God. There is no searching of His understanding. Nobody can ever get to the bounds of it, so as to find something that He does not know. He inhabits eternity, so that infinity, whether it be the infinitely large or the infinitely small, is in Him. All power and wisdom are His, for He is the Creator of all. "He gives power to the faint." (Isaiah 40:29)

All this contemplation of the wondrous power of God, as manifested in the heavens, is but a part of the comfort which God says must be proclaimed to His people. A little while ago we read about God's telling the number of the stars, and calling all them by name. Let us now read the connection, and see why that fact is stated. "The Lord builds up Jerusalem; He gathers together the outcasts of Israel. He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds. He tells the number of the stars; He calls them all by their names. Great is our Lord, and of great power; His understanding is infinite." (Psalm 147:2-5)

So all this power, that is manifested in numbering and naming and upholding the innumerable stars, is the power with which God binds up the wounds of His people, and heals the broken-hearted. His gentleness in dealing with the wounded is equal to His power in upholding the universe.

Help for the Helpless

The pagan proverb has it that: "God helps those who help themselves." (The idea originated in various Greek dramas, but the phrase in this form is first found in Algernon Sidney's Discourses Concerning Government (1698), a published work that cost the author his life, as he was executed for treason against King Charles II in England. His book later became very instrumental in the formation of the American republic, and has been called "the textbook of the American revolution."--Wikipedia)

That is the way the devil tries to discourage people. All men are helpless, and there are times in every man's life when he feels himself to be absolutely without strength. God would have everybody to feel that way all the time. But when men find themselves in that condition, they think of that heathen proverb, and lose heart. Now the truth is that God helps those who cannot help themselves. "When you were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." (Romans 5:6) "[His] strength is made perfect in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:9)

He makes men strong out of their weakness. "Out of weakness [they] were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." (Hebrews 11:34) "He gives power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increases strength." (Isaiah 40:29)

He multiplies force to them that are powerless. This He does by giving them himself. "It is God that works in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure." (Philippians 2:13)

Think of that! The very same power that is manifested in the heavens, guiding all the planets and stars in their courses, is the power that works in us! All the power that is revealed in the heavens is for us. This is shown by the fact that "[He] gave himself for us." (Titus 2:14)

He pledged himself for our salvation. But on Him rests the entire universe. The power that is seen in all creation is His power; it is He himself at work. Therefore when He gave us himself, He gave us all the power in the universe. Is it not worthwhile to look up? Do you want an "aid to devotion," and something to put heart into you? Then look up.

Youth is the synonym for strength and endurance. Yet, "The youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall." (Isaiah 40:30)

There is a limit to the endurance of youth. Besides, age comes even to youth, and with age comes weakness and debility. "But they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength." (Isaiah 40:31)

Mark the implied contrast between youth and age. Youths may fail, but they that wait on the Lord, no matter how old they may be, shall renew their strength. God gives to all who trust in Him eternal life; that is, those who trust in Him get the benefit of it; and the characteristic of eternal life is youth. It renews itself. "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; To show that the Lord is upright: He is my Rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him." (Psalm 92:13-15)

There is in this the miracle of life. Those who wait on the Lord, acknowledge Him in all their ways, depending on Him, receive fresh supplies at His hands daily. He shows them the path of life, and directs them in it. He shows them how to live,--how to eat and drink in the right way to renew life. "Godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." (1 Timothy 4:8)

There are wonderful possibilities in the Christian life, which no man in this generation has yet fathomed. Who will allow God to demonstrate in their bodies what He can do with them that trust Him? "They shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." (Isaiah 40:31)--Present Truth, September 28, 1899--Isaiah 40:25-31.

The Great Case in Court

"Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and fountains of waters." (Revelation 14:7) "Keep silence before me, O islands; and let the peoples renew their strength: let them come near; then let them speak: let us come near together to Judgment." (Isaiah 41:1) "Produce your cause, says the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons, says the King of Jacob. Let them bring them forth, and show us what shall happen: let them show the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come. Show us the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods: yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together." (Isaiah 41:21-23) "Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and show us former things? let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, it is truth. You are my witnesses, says the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen; that you may know, and believe me, and understand that I am He: before me there was no god formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no saviour. 12 I have declared, and have saved, and I have showed, when there was no strange god among you: therefore you are my witnesses, says the Lord, that I am God." (Isaiah 43:9-11) "I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. 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 51:3-4) "Let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That You might be justified in your sayings, and might overcome when You are judged." (Romans 3:4) "I beheld, and there was no man; even among them, and there was no counsellor, that, when I asked of them, could answer a word." (Isaiah 41:28) "Now we know that whatsoever 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) "Come now, and let us reason [literally, "go into court"] together, says the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." (Isaiah 1:18) "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) "The Lord is well pleased for His righteousness sake; He will magnify the law, and make it honorable." (Isaiah 42:21) "I, even I, am He that blots out your

transgressions for my own sake, and will not remember your sins. Put me in remembrance; let us plead together; declare, that you may be justified." (Isaiah 43:25-26) "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: and all that are incensed against Him shall be ashamed. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." (Isaiah 45:22-25) "Why do you judge your brother? or why do you set at nought your brother? for we shall all stand before the Judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." (Romans 14:10-11)

Before proceeding in our consecutive study of the book of Isaiah, it is necessary to take a general view of the main features of the chapters that follow, since they are so closely connected, and so devoted to one main thought, that we shall not get the full force of them if we go on studying small sections of them without first getting the greater theme in mind.

The whole book of Isaiah is devoted to one great purpose, namely, that of showing who God is. Recall the opening words of the prophecy, where God contrasts His people with the brutes, who know their lord, while His people do not know Him. Since the prophet is sent to those who, through lack of consideration, do not know the Lord, it is self-evident that he must be commissioned to make God known to them in the clearest possible manner, and to bring forward the most striking evidences of His existence and character. Let the student take special notice of the frequent occurrence of the statement, "I am God," and the continual contrasts between the true God and the gods of the heathen.

The book of Isaiah, more than any other in the Bible, is based on the idea of a case in court. When one has learned the fact that the whole universe is a great court, in which a case is continually being tried, and God, the angels both good and bad, and all mankind, are concerned in it, the prophecy of Isaiah, and indeed the whole Bible, can be read with a great deal more pleasure and profit than before.

Purpose of the Judgment

By most persons the Judgment is doubtless regarded as the time when the Lord determines who are, and who are not, worthy to enter heaven. They imagine all the people of earth gathered about the throne, where an examination is held, and the characters of all men are passed upon. But such an idea as that does very slight justice to the omniscience of God. He does not need to study character in order to discern one's disposition. It is not necessary for Him to study anything. He does not need to make enquiry into a case, and to examine witnesses, as men do, in order to know the facts. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." (Proverbs 15:3) "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, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12)

When Jesus was here on earth, "He knew all men, And needed not that any should testify of man: for He knew what was in man." (John 2:24-25)

The Lord, therefore, does not need, as man does, a time in which to cast up His accounts; for with Him the account is always kept. The exact status of every person living, and every act and every thought of every person who has at any time lived on this earth, could at any moment be set forth by the Lord, who "inhabits eternity," (Isaiah 57:15) and who "fills heaven and earth." (Jeremiah 23:2)

Therefore it is evident that the Judgment of the last day is not for the purpose of helping God to a decision as to the worthiness or unworthiness of any person. It will not reveal to the Lord a single thing that He did not know before. Indeed, it will be the Lord himself who will reveal "the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart." (1 Corinthians 4:5)

Instead of being for the purpose of revealing all the details of the lives of men to God, as so many seem to suppose, the Judgment is for the purpose of revealing to men their own selves, and to make known to them the details of the life of God. Two texts that are quoted in the beginning of this lesson will help to make this appear. Compare the following: "I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. 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 51:3-4) "Let God be

true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That You might be justified in your sayings, and might overcome when You are judged." (Romans 3:4)

In the first instance it is stated that God will be justified when He speaks, and be clear when He judges. In the second, which is a citation of the first, it is stated that He will be justified in His sayings, and will overcome when He is judged. Since the last is but a repetition of the first, and that too by the Spirit, we may be sure that both texts mean exactly the same thing. Therefore we learn that when God judges He himself is judged. The result will be that He will win the case and be justified.

The Character of God on Trial

That last word, "justified," turns our attention to the points in the case. From the very beginning the character of God has been called in question. Satan and his followers have sought to justify their rebellion against God by charging Him with:

- injustice,
- indifference to the welfare of His subjects,
- cruelty, and
- harsh despotism.

We see all this set forth in the temptation with which Satan induced Eve to take the forbidden fruit. The Hebrew of the words rendered in Genesis 3:1, "Yea, has God said, You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" is not by any means fully expressed by that rendering. The serpent's question is accompanied by a covert sneer, a contemptuous sniff, as he says, "Is it so, that God has said, You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?"

The tempter affects to doubt that even God should be capable of doing so mean a thing as that, thus artfully implanting in the mind of Eve the idea that she has been unjustly dealt with. Then when she repeats the prohibition, the serpent comes out boldly, and says, "You shall not surely die: For God knows that in the day that you eat

thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be like God, knowing good and evil." (Genesis 3:4-5,RV)

He made her believe that God had deceived them in telling them that they should die if they ate of that tree, and that He had told them that story merely to frighten them away from it, because He knew that if they should eat from it they would be equal to himself, and thus He would lose His prestige and authority over them.

By insinuating that God was exalting himself at their expense, the adversary caused her to feel that she was abused, and to imagine that she had found in the serpent a friend who would help her to secure her rights.

From that day to this God has been maligned and willfully misunderstood. Satan's charge of injustice has been repeated by men, and his insinuations have sunk so deeply into the minds of the world, that it does not seem so fearful a thing even for professed followers of the Lord to question His dealings with them. Every doubt is but the echo of the words with which Satan tempted our first parents to sin.

Who has not heard God charged with all the sin and misery in the world? Because God is all-powerful, men say that He is responsible for all the wretchedness; or else, if it be claimed that He is not responsible for it, they say that then He is weak; and in any case they make the presence of sins and misery the fault of God. The spirit of Satan, "the prince of the power of the air, ... works in the children of disobedience," (Ephesians 2:2) and it is one of the most difficult things in the world to convince anybody that God is love. Absolute trust in God as a tender, loving Father, is a very rare thing, so much so that those who trust Him fully in every detail of life are accounted mildly insane, and unfitted for practical life.

The character of God is therefore on trial. God calls upon men to come into court and prove their charges against Him, and His only defense is the revelation of himself to them,--the setting forth of His whole life before them. In Isaiah 1:18, where we have, "Come now, and let us reason together," (Isaiah 1:18) the Hebrew literally rendered is, "Come now, and let us go into court together, says the Lord."

He has been charged with unrighteousness, and His people take up this charge as an excuse for turning away from Him; but God rests His case upon the fact that He

forgives sin, and cleanses from all unrighteousness. He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and this He will do though they be as scarlet. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." (Isaiah 1:18) "He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin." (1 John 3:5)

He never committed a sin, and is not responsible for sin, yet He takes it upon himself in order that it and all its consequences may for ever be removed. The Judgment is for the purpose of making this clear before every being in the universe; and when that is done, every mouth will be stopped.

Convincing Evidence

The trial is now progressing; the Judgment will be merely the summing up. The Judgment will reveal no new feature that all men may not learn now, or else it would then appear that all men had not had a fair chance. In this present time, while the case is before the jury, which is composed of all creatures, God makes a perfect and complete revelation of himself and His character, manifesting himself in all the things that He has made for the benefit of mankind, but chiefly in "Jesus Christ whom He has sent." (John 17:3)

There is no need for anybody to be ignorant of the true character of God. Even the most degraded heathen are "without excuse." (Romans 1:20)

When in the Judgment men are made to see that to which they have so long willfully shut their eyes; when everything that has been done by men, and by God for men, since the creation, and even God's tender provision for men before the creation of the world, and also the underlying motive of all the acts that have been committed, are set forth before the universe, there will not be found a soul, no matter how malicious and hateful, who can open his mouth to say another word against the love and justice of the Creator and Redeemer. Everyone will be compelled by evidence that cannot be evaded, to confess to God, and to bow the knee in token of His right to rule. Even Satan himself will at last be forced by the power of love to acknowledge that: "The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works." (Psalm 145:17)

Someone will here ask, "Will everybody then be saved?"

Not at all; the confession of the wicked will come too late to be counted to them for righteousness. Those who then for the first time confess the love and righteousness of God will not be moved by faith. Although they will acknowledge that God is good, they will have no love for Him. If their probation were continued, they would still go on in the same course of sin. They love sin more than God, or else they would yield to the tender mercy of God while it is now revealed in Christ. Their confession will be only to the effect that the punishment about to be inflicted upon them is just, and but the natural fruit of their own deeds; that they are but receiving the wages for which they have worked all their lives.

The Witnesses

We have read that in the Judgment God will be justified in His sayings, that is, in the sentence which He announces. Every word and act of His life will be justified. But we must remember that this Judgment is preceded by a trial, in which there are witnesses. God calls upon all men to be witnesses for Him, and He has a just claim upon their testimony. But Satan is active with his bribes, and he steals away many of God's witnesses. All the world are now taking sides either for or against the Lord. "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathers not with me scatters abroad." (Matthew 12:30)

Men are now identifying themselves either with the Lord or with the great adversary. It is evident, therefore, that so surely as God is justified will all those be justified who have cast in their lot with Him, and those who have rejected Him, and have challenged His right to rule, declaring that He should not rule over them, (Luke 19:27) must necessarily take themselves out of His dominions when the controversy is ended. But since "His kingdom rules over all," (Psalm 103:19) it follows that for those who reject God no place in the universe will be found.

This is the time for the friends of God to declare themselves. It is true that in some things appearances are against the Lord, but that is only because of our short and distorted vision. We are not wise enough to understand all the workings of God, and we have not exercised ourselves in divine things sufficiently to have our minds toned up to their proper capacity; but enough is made plain to us to enable us to form an opinion. If we declare ourselves on the side of the Lord, even though we cannot explain everything,

we are truly His friends. Enemies may fling their accusations against Him, but we will say, "I do not know all the circumstances, and therefore I cannot give you an explanation of this transaction, but this one thing I do know, that God is just and good, and that if we knew all about this thing of which you accuse Him, you yourself would be compelled to acknowledge that it reveals only the tenderest love and goodness."

Such a friend is appreciated by the Lord, and will be acknowledged by Him before the world and angels, at the last day; while those who are ready to doubt the goodness of God at every step, eagerly seizing upon every insinuation which the devil whispers in their ears, thereby shut themselves off from all connection with Him. Character will not be formed, but only declared, in the Judgment.

This is but a brief outline of the case. In the lessons that follow we shall see other features set forth. This court trial is the greatest affair in the universe, and the attention of the student will be called to it in every lesson henceforward. If we all can but realize that we are involved in this case that is now being tried, it would transform our lives. If we but place ourselves close to the throne of grace and view the case as it progresses, it will make clear to us every question that vexes the world.--Present Truth, October 5, 1899--Review: Isaiah 41 to 45.

The Summons to the Trial

"Keep silence before me, O islands; and let the peoples renew their strength: let them come near; then let them speak; let us come near together to Judgment. Who has raised up one from the east, whom He calls in righteousness to His foot? He gives nations before Him, and makes Him rule over kings; He gives them as dust to His sword, and as the driven stubble to His bow. He pursues them, and passes on safely, even by a way that He had not gone with His feet. Who has wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I the Lord, the first, and with the last, I am He. The isles saw, and feared; the ends of the earth trembled; they drew near, and came. They helped everyone his neighbor; and everyone said to his brother, Be of good courage. So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smooths with the hammer him that smites the anvil, saying of the soldering, It is good; and he fastened it with nails, that it should not be moved. But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend, You whom I have taken hold of from the ends of the earth, and called you from the corners thereof, and said unto you, You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you away; Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed [margin: "look not around you"], 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. Behold, all they that are incensed against you shall be ashamed and confounded: they that strive with you shall be as nothing, and shall perish. You shall seek them, and shall not find them, even them that contend with you: they that war against you shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought. For I the Lord your God will hold your right hand, saying unto you, Fear not; I will help you." (Isaiah 41:1-13,RV)

Always Comfort

In studying this chapter and all the chapters that follow, do not forget that we are studying the message of comfort which God sends to His people. These last chapters of Isaiah form one connected whole.

Right here, in passing, we might notice a fact which may make it more clear to many that this message applies to us in these days. No one who reads these chapters can fail to notice the words of comfort that appear. Promises of God are strewn as thickly as

blossoms in spring. These promises have been the support of many Christians, and have helped to bring many sinners to repentance. No believer hesitates to appropriate them to himself.

But it is very plain that if this prophecy was given to the Jewish people alone, and applies only to them, then we have no right to the promises that it contains. That is to say, whoever rejects the reproofs which God sends, and the requirements of His law, must also forego the blessings of the Gospel of forgiveness. Men unconsciously appropriate the promises and put aside the law, forgetting that the reproofs of God are comfort. "For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life." (Proverbs 6:23)

All God's precepts are promises of fulfillment. He gives all that He asks of us. Whenever the law makes sin to abound, it is only for the purpose of driving us to Christ, in whom "the law of the Spirit of Life" (Romans 8:2) super-abounds as grace.

The Whole World Summoned

At every step in our study we shall be reminded of the great trial now on, which was outlined last week. That lesson should be learned so thoroughly that it will be continually in mind without any effort. Those who are using these studies in their Sabbath study should keep the scriptures and the facts set forth in them before them as they study each succeeding lesson. We cannot become too familiar with the fact that a great trial is now taking place, for we have a part in it, and we need to know just what it is. "Keep silence before me, O islands; and let the peoples renew their strength: let them come near; then let them speak; let us come near together to Judgment." (Isaiah 41:1,RV)

In this chapter we are called to court. The summons is issued to all the world, "the isles," including the utmost bounds of the earth. The heavens are also called upon in this case. Call to mind the opening words of this prophecy, (Isaiah 1:2; Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord has spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me) and read also: "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people." (Psalm 50:3-4)

The whole universe is enlisted in this case. It must be so, because the case concerns God himself, and He upholds the universe.

Keep Silence!

"Silence in the Court!" The case is now being tried, and silence is fitting. What is the case? It is to find out who is God. Men have persuaded themselves that they are gods, and better able to manage the affairs of this world than is the God of the Bible. Now God says, "Be still!" What for? "Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth." (Psalm 46:10)

If men would only keep still, and not put forth so much of merely human speculation, they would have no difficulty in recognizing God. Being still before the Lord means more than merely refraining from talking. It means to keep silence in the heart,--to let our own thoughts be held in abeyance, that they may be brought "into captivity ... to the obedience of Christ." (2 Corinthians 10:5) "The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him." (Habakkuk 2:20) "The Lord's throne is in heaven," (Psalm 11:4) and as long as He is able to maintain His place there, He has a right to command the silence of all mankind. "Who raised up the righteous man from the east, called Him to His foot, gave the nations before Him, and made Him rule over kings? He gave them as the dust to His sword, and as driven stubble to His bow. He pursued them, and passed safely; even by the way that He had not gone with His feet." (Isaiah 41:2-3)

In these verses we have undoubted reference to Christ, whom God has raised up, and to whom He has given all power and authority, setting Him over kings. "Also I will make Him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth." (Psalm 89:27) "Ask of me, and I will 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)

He is the righteous One, whom God has called in righteousness to do His will. (Isaiah 42:6) Some versions of the Bible insert in the margin, as an explanation of verse 2, the word, "Cyrus," meaning that he is the righteous one whom God has called. It is

true that later on Cyrus is called by name, and that in his case the foreknowledge of God is displayed, "calling the generations from the beginning." (Isaiah 41:4)

But the text here is sufficient to show that Christ is the One referred to. He is the One upon whom the responsibility of this case rests, for He is the One who declares God to man. (John 1:18) God's character is in His keeping. Cyrus was called by name before his birth, but Christ "was foreordained before the foundation of the world." (1 Peter 1:20) "Who has wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I the Lord, the first, and with the last; I am He." (Isaiah 41:4)

Preparing Their Case

In response to the call, the peoples gather. "The isles saw it, and feared; the ends of the earth were afraid, drew near, and came." (Isaiah 41:5)

Remember that this case was not called yesterday, but from the very beginning. Every nation under heaven has recognized the fact that a call has been issued to determine who is God, and all have set about the work of making the proof. How do they proceed? They make idols. "They helped everyone his neighbor; and everyone said to his brother, Be of good courage. So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smooths with the hammer him that smote the anvil, saying, It is ready for the sobering: and he fastened it with nails, that it should not be moved." (Isaiah 41:6-7)

In the gods that are found in some form in every nation and every tribe on earth, or that has ever existed, there is found proof of the fact that men know that there must be a God, and these idols are their attempts to show who He is. How foolish is their work! The very thing that they depend upon for proof ought to convince them of their folly.

They seek to encourage one another, and the carpenter speaks hopefully to the goldsmith, and the founder assures the smith that their work is good and well fastened together. Then to make everything sure, the idol is fastened with nails, so that it may not fall down and be broken to pieces. Note the connection of verses 6 and 7 with verses 18-20 of the preceding chapter: "To whom then will you liken God? or what likeness will you compare unto Him? The workman melts a graven image, and the goldsmith spreads it over with gold, and casts silver chains. He that is so impoverished that he has no

oblation chooses a tree that will not rot; he seeks unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image, that shall not be moved." (Isaiah 40:18-20)

Self-Justification is Heathenism

The counterpart of this picture is found in the case of every man who seeks to justify himself. The man who will not confess that he is a sinner is putting himself against God. God has said that all men have sinned; (Romans 3:23, 5:12) and it is certain that there is not a man who is not out of harmony with God. The characters of men are by nature unlike that of God. If therefore men be right, if any man on earth be not a sinner, then it must follow that God is in the wrong.

Everybody, therefore, who claims that he has not done wrong in any particular wherein God says that he is a sinner, affirms that God is not the true God, but that he himself is. He is making a god of the works of his own hands. The one who maintains that his course is right, and who is therefore willing to rest his hope on what he himself has done, is in reality just as surely a heathen as is the one who makes images of wood and stone or gold and silver, and worships them.

In this picture of the gathering of nations, and their mutual encouragement in their efforts to maintain their cause against the Lord, see a parallel to: "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." (Psalm 2:1-3)

But now God presents His side of the case. He addresses himself to Israel. "But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend." (Isaiah 41:8)

Who is Israel? For an answer turn to: "And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, He touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was strained, as he wrestled with Him. And He said, Let me go, for the day breaks. And he said, I will not let You go, except You bless me. And He said unto him, What is your name? And he said, Jacob. And He said, Your name shall be called no

more Jacob, but Israel: for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed." (Genesis 32:24-28)

Jacob wrestled with the Lord, and prevailed when in his helplessness he cast himself on the Lord and asked His blessing. Israel is one who overcomes by faith. Israel represents all who trust the Lord. Israel is the seed of Abraham, who is "the father of all them that believe," (Romans 4:11) and therefore Israel means all who believe.

God's Case

To Israel, that is, to all who will listen to Him, God says, "I have taken you from the ends of the earth, and called you from the corners thereof; I have chosen you, and have not rejected you." (Isaiah 41:9,RV)

The Lord tells us that He is looking about, seeking to save. "The devil as a roaring lion walks about seeking whom he may devour," (1 Peter 5:8) while God is searching the world over to find men who will let Him save them. "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10)

Instead of being indifferent to the wants of mankind, God is doing nothing else every moment but watching for chances to save men from the results of their own folly. Go back to the last verses of chapter 40: "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." (Isaiah 40:27-28)

There is no reason for any to say that God has forgotten them, or that He does not care for their affliction and sorrow. Their way is not hid from the Lord, and their judgment has not passed away from Him. Instead of casting anybody off, God has chosen them, and has gone hunting for them. The Lord says, "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." (John 15:16)

The Apostle Paul addressed the Galatians, who had been rescued from heathenism, as those who had known God, and then he corrected himself by saying that they had

rather been known of God. "But now, after that you have known God, or rather are known of God." (Galatians 4:9)

They did not find God by searching, but He revealed himself to them. "For the Lord will not cast off for ever." (Lamentations 3:31)

Friendship with God

"Abraham my friend." (Isaiah 41:8)

Abraham is called by God himself His friend. Just as surely as Abraham was God's friend, God was Abraham's friend. How proud men are to be able to say, "My friend the Duke of X," or, "My friend Lord So-and-So."

They feel that a distinction is conferred on them in being acquainted with men of high degree, although those men may be in reality a lie; yet how few esteem it an honor to have God for a friend. Ask a man if he knows Lord This, or Colonel That, and he will be grateful for the compliment, even if he knows nothing of them except their names. He feels honored to know that you think it possible that he moves in such society. Ask the same man if he knows the Lord, the God of heaven and earth, and nine chances to one he will be offended. Is it not strange?

Just think what a high honor it is to have God say to any man, "My friend." That is what He said of Abraham, and it is what He says of everybody who has the faith of Abraham. Abraham showed his implicit trust in God when he proceeded to offer Isaac on the altar. In that act of faith. "The scripture was fulfilled which says, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God." (James 2:23)

Value of God's Friendship

The Hebrew word rendered "friend" in this scripture before us, is from the verb meaning, to love. It is stronger than the ordinary word for friend or companion. It is used of those who are very intimate, as lovers. When God contracts friendship with men, it is of no ordinary kind. Perfect friendship means the perfection of mutual

confidence. Such a thing is really unknown among men, for in the closest intimacies there is always some bar to the complete disclosure of one's self to the other.

A feeling that our friend could not understand some things in our own lives, because he has never had any similar experience, and his friendship for us might lessen if he knew of some things in our lives, wherein he himself may never have been tried, causes us to withhold a part of our life from him. We instinctively shrink from making known the secrets of our hearts to anybody, no matter how intimate.

But with God the most perfect friendship is possible, for He has experienced everything. "He has been tempted in all things like as we are," (Hebrews 4:15) and so He never despises anybody who has been tempted, but is able to help. If we make Him our confidant, telling Him everything about ourselves, that is confessing our sins and weaknesses, He will in turn show us all of himself, revealing himself not merely to us, but in us, so that we may have righteousness and strength instead of sin and weakness.

More than this, He will prove himself a true friend, and will never betray our confidence. This is the value of confessing to Him. It is not that we tell Him anything about ourselves that He does not already know; but in confessing our sins, we accept His righteousness to cover them. If we do not confess them, then in the Judgment they will be set forth before the whole world; but when we confess them, He takes them away, so that they can never more be found, for they will no more exist, and He himself will forget them. He will hide the fact that we have sinned from all creation. He will do this by taking away from us every trace of sin. Is not such a friend worth having?

The Comfort of His Presence

"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)

"Fear not," God says to the people whom He has chosen, that is, to all who believe and trust Him. Why not fear? "For I am with you." (Isaiah 41:10)

He is greater than all, so that none need fear. Read Psalm 27:1-3 and 46, and Isaiah 12:2. Read in Matthew 14:22-32 and John 6:16-21 the account of the storm on the sea,

when Jesus came to the disciples, walking on the water. When they were afraid, He called out, "I am; be not afraid." (John 6:20)

It was the same Jesus who said, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." (Matthew 28:20)

Because He is, there is no cause for fear; for He is everywhere, and is all things that anyone needs. So as soon as the disciples received Him into the boat, immediately they were at the place where they were going. "Then they willingly received Him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went." (John 6:21)

In Him there is the fulfillment of all that we need. Because He is with us, we need not fear, "though war should rise up and an host encamp against us." (Psalm 27:3) "In His presence there is fullness of joy." (Psalm 16:11)

He says, "My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest." (Exodus 33:14) "His rod and His staff comfort us, And He prepares a table for us in the presence of our enemies." (Psalm 23:4-5)

Do not forget that His rod comforts. We are studying the comfort of the Lord; but too many people think of the rod of the Lord only as an instrument of punishment, an emblem of displeasure. Well, it is true that the Lord does often "visit the transgression of His people with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes, Nevertheless He does not take His loving-kindness from them." (Psalm 89:32-33)

The rod of correction is the comfort of the Holy Ghost, who makes known the abounding sin in order to apply the superabounding grace. "Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." (Romans 5:20)

The song to be sung in these days is, "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." (Isaiah 12:2)

He strengthens us by His strength. It is interesting to note that the word "taken" in verse 9, "You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth," is from the Hebrew word

meaning, "to gird," "to make strong." From the ends of the earth God gathers His people, and girds them with strength. He is our strength against the enemy.

Be Not Anxious

Notice the margin in verse 10 in the Revised Version. There we have indicated what is placed in the body of the text in the Danish and Norwegian versions: "Do not look so anxiously around you."

This is very literal and true. The Swedish expresses the same thought, though not so vividly, "Do not seek help from others."

God would have His people look straight forward. Time is lost when they look around, and besides they cannot walk straight if they do not look straight ahead.

Did you ever notice children when they cross the road? Whoever has driven, or ridden a bicycle, through the streets of a town, cannot fail to have marked it. When a child decides to cross the road, it looks neither to the right nor the left, but goes straight for the opposite side. Surely God has a care for children, else hundreds of them would be killed. They have no thought for themselves.

Now whoever would enter the kingdom of heaven must become as a little child. (Matthew 18:2-3) We need not be critical, and say that God does not wish us to be careless. Of course He does not; but He wishes us to be trustful. He tells us to seek the one thing, His kingdom and His righteousness, and everything else will be added to us. "But seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matthew 6:33)

We spend too much time calculating probabilities, and discussing possible dangers. God's word to us is, "Go forward." "And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore do you cry unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." (Exodus 14:15)

It was when Peter looked around and saw the billows dashing high, that he began to sink. "Looking unto Jesus," (Hebrews 12:2) is our motto. "Let your eyes look right on, and let your eyelids look straight before you. Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established." (Proverbs 4:25-26)

God will hold our right hand, so that even if we stumble, we shall not utterly fall. "The Lord upholds all that fall, and raises up all those that be bowed down." (Psalm 145:14)

So we can say, "Rejoice not against me, O my enemy: when I fall, I shall arise." (Micah 7:8)--Present Truth, October 12, 1899--Isaiah 41:1-13.

Chapter 49

Fear Not!

"Fear not, you worm Jacob, and you men of Israel; I will help you, says the Lord, and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. Behold, I will make you a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: you shall thresh the mountains, and beat them small and shall make the hills as chaff. You shall fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and you shall rejoice in the Lord, you shall glory in the Holy One of Israel. The poor and needy seek water and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst, I the Lord will answer them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers on the bare heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the acacia tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, the pine, and the box tree together: That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the Lord has done this, and the Holy One of Israel has created it. Produce your cause, says the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons says the King of Jacob. Let them bring them forth, and declare unto us what shall happen: declare the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or show us things for to come. Declare the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods: yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together. Behold, you are as nothing, and your work of nought: an abomination is he that chooses you. I have raised up One from the north, and He is come; from the rising of the sun One that calls upon my name: and He shall come upon rulers as upon mortar, and as the potter treads clay. Who has declared it from the beginning, that we may know? and beforetime, that we may say, He is righteous? Yea, there is none that declares, yea there is none that shows, yea, there is none that hears your words. I first will say unto Zion, Behold, behold them; and I will give to Jerusalem One that brings good tidings. And when I look, there is no man: even among them there is no counselor, that, when I ask of them, can answer a word. Behold, all of them, their works are vanity and nought; their molten images are wind and confusion." (Isaiah 41:14-29,RV) "Fear not." (Isaiah 41:14)

Another installment of the message of comfort. The title of this entire chapter might well be, "Fear not." This exhortation is parallel to the words so often used by the Saviour, "Be of good cheer." (Matthew 14:27)

He who says these words is the Creator, the One whose words are things, which contain the very living form and substance of that which they name. Therefore when the Lord says to us, "Fear not;" "Be of good cheer;" He supplies the courage and cheer. "You have put gladness in my heart," (Psalm 4:7) says the psalmist. God does not tell us to make ourselves glad, but He himself makes us glad. "For You, Lord, have made me glad through your work: I will triumph in the works of your hands." (Psalm 92:4) "The joy of the Lord is our strength." (Nehemiah 8:10)

God's word is His own life; it is charged with His own personality; when we receive it, we receive Him; therefore when we believe His word implicitly, we have Him and all His joy and peace.

Strength in Weakness

"You worm Jacob." (Isaiah 41:14)

Not a very flattering title, is it? But it is the truth. See how the fact is kept before us that the comfort of the Lord does not consist in telling us that we are pretty good, that things are not so bad as they seem, and that if we do not lose confidence in ourselves we shall win. He comforts us by telling us that we are but worms, but grass, nothing at all, and less than nothing. Thus He anticipates every possible doubt on our part. He takes away all ground for saying, "I am so weak and in so desperate a situation that I have no hope; I can surely never overcome."

He plucks courage from despair. From the depths He lifts us up to the heights. We often hear some half-hearted professor calling himself a worm as he prays or bears his testimony. We say "half-hearted," advisedly, because in the cases we have in mind they had well-nigh lost heart, and in tones of discouragement they sighed out that they were "but worms of the dust."

It was almost a wail of despair, although too feeble to be a wail, and the speaker seemed to think that he ought to grovel before the Lord, and apologize for presuming to come into His presence. But not in any such way does the Lord set the fact before us. When the Lord says, "You worm," He does not say it with anything like contempt. He does not despise us. We feel quickened, and breathe in fresh courage, as we hear the

words from His lips. There is inspiration in the exclamation. It is a part of the everlasting comfort of the Lord.

Life From the Dead

"And you men of Israel." (Isaiah 41:14)

This expression is almost meaningless as it stands here, because it does not at all express what the prophet said from the Lord. It is very weak. In the margin of our Bibles a little compensation has been made by inserting the alternative reading, "You few men of Israel."

But even this does not say what the Lord said. What He plainly said, as it stands in the Hebrew, and as given by Bishop Lowth, is: "You mortals of Israel."

Literally, "dying ones." Christ says, "He that believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." (John 11:25)

It is true that God's people are a "little flock," (Luke 12:32) and to them He says, "Fear not;" but they are not only few, they are in a dying condition. They are frail as the grass. They have in themselves no vitality, no principle of life. But what matters that, as long as He is with them, and He is life. Their strength is the Lord himself. God has chosen us, as we learned from the preceding part of this chapter, but not for what we were worth. He chose us for what He could make of us and do with us.

Instruments in God's Hands

"I will help you, says the Lord, and your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. Behold, I will make you a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: you shall thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shall make the hills as chaff." (Isaiah 41:14-15)

See what He will do with us, weak and frail as we are: He will transform us into a threshing instrument able to thresh even the mountains, and make them small, and to make the hills as chaff. We are nothing, and less than nothing; "But 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 nought things that are." (1 Corinthians 1:27-28)

Then let us never again say, "I am so weak, so insignificant, so poor and unknown, so helpless and unworthy, that I cannot do anything."

That may all be true, but it does not affect the case. We are not so feeble and despised, so weak and insignificant that the Lord cannot do anything with us. Remember that where the earth and all the starry heavens are now there was nothing until God spoke.

Darkness was upon the face of the deep until God said, "Let there be light."

Therefore although we be nothing, God can do wonderful things with us. The message of comfort which God sends to His people as a special preparation for His coming makes very prominent the fact that He is the Creator. Whenever we fall into despondency because of our sinfulness and weakness, we lose sight of the fact that God is the Creator, and practically deny it. Let us not do it any more.

Power Over the Nations

Verse 16 says to us poor worms whom the Lord will transform into threshing-machines for threshing mountains to pieces, "You shall fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them." (Isaiah 41:16)

Now read the prophecy in the 2nd chapter of Daniel, where we read that the stone cut without hands, representing Christ, smote the image which represented all the nations of earth, and broke it to pieces, and it "became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them." (Daniel 2:35)

Comparing the two texts, we see that the Lord associates His people with himself in all that He does. He even condescends to acknowledge the help of these poor worms in the work that He does. In a recent Danish translation of Revelation 17:14, where these same kingdoms are spoken of, we find this suggestive reading: "These shall fight against the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, because it is the Lord of lords

and the King of kings and the called and the faithful and the true, who are with Him." (Revelation 17:14)

In Psalm 2 we read these words to Christ: "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)

Now note that in Revelation 2:26-27, the same words are addressed to the saints of God, and the very same power that Jesus Christ himself receives is given to them: "He that overcomes, and keeps my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father." (Revelation 2:26-27)

To have the lowest place in the kingdom of God and Christ, is to be exalted to a place higher than that of the kings of the earth; while the weakest soul that can say with full assurance of faith, "Behold, God is my strength," (Isaiah 12:2) has more power than all the nations.

A Terrible Plague

"When the poor and needy seek water and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine and the box tree together: That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the Lord has done this, and the Holy One of Israel has created it." (Isaiah 41:17-20)

In verses 17-20 we have undoubted reference to the time of trouble and the glory that shall follow. In Isaiah 34 we read of the earth in its desolation. This desolation begins before the coming of the Lord, and continues through the thousand years during which the saints are in heaven with the Lord, sitting in judgment on the wicked. The fourth plague, described in Revelation 14:8-9, dries up everything on the face of the earth. It is such a drought as has never yet been known. By one prophet it is thus vividly

described: "The barns are broken down; for the corn is withered. How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate. O Lord, to You will I cry; for the fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and the flame has burned all the trees of the field. The beasts of the field cry also unto You; for the rivers of waters are dried up, and the fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness." (Joel 1:17-20)

God's People Delivered

But in the midst of this terrible desolation, God's people will not be left to perish. God has not said that they shall not suffer; the disciple is not above his Master, and therefore should not expect to be exempt from suffering with Him. He was hungry and thirsty in the barren wilderness, but He was not forsaken, nor will they be. The promise is, "When the poor and needy seek water and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water." (Isaiah 41:17-18)

Very forcible is the statement that it is the God of Israel who promises this. That was just what God did for Israel when they came out of Egypt: "And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the Lord, and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink. Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why do you chide with me? wherefore do you tempt the Lord? 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? And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me. 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 17:1-6) "He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out; they ran in the dry places like a river." (Psalm 105:41) "Tremble, you earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob;

Which turned the rock into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters." (Psalm 114:7-8)

God's people will yet have reason to be very grateful for the record of that miracle, for before they are delivered from their sojournings in a strange land to the land of promise, they will need it as a basis for their cry for the same thing to be done for them. Their confidence in that evil day will be the fact that they have drunk from the Fountain of Life, and know that God gives living water. When the "time of trouble, such as never was," (Daniel 12:1) comes upon the face of the earth, "[God's] people will be delivered, everyone whose name is written in the book of life." (Daniel 12:1)

A Trial of Strength

The latter part of the 41st chapter of Isaiah is a call to the nations and their gods to give some proof of their power; to make their case good. "Produce your cause, says the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons, says the King of Jacob." (Isaiah 41:21)

State your case, and prove it. Note that the "strong reasons" which the Lord demands are not mere words, but deeds. He backs up His cause by acts. He can point to what He has done in the way of delivering His people. He is the Saviour and Redeemer. What can the false gods show in the way of salvation of a soul? What can any self-righteous man point to in the way of delivering even his own soul from death, to say nothing of helping another? The oppressors who surround God's people, "Who put their trust in their wealth, and boast on the extent of their riches, Yet no one can buy himself off, none can make payment to God for himself. The ransom of their soul is too dear, and there is forever an end of him." (Psalm 49:6-8, Polychrome edition)

God tells the end from the beginning. He makes known things to come, by means of the Comforter. "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come." (John 16:13)

Thus His people are able to know what shall come.

"[God] inhabits eternity," (Isaiah 57:15) so that things past, and things present, and things to come are all alike to Him. Therefore whenever anybody either by word or act

professes to be God, He has a right to demand that they tell something that is to come, or at the very least tell the whole truth of something that has taken place in the past.

Accordingly we find that many false prophets are gone out into the world, attempting to meet this challenge. Spiritualist mediums profess to tell things to come, and create a great sensation by telling people things that have happened in the past. But none of them bear the stamp of Divinity. Compared with the lofty utterances of Inspiration, they are as the peeping of frogs. When God speaks to them, none can answer a word.

Thus we have in this chapter an outline of the entire trial, from its call to its conclusion.--Present Truth, October 19, 1899--Isaiah 41:14-29.

The Lord's Servant

"Behold my servant, whom I uphold; my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon Him: He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall He not break, and the dimly-burning wick shall He not quench: He shall bring forth judgment in truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for His law. Thus says God the Lord, He that created the heavens, and stretched them forth; He that spread abroad the earth, and that which comes out of it; He that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein: I the Lord have called you in righteousness, and will hold your hand, and will keep You, and give You for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house. I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise unto graven images. Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them." (Isaiah 42:1-9,RV)

The student should not fail to note the frequent occurrence of the word "servant," in the book of Isaiah. It would be an interesting and profitable employment to collate all the instances of its use, and compare them. In nothing is there more comfort for us than in the use of this term in the prophecy of Isaiah. By it, our relationship to God and Jesus Christ is made very plain.

Jesus: The Servant of God

"Behold my servant, whom I uphold; my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon Him." (Isaiah 42:1,RV)

The reference in this chapter is undoubtedly to Christ. On this there is no possibility for two opinions. Jesus is pre-eminently the servant of God. In Him the soul of the Father delights, for Jesus said, "I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent me;" (John 6:38) and, "I do always those things that please Him." (John 8:29)

He is the only-begotten (John 1:14,18; 3:16,18; 1 John 4:9) and well-beloved Son of God, (Matthew 3:17) yet He is called God's servant, and this title is given Him as an honor. The servant of God may be a son, and the son can have no higher purpose than faithfully to serve the Father. Note well the fact that Christ is both Servant and Son.

If we obey, we are also servants. Nay, God does not wait to see if we are obedient, before He acknowledges us as His servants; as soon as we yield to Him, we are His. "Know you not that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are to whom you obey?" (Romans 6:16)

All men are of right the servants of God, in that they owe Him all their service; but so many utterly refuse the service of God that the term is mostly confined to those who are loyal.

Special comfort and encouragement will be derived from the study of Christ as the servant of God, and the words that are spoken of Him in this chapter, if we recall the words addressed to Israel, in the preceding chapter. In verses 8-10 and 13 we read some of the same things that are here said of Christ: "You, Israel, my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend. You whom I have taken hold of from the ends of the earth, and called you from the corners thereof, and said unto you, You are my servant; I have chosen you, and not cast you away. 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. ... I the Lord your God will hold your right hand." (Isaiah 41:8-10,13)

Israel, it will be remembered, means those who trust the Lord. To those the same terms are applied as to Christ. They are "chosen in Him," (Ephesians 1:4) "accepted in the Beloved." (Ephesians 1:6)

They are chosen and upheld by the hand, just as is Christ himself. So in reading this 42nd chapter of Isaiah let us not forget that we are the servants of God equally with Christ, so that the work that is given Him to do is ours also, and all the encouragement that God speaks to Him, He speaks to us also. Jesus calls us to join Him in His service, saying, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart." (Matthew 11:29)

Judgment in the Sinner's Favor

"He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles," (Isaiah 42:1) and, "He shall ... set judgment in the earth." (Isaiah 42:4)

To this end the Spirit of God is upon Him. He is the representative of God, charged with the task of carrying on God's case. It is He who conducts God's case at law to a successful issue. He causes judgment to be rendered in God's favor. The Father does not appear in the case at all, except in Christ, who has full authority to speak and act in every matter in the name of the Father. What wonderful confidence the Father has reposed in this Servant! "The Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment unto the Son: That all should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." (John 5:22-23)

The Father has placed His reputation and even His character in the hands of Jesus Christ. The "faithful and wise servant" of the Lord is made ruler over His household, and set over all His goods.

"Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord has made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he comes shall find so doing." (Matthew 24:45-46)

But here again we are brought face to face with the fact that we are servants of the Lord, and that this high place of ruling over the house is entrusted to us. God is not partial. He has no special favorites. What He says to one servant, even though that servant be His only-begotten Son, He says to all. The same love that He has for Christ, He has for us.

"I in them, and You in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that You have sent me, and have loved them, as You have loved me." (John 17:23)

This places a wonderful responsibility upon us. We see by this, and shall see still more plainly as we proceed, that the Lord has committed His case to us. His character is

in our hands. We are to be agents to establish judgment in the earth, and to let the world know who is God.

A Voice Under Control

Jesus, into whose hands so much is committed, is "meek and lowly in heart." (Matthew 11:29) "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street." (Isaiah 42:2)

Take notice that this is in the singular, street, and not streets. It does not say that He shall not speak in the open air. As a matter of fact we know that Jesus did most of His teaching in the open air,--in the fields, on the mountain, by the seaside, or sitting by the wayside well. But He was not boisterous and noisy. When speaking in the house, He would not cause His voice to be heard outside. He did not do anything for effect, or seek to attract attention to himself.

Christ charged the people that they should not make Him known when He had healed a multitude, and this was said to be in fulfillment of this prophecy of Isaiah. "And [He] charged them that they should not make Him known: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon Him, and He shall show judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench, till He send forth judgment unto victory. And in His name shall the Gentiles trust." (Matthew 12:16-21)

There is undoubtedly much to be learned from Jesus as to the use of the voice, not only in public speaking, but on every occasion. A soft, well-modulated voice, yet clear and distinct, with full tones, marks the master. He who can control his own voice, can control the multitude. A sharp, harsh, rasping voice, pitched in a high key, carries no authority with it. Every servant of the Lord is in duty bound to train his voice as much as the muscles of his arms or legs.

It is true that many people in the world do this for gain and applause, and that they become puffed up with pride over the power that it gives them; but this should not deter God's servants from doing so in His name, and for His sake, that they may not

misrepresent Him. We can learn of the Lord how to speak properly as well as we can learn anything else; and if we do truly learn of Him, then we shall not become elated over any success that we may have, for He is meek and lowly in heart.

The word rendered "cry," in this instance, is used most frequently of crying out in pain. In this respect it is also true of Christ. "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth." (Isaiah 53:7)

Neither in boasting, nor in anger, nor in pain, did the Lord Jesus cry out. Yet His voice was far-reaching, and many heard. A well modulated voice is not opposed to the command to "lift up the voice with strength and say, Behold your God!" (Isaiah 40:9) "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)

Very gentle shall the servant of the Lord be. A reed that is cracked, He will not break off. The candle that is just going out, the wick of which is only a smoking cinder, He will not extinguish. On the contrary, He will breathe upon it, and fan it into a flame again. "For you will light my candle: the Lord God will enlighten my darkness." (Psalm 18:28)

By this means He will bring forth judgment in truth. This shows that judgment is brought forth by building up that which is weak. God is merciful. He is love. This has been denied by His enemies, and His case is to demonstrate the truth. Therefore those who are charged with the conduct of the Lord's case can win it only by exercising the meekness and gentleness of the Lord. By His care for the poor and needy, the Lord disproves the charges that have been brought against Him.

No Discouragement with God

"He shall not fail nor be discouraged till He have set judgment in the earth." (Isaiah 42:4)

It is very interesting to know that the same words are used in this verse as in the preceding. The word rendered "fail" is the same as that rendered "smoking" or "dimly-

burning," in verse 3; and "discouraged" is from the word rendered "bruised." "He shall not burn dim nor be crushed until His work is accomplished."

Of course He will not then; this is an instance of the use of the word "until" where it does not mark the limit. For similar instances, see: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." (Genesis 49:10) "His heart is established, he shall not be afraid, until he see his desire upon his enemies." (Psalm 112:8) "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)

A discouraged man is a bruised and crushed man. He is one whose light has almost gone out. Hope is expiring in his breast. Such a one Jesus will restore. He will breathe new life into him. He heals the bruised and crushed one.

There is no more difficult task in this world than trying to encourage a despondent person. How many there are who think that they have good reason to be discouraged, because they are so sinful, so easily led astray. They have fallen again and again, until they can scarcely be persuaded that there is any hope of their salvation.

The servant of the Lord deals with such cases, whispering words of hope and comfort, and does not himself become discouraged. He receives rebuffs, but will not be crushed by them. His light will not burn dim, but he will gather courage from apparent defeat.

What a blessed assurance this is to us when we think of it as applied to Christ! "He will not ... be discouraged until He have set judgment in the earth," (Isaiah 42:4) that is, in the hearts of men--in our hearts. Then when I am almost discouraged over my many failures, I will think, "The Lord Jesus has the task of making me strong and giving me the victory, and He is not discouraged in spite of my many failures. He knows my weakness and sinfulness better than I do myself. Surely if He is not yet discouraged, I have no cause to be."

And thus gathering new courage from the courage of the Lord, we become "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might," (Ephesians 6:10) and the victory is ours. To us all the Lord says, "Be strong, and of good courage." (1 Chronicles 28:20)

This was all that He required of Joshua, when He commissioned him to lead Israel into the promised land. "Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shall you divide for an inheritance the land, which I swore unto their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded you: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper whithersoever you go. ... Have not I commanded you? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be dismayed: for the Lord your God is with you whithersoever you go." (Joshua 1:6-7,9)

Holding the Hand of God

"Behold my servant, whom I uphold." (Isaiah 42:1)

The Lord says that He upholds His servant. The same word is used in the two following instances. "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup: You maintain my lot." (Psalm 16:5) "Hold up my goings in your paths, that my footsteps slip not." (Psalm 17:5) "I the Lord have called you in righteousness, and will hold your hand." (Isaiah 42:6) "The Lord upholds all that fall, and raises up all those that be bowed down." (Psalm 145:14)

Remember that we are the servants of God, if we yield to Him, that is, if we are willing to be His servants; (Romans 6:16) and therefore we have the same promise of being upheld that Jesus Christ himself had. We have the same power to keep us from falling that He had. Nowhere has the Lord left any ground for discouragement. "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." (Jude 1:24)

The word "hold" in the expression, "hold your hand," which occurs so frequently in those chapters, is from the Hebrew word meaning "to strengthen." God promises to strengthen our hand. Everybody knows that one can stand better if he has hold of another's hand, provided, of course, that the other one's hand is stronger than his. Think

then what strength comes from having hold of the Lord's hand. He says that He will hold our hand, and "uphold us, by the right hand of His righteousness." (Isaiah 41:10)

That is all the encouragement we need. He will not drop our hand, and leave us when danger comes. Remember that the Father is greater than all, and no one can pluck His people out of His hand. "My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." (John 10:29)

Opening the Blind Eyes

What work has the Lord given His servant? This: "To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." (Isaiah 42:7)

All this we know Christ did; but is anybody else given such work to do? Most certainly; that is the work of every servant of the Lord, everyone whom the Lord chooses. Saul the persecutor was chosen by the Lord to go 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)

Now do not straightway say, "Well, I have not the ability of Paul."

That has nothing to do with it. Paul was very weak and feeble in body, and had no ability except what the Lord gave him. If the Lord has not given us the ability of Paul, then He does not expect the same work of us; but one thing is certain, namely, that the Lord has sent everyone who has accepted Him, everyone whom He has chosen in Christ, and made accepted in the Beloved, to do the very same work to which He sent Jesus and Paul. He has not planned for any idle servants. Do not forget that He says, "I the Lord have called you in righteousness, and will hold your hand, and will keep you, and give you for a covenant of the people, for a light to the Gentiles; To open the blind eyes." (Isaiah 42:6-7)

If we are connected with an electric battery, all the power of the battery may be felt by anyone who comes in contact with us; so when we have hold of the hand of the Lord, His power becomes ours. Even Paul the Apostle said, "Not that we are sufficient of

ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; Who has made us able to be ministers of the new covenant." (2 Corinthians 3:5-6)

God is to be Glorified

"I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images." (Isaiah 42:8)

God will not give His glory to another; that He cannot do, for He cannot deny himself. He will glorify all who trust in Him, and His glory shall be seen on them; but it will be recognized as His glory. Our light is to "shine before men so that they will see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16)

God will not divide honors with any creature, much less with a dumb idol, which is nothing in this world. This is not because He wishes to exalt himself at the expense of others, as Satan falsely accused Him of doing, but because He cannot divest himself of His personality. He is; that is His name and His character, and He cannot cease to be. He cannot allow any of the praise due to Him to be given to graven images. He cannot admit that the work of men's hands is right. If He did, that would be the overturning of all righteousness and stability. For the good of all His subjects, and for the maintenance of that which He has created, God must carry the case in which He is concerned to a successful issue.

What a blessed assurance it is to know that He will do this. Wrong shall not prevail against God. Though it, for a season, seems to have the best of the struggle, it is only in appearance, and but for a moment. "In the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength," (Isaiah 26:4) and He will gain the victory over all foes. Who will cast in their lot with Him? "Who is on the Lord's side?" (Exodus 32:26)--Present Truth, October 26, 1899--Isaiah 42:1-9.

Chapter 51

A New Song

"Sing unto the Lord a new song, and His praise from the end of the earth; all you that go down to the sea, and all that is therein, the isles, and the inhabitants thereof. Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar inhabits; let the inhabitants of Sela sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains. Let them give glory unto the Lord, and declare His praise in the islands. The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man; He shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: He shall cry, yea, He shall shout aloud; He shall do mightily against His enemies. I have long time held my peace; I have been still, and refrained myself: now will I cry out like a travailing woman; I will gasp and pant together. I will make waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbs; and I will make the rivers islands and will dry up the pools. And I will bring the blind by a way that they know not; in paths that they know not will I lead them; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked places straight. These things will I do, and I will not forsake them. They shall be turned back, they shall be greatly ashamed, that trust in graven images, that say unto molten images, You are our gods." (Isaiah 42:10-17,RV)

The Song of Deliverance

This new song is the song of deliverance. The 13th chapter of Revelation sets before us the exaltation of the Papacy against God, and the influence that it has and will have in all the earth, inducing even the people not nominally under the Papal yoke to do homage to it, and to make an image to it, enacting that all who will not worship either the Papacy or its counterpart shall be killed. But in the midst of that seeming victory of the forces of evil, the prophet saw victory for the people of God. He says: "I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Zion, and with Him a hundred, forty and four thousand, having His Father's name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: And they sang as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders; and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand which were redeemed from the earth." (Revelation 14:1-3)

The Song of Moses

That is to say, none could learn that song except those who had been through the experience. Passing on to the 15th chapter, we read: "And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God. And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are your works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are your ways, You King of saints. Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify your name? for You only are holy: for all nations shall come and worship before You; for your judgments are made manifest." (Revelation 15:1-4)

From these texts we see that the new song which the redeemed sing is the song of Moses the servant of God. In the 15th chapter of Exodus we find that song recorded. It begins, "I will sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation." (Exodus 15:1-2)

Then we read, "Who is like unto You, O Lord, among the gods? who is like You, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? You stretched out your right hand, the earth swallowed them. You in your mercy have led forth the people which You have redeemed: You have guided them in your strength unto your holy habitation." (Exodus 15:11-13)

So we see that the new song is a song of exultation at the power of the Lord over all who exalt themselves against Him, professing to be gods. And inasmuch as God triumphs over all false gods, whether it be in the shape of graven or molten images, or in the shape of men who profess to be authorized to speak and act in God's stead, it necessarily follows that all who identify their cause with His must at the same time triumph also. Therefore the new song is a song of thanks to God, "who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 15:57)

The Time of Trouble

Read again the texts cited from the book of Revelation, and note that in each case the new song is mentioned in immediate connection with the time of trouble. When the people of God seem about to be overwhelmed, then the prophet sees them singing a new song on Mount Zion. In this he stands as the representative of all God's people. It is to teach us that the new song, the song of victory, is to be sung in the time of greatest danger.

In the portion of Isaiah which we are studying, we see that this is so. The call to "sing unto the Lord a new song" is immediately followed by a description of the going forth of the Lord as a warrior. It is in connection with the time when mountains and hills are to be laid waste, and rivers and pools are to be dried up. "I will make waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbs; and I will make the rivers islands, and I will dry up the pools." (Isaiah 42:15)

At that time all the earth is called upon to sing a new song. The inhabitants of the desert and the mountain are called upon to give glory unto the Lord, and declare His praise in the islands. "Sing unto the Lord a new song, and His praise from the end of the earth, you that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles, and the inhabitants thereof. Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar inhabits: let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains. Let them give glory unto the Lord, and declare His praise in the islands." (Isaiah 42:10-12)

The Reason for Singing

Compare this scripture with the 96th Psalm: "O sing unto the Lord a new song: sing unto the Lord, all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, bless His name; show forth His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the heathen, His wonders among all people. For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised: He is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols [that is, nothing]: but the Lord made the heavens. Honor and majesty are before Him: strength and beauty are in His sanctuary. Give unto the Lord, O you kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name. Bring an offering, and come into His courts. O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness: fear before Him all the

earth. Say among the heathen that the Lord reigns: the world also shall be established, that it shall not be moved; He shall judge the people righteously. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice Before the Lord: for He comes, for He comes to judge the earth: He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth." (Psalm 96:1-13)

This is exactly parallel with the portion of Isaiah which we are studying. It is the triumph of the Lord over all false gods, that is, over "every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God." (2 Corinthians 10:5)

It is the same thing that is described in Isaiah 2, when "The day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon everyone that is proud and lofty, and upon everyone that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low: ... And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. And the idols He shall utterly abolish." (Isaiah 2:12,17-18)

It is the day when the Lord in "the glory of His majesty, ... arises to shake terribly the earth." (Isaiah 2:19)

In this time the new song is to be sung by the people of God. God's people are to sing best when the cloud hangs darkest.

This is made still more emphatic in the 3rd chapter of Habakkuk. A terrible time is described by the prophet, so terrible that he trembled at the mere vision of it, and prayed that he might be spared from living through the reality. Yet he says: "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: (Compare with Joel 1:10-20) Yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and He will make my feet like hinds' feet, and He will make me to walk upon my high places." (Habakkuk 3:17-19)

No trouble can come on the earth that is so great that God's people cannot sing. It is very common for people to sing when they see no trouble; but it is indeed a new song that is sung when trouble is thickest.

The New Song and the Old Story

The last text quoted reminds us of the 40th Psalm. The prophet says that God has made him sure-footed, so that he can walk safely on high places. So we read: "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. And He has put a new song into my mouth, even praise unto our God." (Psalm 40:1-3)

We see therefore that the new song that is to be sung by the saints on Mount Zion is but the song that is sung by them in the wilderness of trial. It is the song of redemption from sin. In the victory over sin, we have the victory over everything.

When in scenes of glory,
I sing the new, new song,
'Twill be the old, old story
That I have loved so long.

--A. Katherine Hankey, Hymn: I Love to Tell the Story, 1866.

The Silent Watcher

The fact that God is silent, and does not at once strike down injustice and those who practice oppression, is no sign that He takes no notice. It is very hasty judgment that declares that God does not care. How can He help caring, when every wrong that is committed is done to Him? He has identified himself with mankind, so that whosoever does good or evil to one of the least of them, does it to the Lord. "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 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 25:40,45)

Do not forget that there is no searching of God's understanding, and nothing too small for His notice. He upholds the heavens and the earth. "But they are great things," you say.

True, but they are composed of an infinite number of very small particles; and if God did not have a care over every tiny particle, He could not preserve the whole. God's care for the whole earth is only His care for every atom composing the earth. If He did not look after the fragments, there would be waste. If He did not care for the atoms, because they are small and insignificant, then they would fly off into space, and soon He would have no great things to attend to. So let every soul be assured that the Lord has the same care for him that He has for the whole world.

The Promise Sure

Men are saying, "Where is the promise of His coming?" (2 Peter 3:4)

They are saying that the world is governed by chance, or that God is indifferent to the ills of mankind. Thus they are putting themselves against Him in His great case. They are among His accusers. They forget that: "The long-suffering of our God is salvation." (2 Peter 3:15)

Mark that word "longsuffering." God suffers when men suffer. (Isaiah 63:9) He keeps still, not through indifference, but because of infinite patience and forbearance and self-control. This is to teach men patience. It is for the purpose of giving the worst scoffers time for repentance. But He will finally rise up and scatter His enemies. (See Psalm 68) "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord." (James 5:7)

Walking in the Light

What a wonderful promise is in the 16th verse! "I will bring the blind by a way that they know not; in paths that they know not will I lead them; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked places straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them." (Isaiah 42:16,RV)

Therefore we may with full confidence pray, "Lead me, O Lord, in your righteousness, because of my enemies; make your way straight before my face." (Psalm 5:8)

That is the day when "the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness." (Isaiah 29:18) "The darkness and the light are both alike to the Lord," (Psalm

139:12) so that the night shall be light about His people. Remember that all this time God has His people by their right hand. What matter then if they do not know the way? With God leading, a blind man is far better off than a man with eyes who is walking alone, even though it be in the light.

Eyes are of no use to those who do not trust the Lord, for the fact that they do not trust Him shows that they do not know Him, and that proves that they cannot see; for He is everywhere plainly revealed. "They shall be turned back, they shall be greatly ashamed, that trust in graven images, that say to the molten images, You are our gods." (Isaiah 42:17)

They are like the idols in which they trust, and shall be turned back, and put to confusion, together with the gods in which they trust. The case of the Lord vs. the false gods is as good as settled now, so that whoever puts himself on the Lord's side is taking no risk.--Present Truth, November 2, 1899--Isaiah 42:10-13.

Magnifying the Law

"Hear, you deaf; and look, you blind, that you may see. Who is blind, but my Servant? or deaf, as my Messenger that I send? who is blind as he that is at peace with me, and blind as the Lord's Servant? You see many things, but you observe not; his ears are open, but he hears not. It pleased the Lord, for His righteousness' sake, to magnify the law, and make it honorable. But this is a people robbed and spoiled; they are all of them snared in holes, and they are hid in prison houses; they are for a prey, and none delivers; for a spoil, and none says, Restore. Who is there among you who will give ear to this? that will hearken and hear for the time to come? Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? did not the Lord? He against whom we have sinned, and in whose ways they would not walk, neither were they obedient unto His law. Therefore He poured upon him the fury of His anger, and the strength of battle; and it set him on fire round about, yet he knew it not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart." (Isaiah 42:18-25,RV)

Always More to Follow

In studying portions of Scripture which are "hard to be understood," (2 Peter 3:16) we shall save ourselves from falling into error if we adopt the rule, and rigidly adhere to it, never to guess at anything.

Another thing we must always bear in mind, and that is, that no one on earth can give any statement as to the teaching of any text, which will be final and authoritative. That is to say, nobody can exhaust any portion of God's Word. When we have stated what we see in any text, that does not hinder somebody else from seeing a great deal more.

The trouble with people who read what anyone has written, in whom they may have confidence, is in assuming that he has said all that may be said on that subject. Or, seeing the thing plainly, when it is set before them, they are satisfied, and do not think it worthwhile to keep on looking, so as to see more. That is wrong.

No matter how much we see in any word of the Lord, we may be assured that there is much more that we do not see. A belief in the Divine perfection and fullness of God's Word, would keep any people from ever publishing a "creed," summarizing the teachings of the Bible. Let these things be borne in mind as we study.

Christ's Divine Mission Proved

When Jesus was here on this earth, He proved the Divinity of His mission by causing the blind to see, and the deaf to hear. "Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, And said unto Him, Are you He that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things which you do 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 to them." (Matthew 11:2-5)

Many miracles did Jesus in the presence of the people, that they might believe that He is the Christ, and that, believing, they might have life through His name. "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)

The prophecy of Isaiah shows that the great controversy as to who is God will be continued until the very last day of time,--until the Judgment settles the question for ever. Then since it was necessary that miracles should be performed eighteen hundred years ago, in order to demonstrate the genuineness of the mission of Christ,--God's Representative,--it cannot be otherwise than that the same things must be repeated as long as there is any doubt over the matter.

Miracles To Be Wrought

That miracles of healing will be performed by the servant of the Lord even in the very last days, is evident from the scripture before us. "Hear, you deaf; and look, you blind, that you may see." (Isaiah 42:18)

Someone will say (for there are always people ready to discount the Word of God, and to make out that God has not promised us very much) that this command to the deaf

to hear, and to the blind to see, is to be taken in a spiritual sense; that those who do not understand the truth of God, and who are spiritually blind, are to see the Lord, and to understand the truth. Undoubtedly that is true. But the urging of that in order to break the apparent force of the text, shows that they do not appreciate the greatness of the work of conversion. "Which is greater, to say, Your sins be forgiven you, or to say to a palsied man, Rise, take up your bed, and walk?" (Mark 2:9)

Is it easier to make a man behold his God than to cause him to see his fellows? Why should anybody who believes in conversion think it a strange thing that God should heal any defect in the body?

Without doubt all these texts mean that people will understand the Gospel, but that does not show that they will not also receive bodily healing, but the contrary. It may well be, however, that the most of these mighty miracles will be wrought in what are called heathen lands, and that these boasted lands of enlightenment, where the Gospel has been preached so much, and so much slighted, have already had the most of the evidence that will be given them. It is the isles that are waiting for the law of God, (Isaiah 42:4) and God's servant is commissioned to the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes. (Isaiah 42:1-7)

Sight For the Blind

"Who is blind, but my Servant? or deaf, as my Messenger that I send?" (Isaiah 42:19,RV) "He saved others, himself He cannot save." (Matthew 27:42)

This was said of Christ. He himself suffered all the ills from which He delivered men, yet He did nothing for himself. And this shows that there is no condition that is hopeless. We are deaf and blind; very well, the Lord says that His Servant whom He upholds, His chosen, in whom His soul has delight, whom He has sent to open the blind eyes, is also blind. He has assumed all our blindness. No one is afflicted as He is, because He has the combined afflictions of all men.

No soul of man has so great a weight of sin on him as the Lord Jesus Christ had, for He had the sins of the whole world. But He is "the Holy One and the Just," (Acts 3:14) therefore there is not a soul on earth but may also be just and holy. In Him, all

deafness and blindness, all infirmities of whatever kind, both physical and spiritual, are removed. "In Him is no darkness at all." (1 John 1:5)

Therefore though we be blind and deaf and dumb and lame and vile, all this is passed from us to Him. "With His stripes we are healed." (Isaiah 53:5)

Even so, with the blindness that He has assumed, we see.

God's Intimate Friends

"Who is blind as He that is perfect?" (Isaiah 42:19)

The Revision has, "as he that is at peace with me." (Isaiah 42:19)

The Norwegian has it, "s my confidential friend," (Isaiah 42:19) and this is warranted by the Hebrew fully as much as either of the others. This fits with what has preceded, when we remember that the servant of the Lord is Israel, the seed of Abraham, God's friend. What care we what our condition is, so long as we are God's confidential friends? We may be in prison, but that makes no difference as long as the key is in the hands of our intimate friend. Remember this as you read the last verses of this chapter.

God's Righteousness

"The Lord is well pleased for His righteousness' sake; He will magnify the law, and make it honorable." (Isaiah 42:21)

The Danish translation is, "The Lord has pleasure, for the sake of His righteousness, to make the law great and glorious." (Isaiah 42:21)

This shows that the law of God is His righteousness. The more the law is honored, the more the righteousness of God is exalted. The greater the law, the greater the righteousness of God. Let us see if there is any comfort in this. The psalmist says, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Psalm 40:3)

The foundation of God's throne is righteousness: "Justice and judgment are the habitation of your throne: mercy and truth shall go before your face." (Psalm 89:14) "Clouds and darkness are round about Him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne." (Psalm 97:2)

And God's throne upholds the universe. If the foundations were destroyed, therefore, there would be no existence for anybody. If righteousness should cease, of course the righteous would cease to be, as well, since the righteous are the salt of the earth. But there is no danger, for Jesus said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. 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 will not destroy or alter the law, because that is His righteousness, and "He cannot deny himself." (2 Timothy 2:13)

Fulfilling the Law

A complete answer to anyone who is so perverse that in the face of the plain statement of Christ, that He did not come to destroy the law, (Matthew 5:17) he will say that Christ fulfills the law by abolishing it, is found in the words of the text: "He will magnify the law, and make it honorable." (Isaiah 42:21)

What honor can anyone give to Christ, and in what sort of esteem does he hold His work, who says that Christ destroys that which is honorable, and "holy, and just and good?" (Romans 7:12) "But He fulfilled the law," says one.

That is exactly what He did. What then? "Oh, then we do not need to do it; since He fulfilled it, we can have nothing to do with it."

Indeed, that sounds very strange from the lips of one who professes to love the Lord Jesus. It is very easy to understand how one who says, "We will not have this Man to reign over us," (Luke 19:14) can say, "We do not wish to have anything to do with anything that He is connected with."

But why should a Christian desire to be separated from that which finds its fullness in Christ?

Not Under the Law

"But we are not under the law." (Romans 6:14)

No indeed, thank the Lord for that. And why are we not under it? Because we walk in it. Have you forgotten that the message of comfort prepares the way of the Lord? and that the undefiled in the way are those who walk in the law of the Lord? "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord. Blessed are they that keep His testimonies, and that seek Him with the whole heart. They also do no iniquity: they walk in His ways." (Psalm 119:1-3)

We are delivered from the law, which condemned us to death for our transgression, that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter. "Wherefore, my brethren, you also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that you should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." (Romans 7:4-6)

And this is done by the body of Christ, in whom the law finds its perfect fulfillment. When we are joined to Christ in perfection, then the same fullness of the law will be found in us. The curse of the law is not to them that do it, but upon them that do not continue in all things that are written in it. "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. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that does them shall live in them. 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." (Galatians 3:10-13)

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law; that is, He has redeemed us from disobedience, unto perfect obedience.

Sin Abounding, Grace Superabounding

"He will magnify the law." (Isaiah 42:21) "By the law is the knowledge of sin." (Romans 3:20)

Therefore the greater the law is made to appear, the greater will sin appear. It was just for this reason that the law entered, "that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." (Romans 5:20)

So we see that in magnifying the law, God is making His grace to abound, in revealing His righteousness, which He puts in and upon us, for the remission of sins. The magnifying of the law, and making it honorable, is but the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Law of Life and the Law of Death

The law is righteousness, yet righteousness does not come by it. That is, righteousness does not come by any man's works of the law. It is only "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," (Romans 8:2) that makes us free from sin and death. The righteousness which is by the faith of Christ, (Philippians 3:9) is the only righteousness that will enable anybody to stand in the day of Christ's coming; for the law is in His heart in perfection. The law in the heart of Christ is the law of which a copy was placed on tables of stone by the finger of God. In Christ we have it upon the Living Stone, and not upon the dead stone. So while on the tables of stone given to Moses, it is only death, on the Living Stone, Christ Jesus, it is life. The magnifying of the law shows us how great is the gift of life which God bestows in Christ.

Precepts and Promises

For it must be known that all the precepts of God are promises. Nobody has ever "first given something to the Lord, that it should be recompensed unto him again; For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things." (Romans 11:35-36)

God does not give us life as a reward for something that we have done for Him, but He gives us life which contains the performance of the things which He wishes us to do.

When God says, "You shall not," He does not mean that we must keep ourselves from some evil, but that He will provide the means whereby we shall be kept. By comparing two texts of Scripture we can readily see this. God said to all Israel, "I am the Lord your God, which have brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before me." (Exodus 20:2-3)

Again He says: "Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto you: O Israel, if you will hearken unto me; There shall no strange god be in you; neither shall you worship any strange god. I am the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt." (Psalm 81:8-10)

From this we learn that when God spoke the ten commandments He meant that if the people would but hearken to Him, they should be kept from all evil. The greater the requirement of the law, the greater the gift of God. The magnifying of the law is the magnifying of the grace of God.

Terrible Manifestations of Mercy

The terrors of Sinai reveal the mercies of Calvary. Men are accustomed to think and speak of the terrors of the law as given on Sinai, but they forget that Calvary is equally terrible. Was it death to touch the mount where the law was proclaimed? even so Calvary meant death. There were thunders and darkness and earthquake at Sinai, and at Calvary there were the same.

Yea, even from the throne of grace, to which we are invited to come and obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need, proceed lightnings and thunderings, and voices which cause the earth to quake. "And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices." (Revelation 4:5) "And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail." (Revelation 11:19)

The awfulness of Calvary, which wrung from the lips of the Saviour the cry, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46) and which broke His heart, show the greatness of the law which had been broken. On the cross Jesus magnified the law of God. There it was shown that so unchangeable is the law, that it

will take the life even of the only begotten Son of God, when He is "numbered among the transgressors." (Luke 22:37; Isaiah 53:12)

But the greater and more awful it appears, the more may we rejoice, because we know that God has pledged His own existence to the bestowal of all its righteousness upon us. What a blessed promise it is, that God will magnify the law. Let no one speak lightly of that which Christ by His death made honorable.

Time for God to Work

"It is time for You, Lord, to work; for they have made void your law." (Psalm 119:126)

Men have despised and rejected the law of God, and in this they have been aided by His professed followers; for there are many who bear the name Christian, who do not hesitate to speak most disparagingly of the law. So it is thought so small a matter, that men have no hesitation in putting their own laws in its stead. In this, they are despising and rejecting Christ, whose life it is.

Now as the great controversy is to decide who is God, it follows that in the last days, when the message goes forth, "Behold your God!" the law in Christ must be proclaimed as never before. God will show that He is "our Judge, ... our Lawgiver, ... [and] our King," (Isaiah 33:22) in that He alone can save. But bear in mind that when the Lord works to magnify His law, because men have made it void, He is not working merely to vindicate His own rightful place, but He is working for men. The law of God has been made void in men's hearts, in that they have driven it out, and have turned to their own way. It is time for Him to work, but where? in men's hearts, to lift up the standard of righteousness.

Men by making void the law of God have fallen by their iniquity and God works to restore them by restoring the law in their hearts. And, "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." (2 Corinthians 6:2)--Present Truth, November 9, 1899--Isaiah 42:18-25.

Chapter 53

I Am with You

"Yet now, thus says Jehovah; Who created you, O Jacob; and who formed you, O Israel: Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are mine. When you pass through waters, I am with you; And through rivers, they shall not overwhelm you: When you walk in the fire, you shall not be scorched; And the flame shall not take hold of you. For I am Jehovah, your God; The Holy One of Israel, your Redeemer: I have given Egypt for your ransom; Cush, and Seba, in your stead. Because you have been precious in my sight, You have been honored, and I have loved you: Therefore will I give men instead of you; And peoples instead of your soul. Fear not, for I am with you: From the east I will bring your children, And from the west I will gather you together: I will say to the north, Give up; And to the south, Withhold not: Bring my sons from afar; And my daughters from the ends of the earth: Everyone that is called by my name, Whom for my glory I have created; Whom I have formed, yea whom I have made." (Isaiah 43:1-7,Lowth)

No attention should be paid to the chapter division here, although as a matter of convenience we have made it the division of a lesson. But there is no break in the subject, and we cannot get the full force of the scripture here quoted without reading the last part of chapter 42. "Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? did not the Lord, He against whom we have sinned? for they would not walk in His ways, neither were they obedient unto His law. Therefore He has poured upon them the fury of His anger, and the strength of battle: and it has set him on fire round about, yet he knew it not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart." (Isaiah 42:24-25) "But now thus says the Lord that created you, O Jacob, and He that formed you, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed you, I have called you by name; you are mine." (Isaiah 43:1)

And then follows the assurance that God is with them even in the fire and the water, and that they shall not be burned or overwhelmed. He who gave Israel into captivity is his Redeemer.

Present Help

Our versions make the mistake of rendering verse 2, "I will be with you." (Isaiah 43:2)

The common version is better than the Revision, in that it places the words "will be" in Italics, indicating that they are not found in the Hebrew, as they are not. There is no verb expressed, as is often the case in the Hebrew, which is very brief. Now it is evident that when the copulative verb is omitted, the simplest form of it is that which should be supplied, which is the present tense, and not the future. Therefore it is correctly given by Lowth, "I am with you." (Isaiah 43:2)

That exactly represents the character of God, whose name is I AM. There can be no doubt that God will be with us, when He is always present. With Him the present contains both the past and the future. He is always I AM; therefore in all the ages to come He will be the hope of His people. But if we read it, "I will be with you," we are apt to forget the present. The present is all that we are concerned with; if we have God with us as "a very present help in trouble," (Psalm 46:1) we can ask for nothing more. With God it is always now.

The Secret of Discontent

"Be free from the love of money; content with such things as you have: for He has said, I will in no wise fail you, neither will I in any wise forsake you. So that with good courage we say, The Lord is my Helper; I will not fear: What shall man do unto me?" (Hebrews 13:5-6,RV)

Having Him, we have everything. That is true enough, and no one will deny it; and yet we very seldom act as though we believed it. And that shows how rare real Christianity is; for the very fundamental principle of Christianity is the continual presence of the Lord, and that He is everything.

He who does not believe that God is always present, always loving, and always all-powerful to carry out His loving designs, does not believe in God. But whoever does believe that, must be content, because he knows that with the Lord he has all things. "He

that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32)

It follows, therefore, that anxiety and worry are marks of heathenism. "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)

What Constitutes Heathenism

There is more to this than appears on the surface. We are not aware how often we proclaim ourselves heathen. Consider this very apparent distinction between the heathen and the worshiper of the true God: The heathen is not content without a god that he can see; while the Christian trusts the God who "dwells in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man has seen, neither can see." (1 Timothy 6:16)

In short, the heathen cannot trust his god out of sight, while the

Christian has as much confidence in his God when he cannot see Him as when he can. Now no one would ever complain if he could see all that he desired, ready to hand. It is when we cannot see how we are to get on, that we begin to murmur or grow anxious. Yea, it is often a murmur, in that the desponding one says, "God has forsaken me." (Isaiah 49:14)

Because he cannot see God, he thinks that He does not exist. We doubt God, because we cannot see Him. We cannot endure that He should work behind a veil. Thus we proclaim ourselves heathen.

People may think that it is not a very great thing to believe in God, but really to believe in God is everything. Real belief in God means freedom from all worry, because God cares for us, and tells us to cast all our care on Him. "Casting all your care upon Him; for He cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7)

God's Nearness

"I am with you." (Isaiah 43:2,Lowth)

Therefore we are not to fear. Jesus came and said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," (Matthew 28:20) and He had just said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." (Matthew 28:18)

He cannot leave us nor forsake us, because He fills heaven and earth. "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)

In every sunbeam, in every sparkling drop of water, in every breath of air, the Lord is present, and His presence is with us for the purpose of giving us rest. "And He said, My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest." (Exodus 33:14)

How near He is, when we can feel His breath upon our cheek, yea, even in our nostrils. "For what nation is there so great, who has God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon Him for?" (Deuteronomy 4:7)

Christ's Saving Presence

"Fear not!" (Isaiah 43:5)

Why not? "For I am with you." (Isaiah 43:5)

The Lord has left on record some examples of the saving power of His presence, so that we may learn not to fear. After the miracle of feeding the five thousand with five loaves, when the people were about to take Jesus by force, and make Him king, He constrained His disciples to get into the boat, and to go before Him to the other side of the sea, while He sent the multitudes away. The night came on, and "The sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew," (John 6:18) and the ship in which the disciples were, "was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with the waves," (Matthew 14:24) "And it was now dark, and Jesus had not come to them." (John 6:17)

Then suddenly they saw a form walking calmly on the angry waters, and they cried out with fear; but Jesus said to them, "it is I;" (Matthew 14:27) literally, "I am." "Be not afraid." (Matthew 14:27)

It is the same word, "Fear not, for I am with you." (Isaiah 43:5)

They thought that they were alone on the waters, but His eye was upon them all the time. His name is I AM, and He was with them when they could not see Him as well as when He appeared to them.

The Author and Finisher

When the disciples recognized the Lord, "They willingly received Him into the ship." (John 6:21)

Their fear was past. Then what? "Immediately the ship was at the land whither they went." (John 6:21)

He is the beginning and the end. (Revelation 21:6) With His presence there is the fulfillment of all things. The task that is but just begun is finished if it is begun in Him.

They feared no more, after Jesus came to them; yet there was no more reason to fear before they saw Him, than there was afterwards. Would we fear in any circumstances whatever, if we could see Jesus right before us, or at our right hand? You say, "No; not at all."

But we do fear, and yet He is present. "I have set the Lord always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." (Psalm 16:8)

Are our fears due to the fact that we do not have confidence in the saving power of the Lord? or because we do not believe that He is present? In either case, they are a remnant of heathenism that we have not yet shaken off.

In the Fire

There were three Hebrew captives in Babylon, who proved the power of the presence of the Lord. A stern decree had been issued, commanding everybody to bow down before a golden image that the king had set up. The penalty for disregarding the decree was burning in a furnace. They unqualifiedly refused to bow down to the image. Here was a test as to who was God. Was it the king and his idols? or was it the God of Israel?

If the three men had bowed down through fear, what would their act have said? It would have said that they did not believe in God; that they could not trust in Him to deliver them from the king and his idols. But their profession of faith was more than a theory. They knew whom they had believed, and that their God was able to deliver them.

So into the fiery furnace they went, where the fire was so hot that it slew the men who had to draw near to the outside of it to cast them in. But what of them? God had said, "When you walk in the fire, you shall not be scorched; and the flame shall not take hold on you;" (Isaiah 43:2,Lowth) and so it was. Only their bands were burned off, and the three men rose and walked erect in the midst of the furnace; for God was with them. Then the king commanded them to be brought out, "And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was a hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed upon them." (Daniel 3:27)

Present Though Visible

Did you ever think that we hear nothing more about the form of the fourth after the three men were taken from the furnace? He was clearly seen for a few moments, walking to and fro with them in the flames; then the doors were opened and the men were called forth, and their companion disappeared. Did He forsake them? Not at all; He was as near them when they could not see Him as when He appeared.

In fact, there is nothing to show that the three men in the fire saw Him at all. His appearance was more for the benefit of the king and his idolatrous court, than for the three men themselves. They knew that He was present without seeing Him. It was the

consciousness of His presence that made them able to stand unmoved in the presence of the threatened punishment. God is unchangeable. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and for ever; therefore He is as near when unseen as He is when He is seen. They who believe and trust in His presence when they cannot see Him will at the last have the privilege of seeing His face, and beholding Him for evermore.

Dwelling With Everlasting Burnings There is coming a time when "the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, ... the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." (2 Peter 3:12,10)

Then the inhabitants of the earth shall be burned, and few men will be left. "Therefore has the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left." (Isaiah 24:6)

Who will be the few men left? Only those who are able to dwell with the devouring fire, and amidst everlasting burnings. "The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness has surprised the hypocrites. 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." (Isaiah 33:14-15)

Those who make the Most High their habitation, being confident of His presence, even though it may seem that He has forsaken them, will be able to dwell in the midst of the fire that devours the earth, for they dwell with God, and "our God is a consuming fire." (Hebrews 12:29)

This promise in Isaiah will be very real to many before very long. But none will be able to trust in it when the great test comes, except those who have lived in the consciousness of God's presence, and the proof of it in the deliverance from sin.

God With Us

What is the practical daily result of having God with us? Well, of course, in the first place it is that we have life, and breath, and all things, for "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." (Acts 17:28)

Everybody in the world gets this from the Lord; but those who acknowledge His presence, and who delight in it, get benefits that others do not. Of Christ we read that God anointed Him with the Holy Ghost and with power, and that "[He] went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him." (Acts 10:38)

So the benefit that those receive, who love and acknowledge the presence of God with them, is the power to do good to others. Now remember that the name of Jesus is: "Emmanuel, which being interpreted is God with us." (Matthew 1:23)

He is with us all the days until the end, and therefore God is with us, that we, like Him, may do good. Of the child Samuel we read, "And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground." (1 Samuel 3:19)

The result of God's being with him was that he spoke "as the oracles of God," (1 Peter 4:11) so that his words were too valuable to be lost. If we invite God to stay with us, we must consent to allow Him to manage all our affairs, and us too; but that ought not to be considered a hardship, since "His way is perfect." (Psalm 18:30)

Perhaps the most instructive case of all, as illustrating the presence of God with a man, is that of Joseph. "The patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him, And delivered him out of all his affliction, and gave him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh." (Acts 7:9-10)

Note this, that God was with him when he went down to Egypt, although he went as a slave. It was not merely in the prosperity that God was with him, but in his affliction. Indeed, it was God who sent Joseph into Egypt. When Joseph arrived in Egypt, he was sold again, but the Lord did not forsake him. "The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian." (Genesis 39:2)

But it was not all smooth before him, even though God was with him. Joseph was falsely accused, and without being given any chance to clear himself, he was cast into prison. Surely the Lord had forgotten him then. Not at all. "The Lord was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And

the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. And the keeper of the prison looked not to anything that was under his hand; because the Lord was with him, and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper." (Genesis 39:21-23)

The Lord is not afraid or ashamed to go to prison, so that the fact that a man is in prison does not prove that the Lord has left him. Indeed, the Lord is often in prison. "I was in prison, and you came unto me. ... I was ... in prison, and you visited me not." (Matthew 25:36,43)

After a long time, and much weary waiting, Joseph was taken from prison, and placed over the land of Egypt. He became practically the king of Egypt. He was ruler over all the land, and all that he lacked was a seat on the throne. Joseph did not know what he went to prison for until Pharaoh sent for him; and then he found out that it was the way to the place of power. But Joseph did not spend his time mourning, although he could not see the way out of prison.

We can look back to that time, and seeing the end at the same time that we see the experience that he passed through, it seems to us a matter of course that Joseph should do as he did. But we must remember that to Joseph things looked as black and hopeless during those years in prison as they would to us. If we could see our way clear, we should never murmur, nor doubt the presence and goodness of God.

Joseph could not see ahead, but he did not mind that; God was with him all the way, and that was sufficient; he did not need to see ahead. If we would but remember that He knows the way that we take, and can see the end from the beginning, it would save us much time and useless despondency. God is with us in the dark as well as in the light, in fire, and water, and prison, as well as in times of ease and prosperity.--Present Truth, November 16, 1899--Isaiah 43:1-7.

God's Witnesses

"Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears. Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the peoples be assembled; who among them can declare this, and show us former things? let them bring their witnesses, that they may be justified; or let them hear, and say, It is truth. You are my witnesses, says the Lord, and my servant, whom I have chosen; that you may know and believe me, and understand that I am He; before me there was no god formed, neither shall there be after me. I even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no saviour. I have declared, and I have saved, and I have showed, and there was no strange god among you; therefore you are my witnesses, says the Lord, that I am God. Yea, before the day was, I am He; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand; I will work, and who shall let it?" (Isaiah 43:8-13,RV)

A New Challenge

This lesson brings us to the very heart of the trial. All nations are challenged to come into court with their witnesses, and justify themselves in their opposition to God. They refuse to submit to His authority. In that case therefore they ought to be able to show themselves superior to Him. This is a repetition of the call made in the 41st chapter, but the student will notice that the Lord abates something of His demands upon them. In the former instance He called upon them all to come, and to produce their strong reasons, saying, "Let them bring them forth, and show us what shall happen: let them show the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come. Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods." (Isaiah 41:22-23)

That was altogether too much, and there was none that could utter a word. Now the Lord says, "Who among them can declare this, and show us former things?" (Isaiah 43:9)

They cannot tell things to come; very well, try something easier: show what has happened. Surely that is the least that could be asked of proud boasters.

The Prophet the Only True Historian

But they cannot do even that. It requires just as much prophetic power to tell correctly what has happened as it does to tell what shall take place in the future. There are thousands of histories written, but after one has read all of them, he does not know the truth of the things concerning which they treat.

Even many of the events recorded never took place, but are merely local gossip that grew with the telling, and after the lapse of hundreds of years, is taken as fact. Everybody knows how a rumour will grow, and how in a very few days it will be repeated in all seriousness by the most well-intentioned persons as a veritable fact.

It is said that Von Ranke, one of the greatest historians, has an object lesson in this, which made him very careful in his writing. He was absent from home for a few days, and during his absence an accident occurred, by which several persons were injured. On his return he tried to ascertain the facts in the case, but none of his informants, all of whom saw the affair, agreed in their accounts of it. One had one story, and another had another. Of course all could not be correct, and it was quite likely that all were more or less wrong. Then the historian said, "If I cannot get the exact facts about a thing that happened in my own neighborhood within a few days past, when I can talk with the eyewitnesses, how can I be sure of what happened hundreds of years ago?"

We do not need to go abroad for an experience in this respect; who has not had many similar experiences in trying to learn the details of any affair? Carlyle, himself, a historian, says, "Foolish History, ever, more or less, the written epitomised synopsis of Rumour, knows so little that were not as well unknown."

Even when we have the exact facts recorded, the human historian cannot tell us the truth of what lay behind the events: the motives of the actors. He draws inferences, but he cannot read the heart; and so the real history remains a sealed book. Only in the Judgment will the exact truth of all things be known. When the hidden things of darkness are brought to light, and the counsels of the heart are made manifest, (1 Corinthians 4:5) at the coming of the Lord, then we can study the history of the world with certainty.

How to Study History

But can we not know anything of the past? Must we discount everything that we read in history? Is all study of history useless? Yes and no. We may study history profitably or we may study it to no profit whatever. We may know some of the things that have happened in the past, if we study in the light of the Word of God, who was, and is, and is to come, and who therefore knows things past and present and future equally well. He can do what He challenges the heathen to do: tell former things and also what shall be.

Whoever studies history, and ignores the revelation which God has given, might far better let the study alone. It is to him worse than useless. God, who knows the hearts of men, always tells the exact truth, and He alone can do it. If one will first become acquainted with God's Word, knowing it not merely as a record of facts, but as a living power, he may read history written by men with profit; for being filled with the Spirit of truth, he will be able to discern the truth and error, even of things of which the Bible has not spoken particularly.

When we say that the Bible is the place to study history, we do not mean that the Bible contains an account of all that has happened in the past, nor even of all that it may be useful to know; but the Bible does contain an outline of all history, even of what are called "pre-historic times," so that it is a faithful guide, and it enables one to know the truth. This is the promise of Jesus, "If you continue in my Word, then are you my disciples indeed; And you shall know the truth." (John 8:31-32)

Man cannot tell the truth even of what is passing in his own heart; how foolish then are his assumptions of wisdom in the face of God!

God Alone Speaks Truth

"Let them bring forth their witnesses that they may be justified." (Isaiah 43:9)

If men could tell the truth, the whole truth, then it follows that they would be justified. That is self-evident. If men could substantiate their statements, if they could make their words stand forever, then there could be no case against them. In that case, God would be disgraced, because their words are against Him. But every day proves

how utterly unable man is to tell the truth, even when he does not mean to deceive. On the contrary, the Word of God is settled forever in heaven, and even the thoughts of His heart endure to all generations. "For ever, O Lord, your word is settled in heaven." (Psalm 119:89) "The counsel of the Lord stands for ever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations." (Psalm 33:11)

Then instead of our seeking to justify ourselves, let us hear the Word of God, "and say, It is truth." (Isaiah 43:9)

Men to be God's Mouthpieces

Now God speaks to the people whom He has called from the north and the south, and "from the ends of the earth, Even everyone that is called by His name," (Isaiah 43:6-7) and says, "You are my witnesses." (Isaiah 43:10)

God has spoken, but His word is denied; His character has been impeached; it is evident, therefore, that He must have somebody to testify in His behalf, if He shall win His case. This is not theory, but actual fact. If there could be no one found to testify for God, He would lose His case; for the charge against Him is that He is not able to save.

He started out by making man, and placing him over the earth as its lord. Man has lost the dominion; he has turned against the One whom he was designed to represent. If therefore God were unable to win anybody back to Him, to be faithful and true witnesses for Him, that would prove that He was not God.

So God must have witnesses, and have them He will, even if He should be obliged to make new men out of stones. (Matthew 3:9) Although God has spoken, He rests His case on the testimony of men. It is by the lives of men, that the world is to learn the truth of God. "That they all may be one; as You, Father, are in me, and I in You, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that You have sent me." (John 17:21)

We are associated with Jesus as witnesses in this case. The Lord says, "You are my witnesses, ... and my servant whom I have chosen." (Isaiah 43:10) "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; my elect, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his

voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law." (Isaiah 42:1-4)

From Him we are to learn the kind of witness to be rendered. "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)

Only in Christ can we know who God is, so that we can testify in His behalf, and we can know Him only as He is revealed in us. Let us first then study Christ as a witness for God.

Christ the Faithful and True Witness

"His name is ... the Word of God," (Revelation 19:13) and He is also called "Faithful and True." (Revelation 19:11) "[He is] the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God." (Revelation 3:14)

Before Pontius Pilate, "[He] witnessed a good confession," (1 Timothy 6:13) and said to him, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth hears my voice." (John 18:37)

He himself is the truth: "I am ... the truth." (John 14:6)

In Him all fullness dwells: "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." (Colossians 2:9)

Therefore He tells the whole truth; and there is no unrighteousness in Him, (Psalm 92:15, John 7:18) so that He tells nothing but the truth. He is therefore a perfect witness, He does not testify of hearsay, but says, "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." (John 3:11)

Jesus was able to render perfect testimony, because "God was with Him." (Acts 7:9; Acts 10:38) "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." (2 Corinthians 5:19)

But God is with us, beseeching by us as He was by Christ, and we are ambassadors in the stead of Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:20) Therefore if we do not properly represent the Lord, it is because we reject His presence.

The Spirit of the True Witness

When God calls our attention to His Servant whom He upholds, He says, "I have put my Spirit upon Him." (Isaiah 42:1) "It is the Spirit that bears witness, because the Spirit is truth." (1 John 5:6)

Without the Spirit of truth, no one can tell the truth; his very life is a lie. So before Christ sent His disciples forth, He said, "You shall receive power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

We are therefore placed on an equality with Christ, in the matter of witnessing, since we have the same Spirit given to us that He had.

Reproofs of Instruction

Wisdom cries, and says, "Turn at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my Spirit upon you, I will make known my words unto you." (Proverbs 1:23)

This is in keeping with the message of comfort. The Holy Spirit, the Comforter, comes with conviction; if we turn at His reproofs, then we receive the fullness of the Spirit, and thus we know the words of God; and then the Spirit dwelling in us will testify of the truth. This testimony will not be merely verbal, but will be the testimony of the life, revealing itself in "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance;" (Galatians 5:22) in short, all the attributes of God.

The Witness of Creation

All nature testifies of God. His everlasting power and Divinity are revealed in everything that He has made. (Romans 1:20) Even among heathen peoples, where the Scriptures were never seen, "He left not himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, providing food and joy for the people. "The heavens declare the glory of God." (Psalm 19:1)

From inanimate creation we learn the kind of witness that the Lord desires. It is simply the revealing of His indwelling presence. It is simply to let the world know that He is. In that He is, He is in us; therefore if our lives do not reveal the character of God, we are false witnesses: we make Him seem to be other than He is.

God has a claim upon all men; all are rightfully His witnesses. He has summoned all, and has given to all the witnesses, even the blood of Christ--His own life. There is not a soul on earth that does not live solely by the life of God, the life that is secured to us by the death of Jesus Christ whom He has sent.

Since all receive life from Him, and it is His own life, it is self-evident that the character of God, and that only, ought to be revealed in all. If any do not reveal the character of God, they say either that it is not the life of God which they have (which is a lie), or else that God is such a one as they are, (Psalm 50:21) which is also a lie. Everyone who testifies against God is therefore one of God's witnesses who has perjured himself.

God Alone Has Power

In what God has done for us when there was obviously no other helper, He has given evidence that He is God. "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you." (Isaiah 43:2)

This verse was specially enacted when Israel came out of Egypt, and crossed the Red Sea. All the idols of Egypt had been overthrown, and the things in which the Egyptians trusted, were shown to be useless, and were destroyed. God saved His people "when there was no strange god among them," (Isaiah 43:12) and they acknowledged that Jehovah was "a great King above all gods." (Psalm 95:3)

By His working among them they were witnesses that He is God. We ourselves are in the same position. Every day are we unconscious witnesses that He is God. Whatever gods men serve besides the only true God, are gods of their own making, and therefore of less power than the men themselves. Every day men breathe, without giving the matter a thought; they even lie down at night and sleep, losing all consciousness, yet they continue breathing. Every breath is therefore a witness to the presence and loving power of God.

Then when men speak against God, or speak that which is not truth, they prove themselves to be false witnesses, because their witness is contradictory. With the breath which is evidence of the love and power of God, they deny Him.

God's case is sure: there is none but He that can deliver, and there is none that can pluck one of His saved ones out of His hand: "Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." (John 10:28)

There is the most blessed comfort imaginable in this, that all are of right witnesses. All are "accepted in the Beloved." (Ephesians 1:6)

He has not cast off a single soul. It is on the fact that He in no wise casts any out, but that He receives and pardons and cleanses all, making them new creatures, kings and priests, that God rests His case. God is obliged to receive all who come to Him, or else the charge against Him will stand good.

But it is not merely a question of whether or not God will receive a man. He does not leave it uncertain. That is, He does not give anybody cause to wonder if He will receive him. No; God himself goes out to seek the lost, and whenever He finds one who is dishonoring His name, it may be by lying drunk in the gutter like a beast instead of standing upright like the king that God made man, He says, "You belong to me; you are one of my witnesses; I have a right to your testimony, for I have given you my life."

And by the power of His own life; by the power by which He is from everlasting to everlasting, and by which He upholds all things, He will show His perfect character in that degraded man's life, if the man will surrender to Him. He says, "I will work, and who shall let it?" (Isaiah 43:13)--Present Truth, November 23, 1899--Isaiah 43:8-13.

The Sin-bearer

"Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and I will bring down all of them as fugitives, even the Chaldeans, in the ships of their rejoicing. I am the Lord, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King. Thus says the Lord, which makes a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters; Which brings forth the chariot and horse, the army and the power; they lie down together, they shall not rise: they are extinct, they are quenched as flax. Remember not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing; now shall it spring forth; shall you not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. The beasts of the field shall honor me, the jackals and the ostriches because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen, The people which I formed for myself, that they might set forth my praise. Yet 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. I have not made you to serve with offerings, nor wearied you with frankincense. You have bought me no sweet cane with money, neither have you filled me with the fat of your sacrifices; but 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, and I will not remember your sins. Put me in remembrance; let us plead together: set forth your cause, that you may be justified. Your first father has sinned, and your interpreters have transgressed against me. Therefore I will profane the princes of the sanctuary, and I will make Jacob a curse, and Israel a reviling." (Isaiah 43:14-28,RV)

God's Power to Deliver

Again we have a reminder of God's power and His care for His people. We recall from the 40th chapter that Israel says, "My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God." (Isaiah 40:27)

Therefore God tells what He has done for their sake. "Thus says the Lord, which makes a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters; Which brings forth the chariot

and horse, the army and the power; they lie down together, they shall not rise: they are extinct, they are quenched as flax." (Isaiah 43:16-17,RV)

All the enemies of His people, who put their trust in their war ships, are taken captive by Him. He delivers His people from bondage, even making a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters, as when He brought Israel out of Egypt. The chariot and the horse, the army and the power, are as nothing compared with the Lord. "The horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea. ... Pharaoh's chariots and his host has He cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea. The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone." (Exodus 15:1,4-5)

That was a wonderful deliverance; but the Lord will do still more wonderful things. "Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that they shall no more say, The Lord lives, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt: But the Lord lives, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all the countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land." (Jeremiah 23:7-8)

The things which God will yet do for His people are so great that the marvelous events of the exodus will pale into insignificance by the side of them. "Remember not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing; now shall it spring forth; shall you not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert." (Isaiah 43:18-19,RV)

God's Children Delivered From Egypt

The Lord is the God that has brought His people out of the land of Egypt. "Out of Egypt have I called my son," (Matthew 2:15) says the Lord by the prophet, and this is true of everyone of His sons. Out of the land of Egypt must we all come; and that wonderful deliverance in the days of Moses, will stand as the evidence of God's power to save, and the quickener of faith, until the future, final deliverance shall have been effected, and then to all eternity the "new thing" that God has done will be the theme of the saved. In the performance of this new thing the Lord will "make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert," (Isaiah 43:19,RV) to give drink to His chosen witnesses, His servants. Now this was written nearly a thousand years after the exodus from Egypt, when God caused the waters to run in the dry places like a river, so that

Israel might drink; and since that time there has never been a similar occurrence, that is, none on a similar scale; therefore it is evident that these things are yet to be fulfilled.

That they are to be literally fulfilled, we cannot doubt. If we should deny that we here have statements of what will actually occur, the only reason for it would be the improbability of such things being done, because we are not accustomed to them. But that would be a denial of the Lord.

This is a case in which God's power and love are called in question, and He will do such things as will leave no chance for doubt. In the time of trouble of which we have previously read, when the flame devours the pastures of the wilderness, God will cause rivers of water to spring forth from the dry ground to refresh His children.

Power Yet To Be Manifested

"The beast of the field shall honor me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen." (Isaiah 43:20)

The wild beasts will also honor God. We remember that Jesus was in the wilderness of temptation forty days, and was with the wild beasts. "And immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness. And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto Him." (Mark 1:12-13) "Many bulls have compassed me; strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gape upon me with their mouth, as a ravening and a roaring lion. ... Save me from the lion's mouth; Yea, from the horns of the wild-oxen You have answered me." (Psalm 22:12-13,21,RV)

They compassed Him about, and gaped upon Him with their mouths, and He was threatened by the lions, and was seemingly about to be tossed by the horns of the wild oxen; yet not one of them touched Him. They recognized in Him the authority of their Creator.

Even so it was with Daniel in the den of lions. Their refusal to harm the prophet of God, although they were hungry, as was shown by their instantly devouring his accusers, was a testimony to the saving power of God. Thus they honored Him.

God's people are yet to be brought into just such close places for their faith, and the wild beasts of the desert will do homage to the power of the righteousness of Jehovah in them. God made man to have dominion over the beasts, and this he had as long as he remained his loyalty to God, and when men become perfect witnesses for God,--when the image of God is perfectly restored in them, and the life of Jesus is manifested in their mortal flesh,--the authority of God in them will be recognized by wild beasts and serpents. When it is thus demonstrated that man has recovered his kingly authority, it will be but a very short time until the first dominion will be restored to him.

God's Glory Revealed In and By Men

"This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise." (Isaiah 43:21)

It is of us that the Lord speaks. The Apostle Peter says, "You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should show forth the praises of Him that has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." (1 Peter 2:9)

That is what God has made us for. He has chosen us as His servants, that He might reveal himself in us. It is our "high calling ... in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:14)

Is it not a wonderful thing, that even as the glory of God shone forth of old from the sanctuary, so now He will let His glory shine forth from the men who will acknowledge themselves to be the temples of God? And the glory of God that is seen on them, will be their own glory, shining forth from them. "He will beautify the meek with salvation." (Psalm 149:4)

Acceptable Sacrifice

What shall we think of the Lord's complaint against Israel, that they have not brought burnt-offerings to Him, and have not honored Him with their sacrifices? Does it

mean that they had been remiss in their daily and yearly services? Not by any means. Remember what He said to them in the very beginning of the prophecy of Isaiah. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? says the Lord: I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats." (Isaiah 1:11)

What does He mean then, by what He says here? He means just what He meant in the beginning, when He said, "Bring no more vain oblations." (Isaiah 1:13)

Their sacrifices were vain, because there was no heart in them. They did not give themselves, and that is all the sacrifice that is acceptable to God. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." (Roman 12:1) "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise." (Psalm 51:17)

When these are present, God is "pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness." (Psalm 51:19)

God says, "I have not caused you to serve with an offering, nor wearied you with incense." (Isaiah 43:23)

In like manner He said by the prophet Jeremiah: "I spoke not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people: and walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you." (Jeremiah 7:22-23)

Sacrifice was never anything in itself; for God has made the only sacrifice that can be of any value. Sacrifices were never anything more than an expression of trust and thanksgiving.

Making God to Serve

"But you have made me to serve with your sins, you have wearied me with your iniquities." (Isaiah 43:24)

This is one of the most striking statements to be found in the Bible. Instead of being the servants of God, we have made Him our servant! The term is the same as that used in Exodus 1:13, where we read that: "The Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigor." (Exodus 1:13)

Also, "I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage." (Exodus 6:5)

Isn't it shocking? Just as the Egyptians made slaves of the children of Israel, putting them to hard and distasteful service, even so we have done to God, piling upon Him all our sins, and making Him carry the load day after day. Now we begin to get hold of that which will reveal to us the infinite patience of God.

We are all familiar with the words: "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world;" (John 1:29) but few read the word in the margin, which ought to be in the text, namely, "bears." If we always thought of Him as the Lamb of God who bears the sin of the world, it might make His work mean more to us. "He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." (1 John 2:2)

Mark it; He is, not, He makes propitiation for sins. "[He] His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." (1 Peter 2:24)

These things we have all heard, and they are so common that they have almost lost their meaning to us. Our lesson brings before us in the most vivid manner the Lord's relation to us and our sins.

All Sin is Upon God's Life

Take the words in the 1st chapter of Hebrews, that Christ, being the effulgence of the Father's glory, "and the very image of His substance, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." (Hebrews 1:3,RV)

He upholds or bears all things. The weight of the universe rests upon Him. Not a thing but is held in place by the power of His life. "In Him all things consist," (Colossians 1:17,RV) and, "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." (Acts 17:28)

He is the Soul of the universe. There is no life anywhere but the life that flows from the heart of God. That is the simple truth, which is easily said, but which we may well think upon for days and years.

The fact that God is in all things, even in sinful man, is scarcely ever thought of; and too often wholly disbelieved. Compare Deuteronomy 30 and Romans 10: "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)

In the first passage, together with the context, we learn that Moses was addressing the children of Israel, and exhorting them to obey God. That shows that they were not wholly obedient, and we well know that they were not.

Then he tells them that they need have no difficulty in obeying the Lord, for the commandment is not hidden from them, neither is it very far off. They do not need to go across the sea for it, nor ask somebody to go up to heaven, to bring it down for them, that they may hear it and do it. No; the commandment, the Word, is very near, in their mouth, and in their heart, that they may do it. It is there whether they do it or not; it is there in order that they may have no excuse for not doing it.

Saved by the Life

Read now the parallel text in Romans. It is quoted from this one, but inasmuch as Christ is the Word, the name "Christ" is substituted for "Word." "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 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)

Confessing the Lord Jesus means confessing the truth concerning Him, namely, that "[He] is come in the flesh," (1 John 4:2) even in our own sinful flesh. (Romans 8:3) Why should He come there? In order that "the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us." (Romans 8:4)

The theory that would make Christ keep entirely away from sinners until they begin to serve Him, would throw upon them the labor of converting themselves. No; Christ dwells in every man, waiting his permission to reveal himself. Therefore the wrath of God is justly revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, because they "hold down the truth in unrighteousness." (Romans 1:18)

Christ is the truth: "I am ... the truth." (John 14:6) "That which may be known of God is manifest in wicked men, for God has showed it unto them; for His everlasting power and Divinity are to be seen in everything that He has made [including man]. They are therefore without excuse for their sin." (Romans 1:19-20)

Christ is present in every man to save him from sinning. It is therefore idle for the sinner to say that the Lord will not receive him. Why, the Lord has you; He has been carrying you all your lifetime. There never has been a heart throb, not a pulse beat, not a tingle of a nerve, that did not reveal the presence of the life of God; for all those things reveal the presence of life, and there is no life in the universe but the life of God. If there were, then there would be another God.

That is the whole question in controversy--whether creatures can live separate from the Creator. They who think to save God from the disgrace of being in sinful men, do Him no honor. They are conceding all that the devil would claim. If any man can establish his ability to live an hour without the Lord's life, then he can live for ever without Him. But this no man can do, and it is the Lord's mercy that he cannot.

What God Endures for Man

"The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." (John 1:14)

But for that we could not live at all. In our flesh, our life, is the Divine Word,--God himself. And what is our condition? "Laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that are corrupters ... 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 1:4-6)

This is the condition of the flesh in which the Divine Word has condescended to dwell. "Himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses." (Matthew 8:17)

All the loathsomeness of sin the Lord who hates sin was pleased to take upon himself, that we might be freed from it. He has forever identified himself with humanity. Every sin that is committed by the vilest transgressor is committed with the life that God has loaned to him. God dwelling in human flesh is made the servant of men's passions. They are corrupters, in that they corrupt the life that God has given them. He is not responsible for a single sin, for "in Him is no sin," (1 John 3:5) yet because it has been committed with His life, He assumes the responsibility. The weight of every sin is upon the Lord, and that it is no small weight is seen from the fact that it crushed the life out of the Son of God. What infinite patience, that He still continues to bear it!

Loathsomeness of Sin

But it is loathsome to Him. With the picture of the body utterly corrupt, full of putrefying ulcers from head to foot, and you have an idea of what God is bearing. Can you wonder then that He says, "I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and will not remember your sins." (Isaiah 43:25)

Ah, we do not need to plead with Him, to make Him willing to cleanse us from all unrighteousness; He is most anxious to do it; it is He who pleads with us to allow Him to do it for us.

Yes, and Christ has by himself made purification for sins. With all the sins of the world upon Him, He gave up His life; but because He knew no sin, He came forth from

the grave; and so when we confess that Christ is come in our flesh, we may know that He is risen from the dead, so that He lives in us with the power of the resurrection life.

As soon therefore as we make the confession, and yield completely to Him, we are freed from the bondage of sin; for God is not so in love with sin that He will retain it a second after we turn it completely over to Him. He will cast it "into the depths of the sea." (Micah 7:19)

The Lord has bought our sins; they belong to Him. (John 1:29; 1 John 1:7; 1 John 2:1-2) He has bought us, and we belong to Him. (Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 6:20; 1 Timothy 2:6) We therefore have no right to do anything with ourselves. But when we refuse to confess our sins, and at the same time to confess Christ, we are claiming the sins that are upon Him. We are retaining them, because we refuse to acknowledge that they are sins, and we go on putting more sins upon Him. Patiently He abides with us, however, literally suffering long.

He has our sins, whether we acknowledge it or not; therefore it does not add one whit to His burden for us to let them rest upon Him alone, and not try to bear any of them ourselves. On the contrary, it relieves Him for us to confess our sins, and cast them entirely upon Him, for then He casts them off, and bears us alone. Before, He bore us and our sins; now He bears us freed from sin. Why not grant the Lord this favor?

He asks us to remind Him of what He has done for us. "Let us plead together," (Isaiah 43:26) says He. Literally, "Let us go into court together."

If we will but declare the truth, we shall be justified, for the truth is that He has all our sins upon Him. All that is required of any man, in order to be saved, is that he tell the simple truth about what he sees. If we admit that God is supporting us, that we live by His life, and that consequently all our sins are upon Him, and that we are in harmony with that arrangement, then we are freed from them.

So although our first father sinned, and we as a consequence were born in sin, we are made as free from them as the only begotten Son of God. What a wonderful Saviour!--Present Truth, November 30, 1899--Isaiah 43:14-28.

The Gift of the Spirit

"But hear now, O Jacob, my servant; And Israel, whom I have chosen: Thus says Jehovah, your Maker; And He that formed you from the womb, and will help you: Fear not, O my servant Jacob; And, O Jeshurun, whom I have chosen: For I will pour out waters on the thirsty; And flowing streams on the dry ground: I will pour out my Spirit on your seed, And my blessing on your offspring. And they shall spring up as grass among the waters; As the willows beside the aqueducts. One shall say, I belong to Jehovah; And another shall be called by the name of Jacob: And this shall subscribe his hand to Jehovah, And shall be surnamed by the name of Israel. Thus says Jehovah, the King of Israel; And his Redeemer, Jehovah God of hosts: I am the first, and I am the last; And beside me there is no God. And who is like me, that he should call forth this event, And make it known beforehand, and dispose it for me, From the time that I appointed the people of the destined age? The things that are now coming, and are to come hereafter, let them declare unto us." (Isaiah 44:1-7,Lowth)

The Chosen

How often in these chapters we find the word "chosen." God has chosen Israel. But who are Israel? Israel is the prince of God, the one who overcomes. "And He said, Your name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel [margin: "A prince of God"]: for as a prince have you power with God and with men, and have prevailed.

Does the Lord then choose as His favorites only those who have made a conspicuous success in life? Oh, no: the choice must necessarily be made before the struggle is ended. As we well know, Jacob was chosen before he was born. We are chosen in order that we may overcome. God has blessed us in Christ, "according as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." (Ephesians 1:3)

All are chosen; we have only by submission to His will to make our calling and election sure.

Why God Chooses Us

"Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen." (Isaiah 44:1)

It is evident that Israel means more than one man. The man Jacob, who was by the Lord named Israel, was dead hundreds of years before the prophet Isaiah wrote these words; they apply to all the children of Israel.

And here appears some more of the comfort of God. God has taken away every ground for discouragement, in this promise to Israel. Notice that He uses both names, Jacob and Israel. Jacob is the supplanter, the deceitful schemer, the one whose character is anything but attractive. The Lord indicates that He has chosen Jacob from his birth.

That means that He has chosen us from our birth. But we have a bad record. No matter, so had the original Jacob. He has chosen us, that He may make us better. So we need not mourn over our early life; God makes all that pass away in Christ. Every inspired prayer is a promise of what God will do; and in Psalm 25 we read: "Thus says the Lord that made you, and formed you from the womb, which will help you; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and you, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen." (Isaiah 44:2) "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions." (Psalm 25:7)

That this is what God promises to do, we have already learned from the preceding chapter, where He says, "I, even I, am He that blots out your transgression for my own sake, and will not remember your sins." (Isaiah 43:25)

He has chosen us, "that we might be holy and without blame before Him." (Ephesians 1:4)

Little Children

"Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and you, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen." (Isaiah 44:2)

The word "Jeshurun" occurs only four times in the Bible, the three other times besides this one being in Deuteronomy 32 and 33. It is a diminutive, such as people use as pet names, and is equivalent to "the good little people," or, "the dear little people." It

is applied to the whole people, just as a mother uses a term of endearment to her child. It reveals the tender affection of God for His people. It corresponds to the "little children," so frequently used by the Saviour.

The Water of Life

"For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon your seed, and my blessing upon your offspring." (Isaiah 44:3)

The Spirit of God is the water of life. This is seen from the following texts: "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 shall flow rivers of living water. But this spoke He of the Spirit, which they that believed on Him were to receive." (John 7:37-39)

Remember that this promise in Isaiah is to the same ones who in the preceding chapter are said to be witnesses, and the Spirit is necessary in order that they may bear witness, "And it is the Spirit that bears witness, because the Spirit is the truth. ... For there are three who bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and the three agree in one." (1 John 5:6,8,RV)

God, who is "the Fountain of living waters," (Jeremiah 2:13) is Spirit: "God is a Spirit." (John 4:24) "The Spirit ... proceeds from the Father," (John 15:26) the stream flowing from the fountain head.

Cooling Streams

"For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty" (Isaiah 44:3)

Nothing gives a more complete idea of satisfaction than cold water to one who is thirsty. God promises not merely to give the thirsty ones a drink, but to pour water upon them. He giveth liberally. If anyone has ever known what it is to be faint from thirst in a dry place on a sultry day, he will appreciate this. He longs not merely for a drink, but to plunge into the water. He does not want simply a cupful of water, but a stream of it; and when he sees the stream in the distance, how he runs to it, and, throwing himself down,

buries his head in it, or immerses himself in the refreshing liquid. Even so can the soul who thirsts for the living water find satisfaction.

Thirsting for God

Recall the expressions of longing for God, that appear in the Psalms. "As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after You, O God. My soul thirsts for God; for the living God." (Psalm 42:1-2) "O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." (Psalm 43:1)

All are familiar with the expressions, and yet much of their force is lost because they are considered as only figurative, when as a matter of fact they are very literal. The psalmist does indeed use a figure, but it is only to express his longing for God. The thirsting after God is not the figure; that is the fact. "As the hart pants after the water brooks," this is the illustration; "so his soul pants after God."

This is the thing illustrated. The thirst which God satisfies is real thirst, and He satisfies it as really as the brook satisfies the panting deer.

Drinking the Life of God

Recall the passage which says that:

"The glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams." (Isaiah 33:21)

Remember that the "river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeds from the throne of God and of the Lamb." (Revelation 22:1)

That the water which proceeds from God and the Lamb is real water, such as will satisfy literal thirst, we are taught by the experience of the children of Israel in the desert. "And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the Lord, and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink. Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto

them, Why chide with me? wherefore do you tempt the Lord? 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? And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me. 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. And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, Is the Lord among us, or not?" (Exodus 17:1-7)

Christ is the Rock of Israel, and He stood upon the rock which Moses smote, and we are told that the people "drank of that spiritual Rock which followed them." (1 Corinthians 10:4)

From the spiritual Rock comes spiritual water; but spiritual water is very real. It was real enough to satisfy the thirst of the whole company of Israel, and also all their cattle. It is of this water that comes from the throne, that God says He will give all the thirsty ones freely. "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)

It is from this stream, flowing from the throne of God, that the thirsty land is watered and made fruitful. "You visit the earth, and water it; You greatly enrich it with the river of God, which is full of water; You prepare them corn, when You have so provided for it. You water the ridges thereof abundantly: You settle the furrows thereof: You make it soft with showers: You bless the springing thereof. You crown the year with your goodness; and your paths drop fatness." (Psalm 65:9-11)

When we remember that two-thirds of the human body is water, it is easy to understand that water is our life; and then when we learn that the water which comes from heaven and gushes forth from the earth in springs comes direct from the throne of God, we can see that we live by the life of God.

God Alone Can Satisfy

It is a fact, therefore, that men may literally thirst after God. Indeed, whenever they thirst for pure, fresh water, it is for God that they are thirsting, although they do not know it. Every desire, every unsatisfied longing, is but an expression of the soul's need of God. He alone "satisfies the desire of every living thing." (Psalm 145:16)

"None but Christ can satisfy,"--Emma Frances Shuttleworth Bevan, Hymn: O Christ, in Thee My Soul Hath Found (also: None But Christ Can Satisfy). even though the soul does not recognize the fact. Sometimes a man tries to satisfy his thirst with alcoholic liquor, but that never satisfies; it only creates a worse thirst; instead of building up, it tears down. That spirit is not the Spirit of life, but of death.

Satan, who tries to make people believe that he is the Lord, and that his work is Divine, has stolen the name of the water of life for his spirit, calling brandy eau de vie. That is what pure water is, while the spirituous liquor is the water of death. The exhortation is: "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." (Ephesians 5:18)

Thirsting for Righteousness

"The Spirit is life because of righteousness." (Romans 8:10)

The water and the blood, which agree in one with the Spirit, (1 John 5:8) are also life, and consequently righteousness. We know that the blood of Christ is righteousness, because it "cleanses us from all sin." (1 John 1:7)

Drinking of the water of life is therefore drinking of the blood of Christ which is righteousness and life. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." (Matthew 5:6)

Everything that gives us real life is from God. Whenever we take in that which builds up the body, we are receiving of the life of God, the blood of Christ, the water of life. If therefore we recognize God in His gifts, we may actually take in righteousness with every drink of water that we take.

All our thirst is but a longing for that which only God can bestow; but we do not, however, always thirst after righteousness. Instead, we try to satisfy the longing with everything except God. It is not popular to acknowledge our dependence upon God. Men have no hesitation in letting it be known that they are thirsty, but they would never think of admitting that they are longing for the life of God. That is why so few become filled with righteousness.

Nevertheless God sheds the Spirit upon us abundantly, even though we do not recognize the gift. He gives to the unthankful as well as to the thankful. If we but recognize the gift, and thank Him for every renewal of it, righteousness will be ours as surely as God lives. How easy and plain is the way of righteousness and life!--Present Truth, December 7, 1899--Isaiah 44:1-8.

A Stupid, False Witness

"They that fashion a graven image are all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit; and their own witnesses see not, nor know: that they may be ashamed. Who has fashioned a god, or molten a graven image, that is profitable for nothing? Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed; and the workmen, they are of men: let them all be gathered together, they shall fear; they shall be ashamed together. The smith makes an axe, and works in the coals, and fashions it with hammers, and works it with his strong arm: yea, he is hungry, and his strength fails; he drinks no water, and his faint. The carpenter stretches out a line; he marks it out with a pencil; he shapes it with planes, and he marks it out with compasses, and shapes it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man, to dwell in the house. He hews him down cedars, and takes the cypress and the oak, and strengthens for himself one among the trees of the forest: he plants a fir tree, and the rain nourishes it. Then shall it be for a man to burn; and he takes thereof, and warms himself; yea, he kindles it, and bakes bread: yea, he makes a god, and worships it; he makes it a graven image, and falls down thereto. He burns part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eats flesh; he roasts roast, and is satisfied; yea, he warms himself, and says, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire. And the residue thereof he makes a god, even his graven image; he falls down unto it; and worships, and prays unto it, and says, Deliver me; for you are my god. They know not, neither do they consider: for He has shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand. And none considers in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? He feeds on ashes; a deceived heart has turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" (Isaiah 44:9-20,RV)

One must search long to find a finer piece of description than this. True to the life, it is at the same time wonderfully cutting and sarcastic; its accuracy, however, is what makes it so. The passage will bear reading many times, and after the reader has done with laughing at the poor, stupid idolater, who makes his own god, he may turn the laugh against himself; for this imagemaker's descendants and counterparts are found in every country under heaven, and in every society, and every church.

The careful reader cannot fail to notice that the court is still in session. We ourselves are in the court room. The case will be on until the Judgment day comes. Now the witnesses are being examined, and are giving in their sworn testimony. The trial is to decide who is God, whether the Maker of the heavens and the earth, or the things that man makes, and so, really, man himself.

Witnesses for the Lord

In the verses preceding the beginning of this lesson, we have the Lord's witnesses again addressed. Indeed, the whole of the preceding chapter concerns them. "Fear not, neither be afraid: have not I told you from that time, and have declared it? you are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any." (Isaiah 44:8)

They are the redeemed of the Lord, those whom He gathers out of every country, (Isaiah 43:5-6; 56:6-8) who are "called by His name," (Isaiah 43:7) and whom "He has created for His glory," (Isaiah 43:7) and who show it forth. (Isaiah 43:21) God has blotted out their iniquities, (Isaiah 43:25; 44:22) and poured His Spirit upon them in floods, which they have gladly received, (Isaiah 44:3-4) so that they may testify to Him. (Isaiah 44:8) "One shall say I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." (Isaiah 44:5)

To them God speaks, and tells them not to be afraid. (Isaiah 44:2) He is "the first and the last," (Isaiah 44:6) the only God, and they, as His witnesses, are not to be afraid to lift up their voices with strength, and to declare His name and fame. (Isaiah 40:9) "We know that no idol is anything in the world, and that there is no God but one." (1 Corinthians 8:4)

Idols and Idolaters are Nothing

There are many that are called gods, but there is only one God, namely the living God, who made all things. No idol is anything, and "They that make them are like unto them; so is everyone that trusts in them." (Psalm 115:8)

Therefore the maker and worshipper of an idol is nothing. That is what our lesson tells us: "They that make a graven image are all of them vanity." (Isaiah 44:9)

This word "vanity," is from the Hebrew word meaning "emptiness," "confusion," as in: "The earth was without form." (Genesis 2:1) "He that stretches out the north over the empty place." (Job 26:7) "The city of confusion is broken down." (Isaiah 24:10) "He shall stretch upon it the line of confusion." (Isaiah 34:11) "A thing of nought." (Isaiah 29:21) "Their molten images are wind and confusion." (Isaiah 41:29)

That is all there is to an idol, and it is all there is to the one who makes and trusts in one. That is, it is all there is to anybody who does not trust in the Lord Jehovah. The Judgment day will prove this, when all who have rejected God will cease to be, so that neither he, nor his place, will be found: "For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, you shall diligently consider his place, and it shall not be." (Psalm 37:10) "Eyes have they, but they see not." (Psalm 115:5)

This is spoken of the idols of silver and gold, which are the work of men's hands. These false gods have their witnesses, even as the Lord has His; but on the principle that everybody is like the object of his worship, "their own witnesses ... see not, nor know." (Isaiah 44:9)

The Testimony of God's Witnesses

The reason for this will soon be made clear, if the reader has not already seen it. But first, let us contrast these witnesses with the "Faithful and True Witness," (Revelation 3:14) and with those who range themselves on His side. He says, "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." (John 3:11)

Peter and John, two of the Lord's witnesses, said, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." (Acts 4:20)

God does not desire that His witnesses shall speak anything else. He says, "Go and tell the things which you do hear and see." (Matthew 11:4; Luke 7:22)

A man who testifies to what he has seen, and what he knows, can answer without fear under any circumstances; but the one who tries to tell what he has not seen, and

what he knows nothing about, and what indeed does not exist, will very speedily be put to shame. "If any man wills to do His will, he shall know of the teaching." (John 7:17)

There is therefore no need for anybody to be in doubt. The mere curiosity seeker will not find anything; the man who wishes to make an exhibition of his knowledge, will not be able to give any testimony that will bear cross-examination; but whoever wishes to do the will of God,--whoever yields himself to the Lord,--will know. "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)

True and False Worship

What constitutes the real difference between the worshippers of the true God and those who trust in the things of nought? Just this, that the first trust in something, and the others in nothing. Now remember that a man is absolutely nothing of himself. It is only by the Spirit of God that men are made, and by the breath of the Lord that they receive life and understanding. "But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty gives them understanding." (Job 32:8) "The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty has given me life." (Job 33:4) "All nations are before Him as nothing; and they are counted to Him as less than nothing, and vanity." (Isaiah 40:17)

All the substance, the reality, that there is to any man is the presence of God. This is the grand truth that all the world needs to learn. "Whoever thinks that he is something, when he is nothing, deceives himself." (Galatians 6:3)

That is the trouble with the idolater here described as a type of his class. "A deceived heart has turned him aside." (Isaiah 44:20)

He does not know that there is nothing real but God, and that in Him all things hold together. That is what makes men so proud and boastful. That is the secret of all self-confidence and vainglory. Now if a man recognizes this truth, and trusts in the Lord wholly, yielding his body as the temple of the Holy Spirit, he will be "filled with all the fullness of God," (Ephesians 3:19) and there will be substance, reality, to him and his words. He will be able to speak with authority. It is God that works in him, and it is the Holy Spirit that speaks in him.

But when a man who is nothing to begin with, rejects the source of all life and wisdom, and trusts in that which he himself has made, and which must of necessity be nothing, it follows that the whole thing is emptiness. His words and deeds are wind, and he himself is but chaff. His own testimony carries him away; or, as in Isaiah 1:31, the strong is tow, and his work is a spark, so that he has nothing but destruction in himself.

No Strength in Numbers

"Let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; yet they shall fear, and they shall be ashamed together." (Isaiah 44:11)

Numbers do not make strength. A thousand million ciphers (Cipher: the number zero) are of no more value than one alone. A lie does not become the truth because ten thousand men testify to it. Men cannot create anything; and that is the root of the whole matter. People who know that a single lie will be of no avail, imagine that very many of them will stand. But it is folly. "You have ploughed wickedness, you have reaped iniquity; you have eaten the fruit of lies: because you did trust in your way, in the multitude of your mighty men." (Hosea 10:13) "The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place." (Isaiah 28:17)

No man can possibly have any more strength than he has with God in him alone. God's presence in another man will not answer for me; so that I cannot trust even in a good man; how much less, then, in a wicked man. "You shall not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shall you bear witness in a cause to turn aside after a multitude to wrest judgment." (Exodus 23:2) "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished." (Proverbs 11:21)

Let no one rest in any way that he is pursuing, confident in the thought that "everybody does so," or that it has been the custom for many years. Find out for yourself what the Lord says, and then you will know that you have the truth, and that your way will stand. His Word is the only real foundation. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 3:11)

Anyone who reads this, anybody who can read the Bible, can see at once the folly of the man who makes a god out of a tree. It would seem that no one could possibly be

so foolish as to worship a thing that he himself has made, and could say to it, "Deliver me, for you are my god." (Isaiah 44:17)

Part of the tree he uses for cooking his dinner, and the remainder he makes into a god. Surely he ought to be able to see that there is no more power to the portion of the tree which he worships than in that which he burns in the fire. Yet the thing is done by men of as good mental ability as any of us. "The deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:13) is amazing; and this deceitfulness is in every human heart. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9)

Excuses or Confession?

There is nothing more common in this world than self-justification--the desire to maintain one's own cause, and to demonstrate that one is in the right, and has done no wrong. We have all had experience in this. The tendency is inherent in human nature. "They all with one consent began to make excuse." (Luke 14:18)

That is, they all began to show what they regarded as a good reason for not complying with the summons that the king issued. Now if a good reason, a reasonable excuse, can be given for any course, that shows that the course is right. So every excuse that anybody makes for his acts,--for not serving God,--is a claim that he is all right in himself, without heeding the Lord. In what are we trusting, when we do that? Manifestly in ourselves,--in the works of our own hands. Then we do not differ a particle from the man who is described in this chapter. "A deceived heart has turned [us] aside, [and we are] feeding on ashes." (Isaiah 44:20)

If we confess our sins, we shall find mercy from God, because in confessing them we are acknowledging that God is, and that He is in the right; and He is mercy. All that is needed therefore, is for us to confess our sins, not because God stands on His dignity, and wishes to humiliate us, but because only by confessing that we are wrong and that He is right will we trust in Him, who is the only source of life and righteousness. "Go and proclaim those words toward the north, and say, Return, backsliding Israel, says the Lord; and I will not cause my anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, says the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever. Only acknowledge your iniquity, and that you have transgressed against the Lord your God." (Jeremiah 3:12-13) "A deceived heart has

turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" (Isaiah 44:20)

How is there a lie in the right hand of the man who trusts in the works of his hands, that is, in anything that he has done,--the man who will not confess to God, but who maintains that he has life and righteousness in himself? The answer is very easy. Read the preceding verses. The man who proposes to save himself by his own works, "is hungry, and his strength fails: he drinks no water, and is faint." (Isaiah 44:12)

But afterwards he eats and drinks, "and is satisfied." (Isaiah 44:16)

But he did not make the food and drink, and he knows it. All the strength that he has comes from what he eats and drinks, that is, from something outside of himself, which he has received. The strength of our right hand is the strength that God has given us, yet we talk and act as if it were our own.

Therefore it is evident that there is a lie in our right hands whenever we do so. Yes, we ourselves are lies, for we profess to be something when we are nothing. Every morsel of food that we eat, and upon which we depend for strength to go about our daily work, or which we use in self-gratification, is an evidence that we are wholly dependent on God.

The easiest thing in the world to know is God. Anybody who has sense enough to know that eating will give strength, has no excuse for not knowing God. Ah, there are very many stupid people in this world; very many false witnesses. Shall we hearken to the Lord, and be wise, or shall we continue in our folly?--Present Truth, December 14, 1899--Isaiah 44:9-29.

Abolishing the Enmity

"Remember these things, O Jacob; And, Israel; for you are my servant: I have formed you; you are a servant unto me; O Israel, by me you shall not be forgotten. I have made your transgressions vanish away like a cloud; And your sins like a vapor: Return unto me; for I have redeemed you. Sing, O you heavens, for Jehovah has effected it; Utter a joyful sound, O you depths of the earth: Burst forth into song, O you mountains; You, forest, and every tree therein! For Jehovah has redeemed Jacob; And will be glorified in Israel. Thus says Jehovah, your redeemer; Even He that formed you from the womb: I am Jehovah, who make all things; Who stretch out the heavens alone; Who spread the firm earth by myself: I am He, who frustrates the prognostics of the imposters; And makes the diviners mad: Who reverses the devices of the sages, And infatuates their knowledge: Who establishes the word of His servant; And accomplishes the counsel of His messengers: Who says to Jerusalem, You shall be inhabited; And to the cities of Judah, You shall be built; And her desolated places I will restore: Who says to the deep, Be wasted; And I will make dry your rivers: Who says to Cyrus, You are my shepherd! And he shall fulfill all my pleasure: Who says to Jerusalem, You shall be built; And to the temple, your foundations shall be laid." (Isaiah 44:21-28,Lowth)

A Contrast

What a contrast we have here between the true God, and the god made by a man who cannot work a single day without fainting from hunger and thirst, and who takes a portion of the material from which his god is made, and cooks his dinner with it. These things are to be remembered. This was written for us in this nineteenth century. That man who makes his god out of an ash tree is no more of a heathen than is any other man who does not trust in the Lord.

The Blessing of Service

It is a blessed thing for any man to hear the Lord say to him, "you are my servant."
(Isaiah 44:21)

To whom does He say it? To everyone who will listen to Him. "[Jesus] tasted death for every man," (Hebrews 2:9) and all have been purchased by the blood of Christ. As soon as anyone yields to the Lord, to serve Him, that moment he is the Lord's servant. "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)

Then he has all the privileges of the Lord's house. The Lord's servants are all free men. The loosing of them from bondage is the mark of servitude to Him. "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)

The Lord's servants, that is, those who give themselves wholly to His service, are known by their freedom. In verse 21 we have literally, instead of "I have formed you; you are my servant," "I have formed you my servant." (Isaiah 44:21)

God creates man His servant. When God made man in the beginning, man was God's servant. But he was made a king, with absolute authority over all the earth and everything connected with it. So the Lord's servants are all kings by birth. There are many different grades of servants just as there are different degrees of ability; but the Lord has no one in His service, who is lower in rank than king.

Men have lost the dominion. Adam lost control of himself, and therefore all his authority was gone; but Christ came to restore that which was lost; in Him we are created anew, and then the authority is restored. We are given complete dominion over ourselves, and the man who can rule himself can rule anything else under heaven. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that rules his spirit than he that takes a city." (Proverbs 16:32)

God's Watchfulness

Surely there is not a more comforting passage of scripture in the Bible than this. It is full of tender, comforting words. "O Israel, you shall not be forgotten of me." (Isaiah 44:21) "He that keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." (Psalm 121:3-4)

How often we hear somebody say that God has forgotten him. Why, the very breath that he uses in saying it, is an evidence that God has not forgotten him. A man is not a mere machine. He is not like a clock which the owner winds up, and then leaves to run down when the spring has uncoiled. If that were the case, then everybody would live at least to old age. No man lives of his own power, for "There is no man that has power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither has he power in the day of death." (Ecclesiastes 8:8)

We lie down, and go to sleep, and we awake, simply because the Lord stays awake and watches. In the beginning He breathed the breath of life into man's nostrils, and He has continued doing that every moment since. If He thought only of himself; if He gathered unto himself His Spirit and His breath; all flesh would perish together, and man would turn again to dust. "If He set His heart upon man, if He gather unto himself His spirit and His breath; All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust." (Job 34:14-15)

But God does not forget a single individual; therefore we live. This does not imply that when a man dies it is because God has forgotten him. Not by any means. No; the God who has so complete a grasp of details that He knows every sparrow, and the number of the hairs upon every head, as well as the names of all the innumerable stars, can never be accused of forgetfulness. Details do not worry Him.

Sin Abolished in Flesh

Where are our sins? They are in us, in our own lives, of course. "From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evileye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man." (Mark 7:21-23)

Then when God says, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins," (Isaiah 44:22) what does He mean? Simply this, that by His life He cleanses us from all sin--takes it out of us. "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)

The Hebrew word here rendered "blotted out," is the word meaning to wipe off, as one would wipe words from a slate or blackboard. God takes the sins, and obliterates them. Do not make the mistake of saying that there is no such thing as sin, as some people do. There is sin, and it is very real; but it is not in Christ. "He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin." (1 John 3:5) "[He has] condemned sin in the flesh." (Romans 8:4)

In His own flesh He has "abolished the enmity," (Ephesians 2:15) which is the carnal mind. Although He was in the flesh, the mind of the flesh had no control over Him. But it was our flesh that He took, therefore He has abolished sin in the flesh of everyone who will confess Him. It is literally blotted out. He took upon himself all the sins of the world, yet no person ever saw the slightest trace of a sin in or on Him. In Him the sins were as effectually effaced as if they had never existed.

Come Back! All is Forgiven

When the child plays truant from school, he is afraid to meet the master. The youth gets into bad company, and fears to go home. Conscience--a guilty conscience--makes cowards of us all, ever since Adam and Eve hid themselves from the face of the Lord in the garden of Eden, after they had eaten the forbidden fruit. People judge the Lord by their own hard, unforgiving natures, and think that since they have sinned against Him He must be angry with them; this keeps many away from Him; they do not believe that He will accept them if they come to Him. But He says, "Return unto me; for I have redeemed you." (Isaiah 44:22)

He tells us that the sins are blotted out, so that we need have no fear of returning. Nothing is held against us; all is gone in Christ. More blessed than all this is the fact that in this blotting out of our sins their power is destroyed, so that they cannot have dominion over us. God himself has provided the way so that we need not come back like culprits, cringing and cowering with fear, but like sons, confidently, expecting mercy, and grace to help in time of need.

The Heavens and the Earth Interested

"Sing, O you heavens; for the Lord has done it: shout, you lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, you mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord has redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel." (Isaiah 44:23)

Here is something for the heavens and earth to rejoice over. How often the heavens and earth are called upon, in connection with the work of redemption. In the very 1st chapter of Isaiah, the heavens and earth are called upon to witness that God has nourished and brought up children, who have rebelled against Him. Now the same heavens and earth are called upon to rejoice, from the utmost heights to the lowest depths, because God has redeemed His people.

Why should all nature be called upon to rejoice in this? Ah, there is good reason for it, because all nature was as it were placed in pawn, pledged to man's redemption. God upholds all things: (Hebrews 1:3) in Christ all things hold together; (Colossians 1:17,RV) so when God gave Christ, interposing himself by an oath, thus pledging His own existence for man's salvation, the whole creation was placed over against the redemption of man. Humanly speaking, all nature was risked by the Lord in the grand enterprise of redeeming man. If the work had failed, if God had broken His word, then His life would have been forfeited, and the universe would have been dissolved.

God and all creation, therefore, have a far greater interest in the redemption of man, than any man can have, or than all mankind can have. Their existence depends upon man's salvation. So we can well understand why "heaven and nature"--Isaac Watts, Hymn: Joy to the World, 1719--should be called on to sing the grace of God that brings salvation, and why they should respond.

What a strong ground of faith this gives us. There is not a thing in God's universe that has not an interest in our redemption, and there is nothing that is not calculated to help us in the way of life. Nothing is against us, but everything is for us. "All things are yours; Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's." (1 Corinthians 3:21-23)

God Creates by Himself

"Thus says the Lord, your redeemer, and He that formed you from the womb, I am the Lord that makes all things; that stretches forth the heavens alone; that spreads abroad the earth by myself." (Isaiah 44:24)

God had no helper in the creation of the universe. "The Word was with God in the beginning, [but] the Word was God." (John 1:1)

He who by himself created the heavens, and spread out the earth, is competent to redeem His people. Redemption is but creation anew, and the fact that God is Creator, and that without any aid,--when indeed there was no one else to give aid,--He created all things, is sufficient proof that what He has promised concerning man, He is fully able to perform. (Romans 4:21) This is the reason we are called upon in the very last days to "give glory to God ... and worship Him [as the One who] made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." (Revelation 14:7)

The Infallible Word in Men

"[I am the Lord] that frustrates the tokens of the liars, and makes diviners mad; that turns wise men backward, and makes their knowledge foolish. That confirms the word of His servant, and performs the counsel of His messengers." (Isaiah 44:25-26)

That which God does by another is as firm as if done without any agency. He confirms the word of His servant. He has reconciled us to himself, and has put into us the Word of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:18-19) "He whom God has sent, speaks the words of God." (John 3:34)

Whoever speaks only the Word of the Lord, need have no fear that one of his words will fail. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God," (1 Peter 4:11) and he may speak with all boldness. The tokens of liars will be frustrated, and diviners will be seen to be mad, and the worldly-wise will be taken in their own craftiness, (1 Corinthians 3:19) and their knowledge shown to be foolishness; but the simple truth uttered by the lowliest follower of God will stand as long as the sun and moon endure.

The last reference in this chapter, concerning Cyrus and his work, will be considered in connection with the first verses of the next chapter, where the subject is continued.--Present Truth, December 21, 1899--Isaiah 44:21-28.

God, the Ruler of Nations

"Thus says the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before you, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: And I will give you the treasurers of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that you may know that I, the Lord, which call you by your name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel my elect, I have even called you by your name: I have surnamed you, though you have not known me. I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded you, though you have not known me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things." (Isaiah 45:1-7)

The Foreknowledge of God

When Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had a dream describing a calamity that was to befall him, he was told that it was to let him "know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever He will." (Daniel 4:25)

In the scripture before us we have a wonderful example of the truth of this, and also an illustration of the fact that nothing happens by chance, and takes God by surprise, but is provided for long beforehand. Isaiah prophesied "in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah." (Isaiah 1:1)

Hezekiah reigned 29 years (2 Chronicles 29:1) and as he lived 15 years after his great illness, (Isaiah 38) we know that he had reigned 14 years at that time. But Isaiah had at that time been prophesying at least 46 years, for Jotham and Ahaz had each reigned 16 years. (2 Chronicles 27:1; 28:1) We know not certainly how long Isaiah prophesied in the reign of Uzziah, but the 6th chapter seems to indicate that he began in the last year of his reign.

The point is that in 714 BC, which was about the date of Isaiah's special message to Hezekiah, Isaiah had been prophesying between 45 and 50 years; and that as he did not prophesy later than Hezekiah's reign, he died before the year 698 BC. We are therefore safe in putting the date of the scripture which we have before us as not later than 712 BC.

Of what importance is this fact? It shows the minuteness of God's foreknowledge, and the perfection of His plans for the salvation of His people. Babylon was captured by Cyrus in the year 538 BC, when he was 61 years old. We find therefore that Cyrus was named, and his work was described in detail, more than 130 years before he was born, and about 184 years before the work was done.

That is to say, more than 100 years before the children of Israel were carried captive to Babylon, the Lord had not only foretold their release from captivity, but had named the man who should be instrumental in setting them free, and had given a minute description of the incidents of the capture of the city. In view of this, how forcible are the words, "I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me." (Isaiah 45:5)

The Siege of Babylon

In order that the exactness of the prophecy may be better appreciated by the reader, we quote the following brief account of the capture of Babylon from Rawlinson's Great Monarchies.

It may be necessary to state, for the aid of some, that Babylon was very large, surrounded by a wall of immense height and thickness, and stored with provisions sufficient to last twenty years. The river Euphrates passed through the city, dividing it into two parts, but there was also a wall on each side of the river, the whole length of its passage through the city, and the twenty-five streets which led across the river were enclosed by huge gates of brass.

Having described the progress of Cyrus to Babylon, against which his army began a seemingly hopeless siege, Rawlinson continues:

Withdrawing the greater part of his army from the vicinity of the city, and leaving behind him only certain corps of observation, Cyrus marched away up the course of the Euphrates for a certain distance, and there proceeded to make a vigorous use of the spade. His soldiers could now appreciate the value of the experience which they had gained by dispersing the Gyndes, and perceived that the summer and autumn of the preceding year had not been wasted. They dug a channel or channels from the Euphrates, by means of which a great portion of its water would be drawn off, and hoped in this way to render the natural course of the river fordable.

When all was prepared, Cyrus determined to wait for the arrival of a certain festival, during which the whole population were wont to engage in drinking and reveling, and then silently in the dead of night to turn the water of the river and make his attack. All fell out as he hoped and wished. The festival was held with even greater pomp and splendor than usual; for Belshazzar, with the natural insolence of youth, to mark his contempt of the besieging army, abandoned himself wholly to the delights of the season, and himself entertained a thousand lords in his palace. Elsewhere the rest of the population was occupied in feasting and dancing. Drunken riot and mad excitement held possession of the town; the siege was forgotten; ordinary precautions were neglected. Following the example of their king, the Babylonians gave themselves up for the night to orgies in which religious frenzy and drunken excess formed a strange and revolting medley.

Meanwhile, outside the city, in silence and darkness, the Persians watched at the two points where the Euphrates entered and left the walls. Anxiously they noted the gradual sinking of the water in the riverbed; still more anxiously they watched to see if those within the walls would observe the suspicious circumstance and sound an alarm through the town. Should such an alarm be given, all their labors would be lost. If, when they entered the riverbed, they found the river walls manned and the river-gates fast-locked, they would be indeed caught in a trap. Enfiladed on both sides by an enemy whom they could neither see nor reach, they would be overwhelmed and destroyed by his missiles before they could succeed in making their escape. But as they watched, no sounds of alarm reached them--only a confused noise of revel and riot, which showed that the unhappy townsmen were quite unconscious of the approach of danger.

At last shadowy forms began to emerge from the obscurity of the deep river-bed, and on the landing places opposite the river gates scattered clusters of men grew into

solid columns--the undefended gateways were seized--a war shout was raised--the alarm was taken and spread--and swift runners started off to show the king of Babylon that his city was taken at one end. (Jeremiah 1:31)

In the darkness and confusion of the night a terrible massacre ensued. The drunken revelers could make no resistance. The king, paralyzed with fear, at the awful handwriting upon the wall, which too late had warned him of his peril, could do nothing even to check the progress of his assailants, who carried all before them everywhere. Bursting into the palace, a band of Persians made their way to the presence of the monarch, and slew him on the scene of his impious revelry. Other bands carried fire and sword through the town. When morning came, Cyrus found himself undisputed master of the city, which, if it had not despised his efforts, might with the greatest ease have baffled him.

Note the statements of the prophecy: "I will loose the loins of kings." (Isaiah 45:1)

At the very hour when Cyrus was making his entrance into the city, while Belshazzar was engaged in a wild, idolatrous feast, God caused a writing to appear on the wall of the banqueting hall.

"Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another." (Daniel 5:6) "And the gates shall not be shut." (Isaiah 45:1)

All the skill of Cyrus, and even his stratagem of diverting the course of the river, would have availed nothing, if the gates leading to the river had not been left open. His army might have marched into the city, and out again if it could have got out, but could have inflicted no damage. But in that night of idolatrous revelry, everything was neglected and the way was open. The gods whom the princes praised gave no protection.

God Works All According to His Will

This entire prophecy is devoted to showing that there is none but God. He is the Creator and the Redeemer. He can create, and He can destroy. Nothing takes place

without His counsel or consent. Everything works out His will. He makes even the wrath of man to praise Him:

"Surely the wrath of man shall praise You: the remainder of wrath shall You restrain." (Psalm 76:10)

Kings and nations think that they are controlling, and are doing their own will, when they are simply working out God's plan. We must not make the mistake of thinking that God plans all their wicked practices, but however wicked they are, however opposed to His will, they carry out His purpose even by their opposition.

It was God who said to Jerusalem, "You shall be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, You shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof." (Isaiah 44:26)

He said it, and Cyrus was His agent in carrying it out. God also "said to the deep, Be dry," (Isaiah 44:27) and it was He who dried up the rivers. So when Cyrus was digging his channels, and turning aside the Euphrates from its bed, he was simply doing God's work. What a marvelous, awe-inspiring thought--that men are factors in the great plan of the Most High God! And how glorious when they yield themselves willingly and understandingly!

All the events of this earth's history, are not for the benefit of those who are enacting them, but for the salvation of God's people. Instead of being afraid when wars and rumours of wars and tumults come, thinking they are about to be overwhelmed, the faithful followers of God may be of good courage, knowing that out of these very alarms, and even by means of them, God is working out their deliverance.

God did his work through Cyrus, "That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me." (Isaiah 45:6)

And how widely was the name of God known in consequence? Over all the world. The kingdom of Babylon was worldwide. "You, O king, are a king of kings: for the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven has He given into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all." (Daniel 2:37-38) "And command them to say unto their masters, Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel;

Thus shall you say unto your masters; I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me. And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him. And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the very time of his land come: and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him." (Jeremiah 27:4-7)

Of course this worldwide kingdom came under the dominion of Cyrus, and so the decree for the building of the temple ran thus: "Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also into writing, saying, Thus says Cyrus, King of Persia, The Lord God of heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and He has charged me to build Him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all His people? His God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel, (He is the God) which is in Jerusalem." (Ezra 1:1-3)

So we see that the one true God was proclaimed by Cyrus throughout all the world.

Cyrus the Israelite

"What a wonderful tribute from a heathen king!" some will exclaim.

Why do you say, "a heathen king"? True, Cyrus was a Persian. He was brought up in ignorance of the true God: but so was Abraham. "And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus says the Lord God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods." (Joshua 24:2)

God revealed himself to Abraham, and he believed, and so became "The friend of God." (James 2:23)

Cyrus was surnamed by God while he was yet ignorant of Him, even long before he was born, yet he came at last to know God, and he acknowledged Him before all the

world, declaring Him to be God, and confessing that he held his title from Him. What more could anybody do? If there was ever a Christian king in any land, then certainly it was Cyrus, of Persia, as well as Nebuchadnezzar, of Babylon. This man, direct from heathenism, did what the Israelites, with a long ancestry of believers failed to do.

Cyrus was, therefore, an Israelite, even by his own confession. Read his proclamation over again. He declared his belief in the Lord of heaven, who had brought him to the throne, and said, "He is the God," (Ezra 1:3) and at the same time declared Him to be "the Lord God of Israel." (Ezra 1:3)

God takes from among the Gentiles a people for His name, and Cyrus, the Persian, was one of them. It is not the flesh, but faith, that determines who are Israel. "God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that fears Him, and works righteousness, is accepted with Him." (Acts 10:34-35)--Present Truth, December 28, 1899--Isaiah 45:1-7.

The Unseen God

"Drop down, you heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, that they may bring forth salvation, and let her cause righteousness to spring up together; I the Lord have created it. Woe unto him that strives with his Maker! a potsherd among the potsherds of the earth! Shall the clay say to him that fashions it, What do you make? or your work, He has no hands? Woe unto him that says unto a father, What do you beget? or to a woman, With what do you travail? Thus says the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of the things that are to come; concerning my sons, and the work of my hands, command me. I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded. I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will make straight all his ways; he shall build my city, and he shall let my exiles go free, not for price nor reward, says the Lord of hosts. Thus says the Lord, The labor of Egypt, and the merchandise of Ethiopia, and the Sabeans men of stature, shall come over unto you, and they shall be yours: they shall go over after you; in chains they shall come over; and they shall fall down unto you, saying, Surely God is in you; and there is none else, there is no God. Verily You are a God that hide yourself, O God of Israel, the Saviour." (Isaiah 45:8-15,RV)

God Hides Himself

He will take the last verse as the key to the whole text, and the basis of our present study. "Verily You are a God that hide yourself, O God of Israel, the Saviour." (Isaiah 45:15)

God hides himself. "[He is] the King eternal, immortal, invisible," (1 Timothy 1:17) "dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man has seen, nor can see." (1 Timothy 6:16)

What then is the use of the command, "Behold, your God!" (Isaiah 40:9)

Why tell people to behold God, when He is invisible, and no man has seen Him, and no man can see Him? He even hides himself, so that nobody can see Him, and then sends us a message, saying, "Behold me, behold me." (Isaiah 65:1)

Where is the consistency? This is a fair specimen of the fault that many people find with God and His Word. They make out what seems a very plausible case against Him, and think that they have abundant excuse for their unbelief.

Now when it appears that there is not the least inconsistency here, nor shadow of unreasonableness, it ought forever to put an end to all cavil. When God rests His case on the most inconsistent terms possible, and nevertheless shows himself perfectly true, it necessarily follows that no case can possibly be made to stand against Him. "The foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men." (1 Corinthians 1:25)

There is such a thing as seeing the invisible. The things that are impossible to human sight are very easy when the eyes of our understanding are enlightened by the Holy Spirit. "[Moses] endured as seeing Him who is invisible." (Hebrews 11:27) "Our light afflictions work out for us an eternal weight of glory, While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." (2 Corinthians 4:17-18)

If we would have pleasure in the place of pain, we must continually look at the things which are invisible, paying no attention to the things which are seen.

God Hidden in Christ

Once one of the twelve disciples said to Jesus, "Lord, show us the Father, and it suffices us." (John 14:8)

Jesus replied, "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)

And then He added, "Believe you not 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 which dwells in me, He does the works. Believe me, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else

believe me for the very works' sake." (John 14:10-11) "God was in Christ." (2 Corinthians 5:19)

Jesus was the manifestation of God, and yet there was nothing in His appearance to indicate the fact. It was impossible for anybody to ascertain by His appearance--His flesh and blood--that He was the Son of the living God. "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) "[He was] the brightness of the Father's glory, and the very impress of His substance," (Hebrews 1:3,RV) but He veiled His glory with the robe of humanity. Nevertheless, "we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

He was the Saviour, yet He said, "The flesh profits nothing." (John 6:63)

It was not that which could be seen, but that which could not be seen, that profited. And the unseen, the hidden life, was made visible; "For the life was manifested, and we have seen it." (1 John 1:2)

The visible is nothing; only the invisible is real. This, by the way, should teach all men the folly of trusting to forms and ceremonies for salvation. Ritualism is emptiness.

God Hidden in the Light

Where does God hide himself? In the light. "[He] dwells in the light." (1 Timothy 6:16)

But do we not read that "clouds and darkness are round about Him," (Psalm 89:2) and that "He made darkness His secret place?" (Psalm 18:11)

Yes, "His pavilion round about Him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies;" (" (Psalm 18:11)) but, "The darkness and the light are both alike to Him, ... the night shines as the day;" (Psalm 139:2) so that "At the brightness that was before Him His thick clouds passed." (Psalm 18:12)

Although He dwells in darkness He covers himself with light as with a garment: "Who cover yourself with light as with a garment." (Psalm 104:2) "And the light shines in the darkness; and the darkness overcame it not." (John 1:5,RV)

Light overcomes darkness. Moreover, "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." (1 John 1:5)

The case becomes more and more complex, but the very complexity is clearness. God hides himself, but He hides himself in light, and He himself is light, and the light cannot be shut in by any darkness. Why then can we not see Him? The only reason is that we do not have our eyes adjusted to view the light. If we will but get our eyes anointed with heavenly eye salve, we may see heavenly things. "I counsel you to ... anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see." (Revelation 3:18)

Then, "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." (1 John 1:7)

We become one with Him. He hides himself in us. Very few take in the force of this last verse. They seem to think that it is human fellowship that is referred to, whereas it is fellowship with God. "If we walk in the light as God is in the light, we have fellowship with Him, and He with us."

We and God have fellowship with each other--mutual fellowship. The French of Segond puts it clearly, "nous sommes mutuellement en communion", we are mutually in communion.

God Hidden in Men

Then where shall we look to find God? Look everywhere. Look within. "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) "Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God." (1 John 4:2)

Confess that the Word, which was in the beginning with God, and was God, (John 1:1-2) is come in your flesh, and dwells there, and you are born of God and know God. (1 John 4:7) "If haply you feel after Him, you will certainly find Him, for He is not far

from everyone of us, Since in Him we live, and move, and have our being." (Acts 7:27-28) "Know you that the Lord He is God: it is He that has made us, ... and we are His," (Psalm 100:3) and the invisible things of God, even His everlasting power and Divinity, are clearly seen in the things that are made, so that what may be known of God is manifest in all men. (Romans 1:19-20) Who can charge God with unfairness because He has hidden himself, when He is light, and hides himself in the light, and sends the true light into every man that comes into the world? (John 1:9)

God Hidden in His Works

God hides himself in His works. People look at Him, but do not see Him.

Have you not often seen hidden faces in pictures? You were told that in a certain picture a face was concealed. You gazed at the picture long and steadily, turning it so as to see it from every possible point, and going away and coming back again, but you could see nothing but what was apparent. At last somebody placed his finger upon a certain spot, or put the picture before you in a certain way, when, lo, the hidden face stood revealed; and then you could not look at the picture without seeing it. In whatever position the picture was placed, you saw the hidden face, and you wondered how you could ever have been so blind as not to see it. It was concealed, yet wonderfully apparent.

So God is concealed in His works; most people see nothing of Him; yet as soon as we have eyes for Him, we cannot see a thing without beholding His invisible face plainly revealed. "The skies pour down righteousness, and the earth brings forth truth." (Isaiah 45:8)

In this connection, read: "Remember that you magnify His work, Whereof men have sung. All men have looked thereon; Man beholds it afar off. Behold, God is great, and we know Him not; The number of His years is unsearchable. For He draws up the drops of water, Which distil in rain from His vapour, Which the skies pour down And drop upon man abundantly. Yea, can any understand the spreadings of the clouds, The thunderings of His pavilion? Behold, He spreads His light around Him; And He covers the bottom of the sea." (Job 36:24-30)

Wondrously does God hide himself, so that every raindrop, every sunbeam, and every springing flower reveals Him. "His doctrine drops as the rain, and His speech distils as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass." (Deuteronomy 32:2)

If we but know where to find Him, we may drink in His righteousness in the rain that falls from heaven, and the light of His countenance will sparkle to us in the drops of dew upon the grass.

When we read verses 9-11 together, it seems evident that the latter verse is a question instead of a direct statement. Thus it is given some translations, "Do you ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands do you command me? ... Shall the clay say to him that fashions it, What do you make? Woe unto him that says unto his Father, What do you beget?" (Isaiah 45:11,9-10)

God is our Father; we are but clay, and He is the Maker of all things; who are we that we should presume to question His ways? how dare puny man set himself to criticize God's work? "He has made the earth, and created man upon it, and His hands have stretched out the heavens, and He has commanded all their host;" (Isaiah 45:12) yet men criticize and question His actions as though He were the merest apprentice. It would be better to look in quietness, and learn.

Lighting the Way of the Bridegroom

There shall come in the last days, the days of which Isaiah prophesied, (See Isaiah 6:11-12) "scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." (2 Peter 3:3-4)

But they say falsely, without any thought of what has taken place. In this portion of Isaiah, together with that which we studied last week, we have one of the proofs that God has given us of the truthfulness of His word, and that, too, with special reference to the coming of Christ to save His people.

Recall the prophecy concerning Cyrus, and how long it was uttered before the event took place, or Cyrus was born. God said, "He shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward." (Isaiah 45:13)

God's people had been brought out of Egypt, to dwell in their own land, even the whole earth, which was promised to Abraham. "For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith." (Romans 4:13)

But through lack of faith they never entered into the fullness of their inheritance. At the time of the nation's highest prosperity, the promised inheritance was still future, (See 2 Samuel 7:1-10) and King David on the throne, with wealth in abundance, was but a stranger and a sojourner, even as were Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. "For we are strangers before You, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding." (1 Chronicles 29:15)

Because the people were no more fit to dwell in the land than the Canaanites had been, God sold them into the hands of their enemies, and they were taken captive to Babylon. But He did not forsake them. Before they were taken away, the exact length of their captivity,--seventy years,--was foretold. "For thus says the Lord, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. 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. Then shall you call upon me, and you shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you." (Jeremiah 29:10-12)

By reading these words, we see that the deliverance from Babylonian captivity was to be the final, complete deliverance of God's people. "You shall seek me, and find me, when you shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, says the Lord; and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have drive you, says the Lord; and I will bring you again into the place where I caused you to be carried away captive." (Jeremiah 29:13)

If Israel had learned the lesson in captivity, that God designed they should learn, the close of the seventy years would have been the beginning of the time of the promise, even as the deliverance from Egypt was.

Promptly at the time appointed, God sent a man to release the people from Babylon. He fulfilled His word to the letter. But although everybody was free to return to Canaan, and representatives from all the tribes did return, in goodly number, they never really came out of Babylon. Babylon means confusion, departure from the simplicity that is in Christ. From that time even till now God's people have been in Babylon, so that still the call sounds, and still louder will it yet sound, "Come out of her, my people." (Revelation 18:4)

The coming of the Lord will mark the complete deliverance of God's people from Babylon; and He will come just as surely as Cyrus fulfilled God's word in the decree concerning Jerusalem and the temple. Then will all the world know that God dwells in His people. They will come, saying, "Surely God is in you; and there is none else, there is no [other] God." (Isaiah 45:14)

Christ is coming "to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." (2 Thessalonians 1:10)

But before He can come, His way must be prepared, so that He can dwell fully in His saints. Just as God was in Christ, so must He be in His church as a whole, and in each individual member, before Christ can be revealed to the eyes of all the world. It is only as men see God in His people, that they can fully know that there is only one God, the One who created all things. Christ, the fullness of God, must be fully formed in His people, and then will all "see what is the stewardship of the mystery which from all ages has been hid in God who created all things; To the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Ephesians 3:9-11,RV)

Then will the world know that God hides himself in man, in order that man may be glorified by His presence.--Present Truth, January 4, 1900--Isaiah 45:8-15.

Object of the Earth's Creation

"They are ashamed, they are even confounded, His adversaries, all of them; Together they retire in confusion, the fabricators of images. But Israel shall be saved in Jehovah with eternal salvation: You shall not be ashamed, neither shall you be confounded, to the ages of eternity. For thus says Jehovah, Who created the heavens; He is God: Who formed the earth and made it; He has established it: He created it not in vain; for He formed it to be inhabited: I am Jehovah, and none besides: I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth; I have not said to the seed of Jacob, Seek me in vain: I am Jehovah, who speak truth; who give direct answers." (Isaiah 45:16-19, Lowth)

The Fate of Idols and Their Makers

"They shall be ashamed, and also confounded, all of them: they shall go to confusion together that are makers of idols." (Isaiah 45:16)

Long ago we learned (See Chapter 25, "The Sure Foundation") in our study of this prophecy that "he that believes shall not make haste," (Isaiah 28:16) or be confounded, because he builds up the Sure Foundation, the Rock of Ages, Christ Jesus. "We know that no idol is anything in the world, and that there is no god but one." (1 Corinthians 8:4)

Therefore those who make and trust in idols must necessarily go to confusion. They literally go to nothing, for the idol is nothing, and "They that make them are like unto them; so is everyone that trusts in them." (Psalm 115:8)

He who builds up nothing must come to nothing. Thus we read: "For the day of the Lord is near upon all the heathen: as you have done, it shall be done unto you: your reward shall return unto your own head. For as you have drunk upon my holy mountain, so shall all the heathen drink continually, yea, they shall drink, and they shall swallow down, and they shall be as though they had not been." (Obadiah:15-16) "The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth and from under these heavens." (Jeremiah 10:11)

Of course then those who trust in them will perish with them. That is to say, whoever trusts in anything less than the power that made and upholds the heavens and the earth, will go out of existence.

No Lack to Those Who Trust God

"But the Lord is the true God, He is the living God, and an everlasting King." (Jeremiah 10:10) "[He is] from everlasting to everlasting." (Psalm 90:2)

Therefore, "Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation;" (Isaiah 45:17) for Israel is the people who depend upon the Lord, and who "have no confidence in the flesh." (Philippians 3:3)

Jacob's name was changed to Israel when he ceased to wrestle, because he was unable to stand, and hung on the Lord for support. That was his strength whereby he prevailed. "And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when He saw that He prevailed not against him, He touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with Him. And He said, Let me go, for the day breaks. And he said, I will not let You go, except You bless me. And He said unto him, What is your name? And he said, Jacob. And He said, Your name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince you have power with God and with men, and have prevailed." (Genesis 32:24-28) "He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God: Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto Him: he found Him in Bethel, and there He spoke with us." (Hosea 12:3-4)

It is "in the Lord" that Israel will be saved, not in themselves. "Vain is the help of man." (Psalm 60:11; Psalm 108:12) "Cursed be the man that trusts in man." (Jeremiah 7:5)

Why the Earth Was Created

"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)

Why was the earth created? The text tells us that God formed it to be inhabited. This statement immediately follows the statement that "He created it not in vain." (Isaiah 45:18)

That is to say, that if the earth were not inhabited, it would have been formed in vain. There would be no reason for its existence if it had no inhabitants.

Note further that the fact that the earth was not formed in vain, but was created to be inhabited, is given as proof that Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. Israel "shall not be ashamed nor confounded to the ages of eternity," (Isaiah 45:17) because they will have the earth to dwell on. It is to be the home of the saved, even as in the beginning it was formed to be inhabited by a righteous race.

A Present, Timely Message

This is a message for this time, for the message given to Isaiah was to be proclaimed "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)

Is there any prospect that such a thing will ever take place? There is indeed. God does nothing arbitrarily, and the Lord will not come to "take unto himself His great power, and to reign, and to destroy them which destroy the earth," (Revelation 11:17-18) until the earth and its inhabitants are so near total destruction that they would not last any longer, even if His coming were deferred. It is nothing but the coming of the Lord that saves the earth from destruction, which wicked men have brought upon it by their own self-destroying sins. Let us study this matter a little more closely, and we shall see it plainly.

Sin Brings Ruin

Remember that God has placed himself on trial by the world. The Judgment of the last day will be to determine and demonstrate the righteousness of God's character. He is to "be clear when He judges," (Psalm 51:4) or, to "overcome when He is judged." (Romans 3:4)

The judgment will be that: "God is true, but every man a liar." (Romans 3:4)

Thus every sinner will pronounce judgment upon himself. The wicked are now "treasuring up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." (Romans 2:5)

In the judgment, every sinner will acknowledge that he has brought his fate upon himself, and is simply reaping what he has sown. "He that sows to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption," (Galatians 6:8) and, "To be carnally minded is death [it has death in it]." (Romans 8:6)

Weigh these texts well. It is made very plain in the Scriptures that the wicked will receive punishment at the hands of God; that they will be "burned up with unquenchable fire." (Matthew 3:12)

But what is here set forth is that the Lord will not administer this punishment until the wicked men and seducers have waxed so bad that if the Lord did not come the race would cease to exist, being self-destroyed. This conclusion necessarily results from the fact that the wicked reap the fruit of their own doings; that: "The turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them." (Proverbs 1:32) "The strong shall become tow, and his work a spark of fire, and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them." (Isaiah 1:31)

When the wicked see that the coming of the Lord occurred just as they were about to exterminate themselves, and that He came to save the earth from utter destruction by them, and to make it a place fit for the habitation of those who remain loyal to Him, no tongue can rise up against Him in judgment. The master of the harvest begins His work at the time when the grain would fall of itself if it were not reaped.

The End Approaching

Is there any probability that such a state of things is imminent? There undoubtedly is, although very many people will scoff at the statement.

Look at the rapid increase of disease. In the last few years consumption has increased at a most alarming rate, and is carrying off its victims by the hundred thousand. People of middle age can well remember when a consumptive person was a somewhat noted person in a community, lingering along for years; whereas now consumption is one of the most common diseases, and often carries off its victims almost as quickly as the plague. Indeed, it has earned the name of "the great white plague."

The same plague is upon the cattle upon which men feed, so that the danger is intensified. If the disease should increase in the next few years at the same rate that it has in the past few years, the human being or the cow that did not have consumption would be an exceptional case.

This is only one of the many causes of death; many others might be named. Vice is increasing by leaps and bounds, and becoming more bold, if not more open. By unnatural practices men and women are "receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet." (Romans 1:27)

By wrong habits of eating and drinking, people are undermining their constitutions, and preparing themselves to be a prey to any epidemic that arises. Men and women vie with one another to see who can discover something new to eat. The simple things which God gave to man as his food, which are perfectly adapted to the wants of the body, building it up and making it strong, are but little thought of, while more and more abominable things and worse combinations are swallowed, the effect of which is only to fill the body with poisons, and to produce unsound tissues.

People flatter themselves that none of these things injure them, even while they are continually dosing themselves with patent nostrums, in order that they may keep their diseased organs from crying out under the strain put upon them, and preserve the feeling of health without the reality.

Many who have the appearance and the feeling of health are often cut down almost without any warning, because they have been fitting themselves to be a prey to disease. The plagues that come upon the earth are not any "mysterious dispensation of Providence," but are the natural and inevitable result of the gross habits of the people.

Devastating War

Then there is war with all its evils. The thousands that are slaughtered in battle do not by any means mark the sum of the ravages of war. Poverty, disease, and famine naturally follow in the wake of great armies. And when was there ever such preparation for war as at the present time. True there is great talk of peace, but the weapons of war are in hand all the time. No nation will voluntarily talk of peace until it can dictate the terms.

Immense armaments are being prepared for use, and who can estimate the slaughter that will take place when all the nations really become angry, and all join in the strife? The most optimistic know that the general struggle cannot be much longer delayed, and none dare contemplate the result.

There is nothing more certain than that with all the able-bodied men drawn into the armies, as is fast being the case, and set to killing one another, together with disease eating up the rest, to say nothing of the new ills that are generated by the armies themselves, another hundred years, if the coming of the Lord were delayed so long, would see none left on earth except the few righteous people who keep the truth. This is not speculation, but is exactly what the word of the Lord has foretold. "The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled; for the Lord has spoken this word. The earth mourns and fades away, the world languishes and fades away, the haughty people of the earth do languish. The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore has the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate; therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left." (Isaiah 24:3-6)

A Brighter Picture

But this is not to be the end, for the Lord created the earth not in vain, but formed it to be inhabited. When He formed it, He also made man and set him over it, and everything that He had made, including man, was "very good." (Genesis 1:31) From this we learn God's purpose in creating the earth. It was to be inhabited. Someone may say, "Well, it is now inhabited."

Not by the people for whom God designed it. He did not make the earth to be inhabited by wicked people, those who are in rebellion against His Government. The object of the creation of the earth will not be met until righteousness dwells in it, and sin and sickness are unknown. That time will come just as surely as God lives and is true.

The increase of evil, wicked men and seducers waxing worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived, (2 Timothy 3:13) the preparations for war, and the destruction of men by violence, disease, and vice, do not throw any discredit upon God's word, but are in themselves tokens of its truthfulness, and of the near approach of the time when Christ shall come and "reign in righteousness." (Isaiah 32:1)

The Saving Word of God

"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: I the Lord speak righteousness, I declare things that are right." (Isaiah 45:19)

God has not spoken any word in vain. He is able to save all that put their trust in Him, and His salvation is a perfect salvation. He saves from sin and death, and from every trace of both. He does not deceive. Far more than earthly parents, does He know how to give good gifts, (Matthew 7:11) even the gift of His own Spirit, to those who 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 power by which He will keep His people in the time of trouble (Daniel 12:1) that is coming on all the world, (Revelation 3:10) so that no plague shall come nigh their dwelling even though "noisome pestilence ... walks in darkness and destruction wastes at noonday," (Psalm 91:3,6) so that "no evil befalls them, neither does any plague come nigh their dwelling," (Psalm 91:10) is the selfsame power by which He now keeps them from sin. And He speaks plainly, too. The agents of Satan, wizards and familiar spirits, "peep and mutter," (Isaiah 8:19) "[and] whisper out of the dust," (Isaiah 29:4) but God gives direct answers. There is nothing ambiguous in them, as is the case with heathen oracles. The word "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? ... But the word is very nigh unto you, in your mouth, and in your heart that you may do it." (Deuteronomy 30:11-12,14)

Therefore, "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 10:9-10)

And, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." (2 Corinthians 6:2)--Present Truth, January 11, 1900--Isaiah 45:16-19.

The God That Can Save

"Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, you that are escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save. Tell, and bring them near: yea, let them take counsel together: who has declared this from ancient time? who has told it from that time? have not I the Lord? and there is no god else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. 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, ever tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength: even to Him shall all men come, and all that are incensed against Him shall be ashamed. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." (Isaiah 45:20-25)

In order to get the full benefit of these closing words of the 45th chapter of Isaiah, one must have in mind the leading features of all that has preceded, from the 40th chapter. Remember that in the whole Gospel of Isaiah the prominent feature is the great case in court, where the Government of God is on trial among men, before the whole universe. The question to be decided is, "Who is God?"

The decision of the case depends on who can save: the One who can save is the true God. The witnesses are the men whom God saves. They alone can be true witnesses, telling what they know from personal experience. In these verses we have this court scene vividly presented before us. "Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together. ... Tell, and bring them near: yea, let them take counsel together." (Isaiah 45:20-21)

Here again is the summons to court. God challenges His enemies, those who have brought false charges against Him, to come and establish their case if possible. Let all the strength of all nations be joined together to manufacture a god or multitudes of gods, yet none of them can save; none can deliver those that trust in them. That is to say, no man, nor all men together, can save. Men cannot save themselves.

Those who set up a wooden god, or any kind of god that cannot save, have no knowledge. Surely, the least degree of wisdom would teach anybody that when he is in a lost condition he cannot manufacture anything that can save him. This is simply the same thing that we find in the New Testament: "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." (Ephesians 2:8-9)

The Gospel according to Isaiah is identical with that preached by Paul.

Praying for Deliverance

For what purpose does one trust in any god, whether the true God, or one of his own manufacture? It is for the purpose of support, of salvation. Read again the 44th chapter. The foolish man who makes a god out of the same piece of wood with which he cooks his dinner, falls down before it, and says, "Deliver me; for you are my god." (Isaiah 44:17)

The fact that he prays this prayer, shows that he feels the need of deliverance. We must not make the mistake of supposing that all the heathen are insincere. There is no doubt as great a proportion of sincerity among the people in openly heathen countries as there is in those that are nominally Christian. It is not every heathen that prays for aid in sin-for the furtherance of his evil designs.

True, we learn that among the ancients very many prayed to the gods in order that they might succeed in some proposed plan of robbery or seduction; but then we read that many among professed Christians pray to God, but ask only that they may consume it upon their lusts. "You ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your lusts." (James 4:3)

So if the heathen have no excuse, the professed Christian has no reason for despising them. Among the heathen who in their blindness bow down to wood and stone, there are very many who are earnestly longing for deliverance from the chains that bind them. Ethiopia is represented as stretching out her hands to God. "Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God." (Psalm 68:31)

We are told that when the true light from God shines forth from the people of God, the Gentiles will come to it. "And the Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising." (Isaiah 60:3)

So when we hear of men praying, no matter to what they pray, we know that they pray because they desire something. The heathen pray to a god that cannot save. Yet they continue to pray for year after year. What wonderful perseverance! Praying for deliverance, and continuing to pray, not discouraged by the fact that they never find the thing sought for. There is something in them to admire, even while we pity.

Would we be as persevering? It is a question, for very many times we become weary in well-doing, and say that it is a vain thing we serve God. (Malachi 3:14) Perhaps we can learn a lesson even from the heathen.

He Who Creates, Saves

Into the midst of this multitude assembled to pray to a god that cannot save, God sends out the message, "Look unto me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth." (Isaiah 45:22)

How is it that He calls to the ends of the earth, to look to Him to be saved? Because He is "the Creator of the ends of the earth." (Isaiah 40:28)

He can save that which He has made. And He will do it, too, for: "All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God." (Isaiah 52:10) "The heavens are yours, the earth also is yours: as for the world, and the fullness thereof, You have founded them. The north and the south, You have created them; Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in your name. You have a mighty arm; strong is your hand, and high is your right hand." (Psalm 89:11-13)

In Christ we have redemption, because in Him are all things created, and in Him all things hold together: "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, 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 1:13-17)

The Creator is the Saviour. The cross of Christ saves, because in the cross is the power of a new creation. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

That which reminds us of the fact that God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and the sea, and all that is in them is that which presents to us the Gospel of our salvation. It is the Word of truth.

Salvation Natural to God

God is our Father. All the subjects of the King of kings are His children. Yet most people, even professed Christians, think it a surprising thing that God answers prayer. Indeed, it is really a question in the minds of many, whether God does actually hear our prayers.

If there were a case reported, of marvelous cure, or deliverance from great danger, or of relief in great distress, many professed Christians would shake their heads, and deplore such fanaticism. Among those who would believe it, it would be reported as a most marvelous thing.

Marvelous indeed are all God's mercies, but what we mean is that people would regard it as a strange thing. "This poor man cried, and the Lord actually delivered him out of all his troubles! (Psalm 34:6) How strange!"

We pick up our morning paper, and read the headlines. One says, in startling letters, "Astonishing Occurrence: A rich father actually gives his son a suit of clothes!"

Another one says, "Strange Affair: A young man traveling on the Continent telegraphs to his father for money, and receives a check the next day!"

You throw down the paper in disgust. "How senseless to publish such commonplace things as those; why, it is the most natural thing in the world for a father to give his son money and clothing, and whatever he needs for his support; that is an

everyday occurrence; why take up space to tell what everybody knows?" "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" (Matthew 7:11)

We should indeed publish the mercies of the Lord, but not as though it were a rare thing for the Lord to be merciful. Rather should the goodness of the Lord be talked about so much that everybody would know that "He delights in mercy," (Micah 7:18) and that it is His nature to give to everyone that asks. "Everyone that asks receives." (Matthew 7:8)

God saves, and saves immediately. "Shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry to Him day and night, and yet He is longsuffering over them? I say unto you, that He will avenge them speedily." (Luke 18:7-8,RV)

Bearing False Witness Against God

Yet thousands professedly pray to God, and receive no definite answers. Indeed, they scarcely expect answers, and would be surprised if any came. How many people are there in Christian lands and in Christian churches who day after day and week after week bow down before the Lord, and pray for deliverance, and yet are not free. They pray for salvation from sin, and yet are not saved; they still go on sinning. How much better off are they than the heathen?

The idolater prays to a god that cannot save, and is not saved; the professed Christian prays to the God that can save, and he likewise is not saved. Where is the difference? Not in the men, certainly. The heathen is for all practical purposes as well off as the man who professes to worship the true God. "My brethren, these things ought not so to be," (James 3:10) and it is not God's fault that they are so. He hears prayer, and He saves.

Worse Than the Heathen

We are God's witnesses, yet we often bear false witness. Every professed Christian who continues to live in sin; everyone who prays to God, declaring that he worships only the true and living God, but who does not live in the constant enjoyment of the salvation for which he prays, is a false witness. He is doing God worse service than are

the heathen themselves. He is saying that there is no more power in God to save than there is in the gods of the heathen; and inasmuch as he professes to be a servant of God, and is supposed to be intimate with Him, his testimony tells more against God than does the testimony of many heathen.

When the heathen looks at such an one, what inducement has he to leave his idols, and worship the God of the Christian? The heathen is indeed without excuse, in that he has all creation before him; but he gets no evidence from this one of the highest of God's creatures. It is well that God has not left himself without witness, in that He has done all men good, giving them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons; for the men who have professed His name have too often testified that He could not save, or else that He was indifferent.

The only way that we can be true witnesses for God, is by allowing His power to work in us that which is good. It is not enough that we do not indulge in some of the practices of the debased heathen; if we do not take salvation from our God, to whom we pray for deliverance, we are as bad off as are the heathen who set up the wood of their graven image, and pray to a God that cannot save. Let us not libel God any more.

The Secret of Successful Prayer

If men in praying would remember that He is the creator of the ends of the earth, there would not be so many vain prayers. "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)

He who made man of the dust of the earth can very easily "lift up the poor out of the dust, ... and set them among the princes of His people, (Psalm 113:7) and make them inherit the throne of glory." (2 Samuel 2:8)

It is because men have forgotten to worship God as the Creator, that they do not find salvation. The fact that He is the Creator, is the sole difference between Him and the hordes of false gods. Do not forget this essential difference.

Salvation in a Look

God says, "Look unto me, and be saved." (Isaiah 45:22)

Salvation is in a look. "There's life in a look."--Joh Parker, Hymn: There is Life in a Look.

When the children of Israel were dying in the bites of venomous serpents, "The Lord said unto Moses, Make a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole; and it shall come to pass, that everyone that is bitten, when he looks upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived." (Numbers 21:8-9) "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)

Looking in faith saves us.

"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) "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us 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." (2 Corinthians 4:17-18)

While we look at the Lord, He looks at us, and the Light of His countenance saves. "The light of the knowledge of the glory of God [shines] in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:6)

When Peter denied the Lord with cursing and swearing, Jesus turned and looked upon Peter, and immediately Peter received repentance and forgiveness. "And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with Him: for he is a Galilaean." (Luke 22:59) "But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom you speak." (Mark 14:71) "And immediately, while he yet spoke, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said unto him, Before the cock crew, you shall deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly." (Luke 22:60-62)

No one can possibly be lost while he is steadfastly looking unto Jesus.

Sworn Testimony

"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." (Isaiah 45:23)

In this great case, all the testimony must be sworn to. God has given testimony in His own behalf, and has sworn to it. He has sworn that none who trust in Him shall be lost. He has sworn to save everyone who is willing to be saved, that is, everyone who acknowledges himself to be utterly lost, and who therefore cease his vain struggles to save himself, but allows God to do as He will with him.

His case rests upon His power and willingness to save the ungodly, and such confidence has He in the outcome, that He has sworn that every knee shall bow before Him, and every tongue confess that He is the Lord. All will do this, constrained by the weight of evidence.

- The righteous will do it now, even though they cannot see and understand all the dealings of God;
- The wicked, even the devil himself, will do it at the last, when the hidden things are brought to light, and will thus pronounce their own doom.

In the oath of God, He has placed every man under oath. Every man on earth is under obligation to God, to bear witness to His faithfulness and power to save; all are by right God's witnesses; therefore all who do not in their lives bear witness to the fact that God saves, are perjurers. The third commandment (Exodus 20:7) is broken by many in their prayers. They take the name of God in vain, because they do not claim the salvation which He has wrought out, and has brought to all mankind.

Our Case God's Case

"Surely he shall say of me, In the Lord is all righteousness and strength: even to Him shall men come; and all that are incensed against Him shall be ashamed. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." (Isaiah 45:24-25)

In the Lord there is righteousness and strength. In the Lord there is justification and glory. When God swore, He swore by himself. He pledged His life for the salvation of men. He virtually said that if He failed to save anybody, even the humblest person in the remotest part of the earth, who called upon Him for salvation, He would forfeit His own life. (This thought is also found in Chapter 25, A Sure Foundation, sub-head "A Tried Stone," and Chapter 58, Abolishing the Enmity, sub-head "The Heavens and the Earth Interested.")

Indeed, if righteousness does not come from God, or if it comes from any other source than the Lord Jesus, then His life is already forfeited, for in that case Christ is dead in vain. "I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." (Galatians 2:21)

But Christ is not dead in vain, and "God is from everlasting to everlasting," (Psalm 90:2) although He has staked His life. He declares that all men shall yet bear witness, and swear to it, that He is the God that saves. Since He has such confidence in His case, and is willing to stake so much upon it, cannot we put our case along with His? If we join Him, our life is "bound up in the bundle of life with His," (1 Samuel 25:29) and we are as sure of everlasting life and happiness as He is. What a great salvation!--Present Truth, January 18, 1900--Isaiah 45:20-25.

The Downfall of Pride

"Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon; sit on the ground without a throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for you shall no more be called tender and delicate. Take the millstones, and grind meal; remove your veil, strip off the train, uncover the leg, pass through the rivers. Your nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, your shame shall be seen: I will take vengeance, and will spare no man. Our Redeemer, the Lord of hosts is His name, the Holy One of Israel. Sit silent, and get into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans; for you shall no more be called The Lady of kingdoms. I was wroth with my people, I profaned my inheritance, and gave them into your hand: you showed them no mercy; upon the aged have you very heavily laid your yoke. And you said, I shall be a lady for ever; so you did not lay these things to your heart, neither did you remember the latter end thereof. Now therefore hear this, you that are given to pleasures, that dwell carelessly, that say in your heart, I am, and there is none else besides me; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children: But these two things shall come to you in a moment in one day, the loss of children and widowhood; in their full measure shall they come upon you, despite of the multitude of your sorceries, and the great abundance of your enchantments. For you have trusted in your wickedness; you have said, None sees me; your wisdom and your knowledge, it has perverted you; and you have said in your heart, I am, and there is none else besides me. Therefore shall evil come upon you, you shall not know the dawning thereof: and mischief shall fall upon you; you shall not be able to put it away: and desolation shall come upon you suddenly, which you knew not. Stand you with your enchantments, and with the multitude of your sorceries, wherein you have labored from your youth; if so be you shall be able to profit, if so be you may prevail. You are wearied in the multitude of your counsels; let now the astrologers, and stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save you from the things that shall come upon you. Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: it shall not be a coal to warm at, nor a fire to sit before. Thus shall the things be unto you wherein you have labored: they that have trafficked with you from your youth shall wander everyone to his quarter; there shall be none to save you." (Isaiah 47:1-15,RV)

To Whom is This Spoken?

Of what interest is all this to us? How does it concern us to know that such things were prophesied of Babylon, and that they were fulfilled more than twenty-five centuries ago?

Is it to us anything more than a mere matter of curiosity such as that with which we read any other record of the past? Or if it be more than a matter of curiosity, has the record any more than a historical interest for us, proving the truthfulness of God's word?

Why were these things placed in the Bible for us to read, and why do we read them? "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." (Romans 16:4) "The prophets ... prophesied of the grace that should come unto you; ... the Spirit of Christ which was in them ... testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Not unto themselves, but unto us, did the prophets minister the things which are now reported unto us by them that have preached the Gospel by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." (1 Peter 1:10-12)

The things written in this chapter concern us in this age, at this present time, more than they have ever concerned any other people on this earth. We live very much nearer the fulfillment of these things than did Isaiah or the Jews who were carried captive to Babylon.

Isaiah and Revelation

Compare this chapter with the 18th chapter of Revelation, and you cannot fail to see that both prophets are speaking of the very same thing. Indeed, they use exactly the same expressions, so that the higher critic would doubtless say that John copied from Isaiah. But when God has an important message, He is able to send it by more than one messenger, and to give the message to each one of them independently.

- Revelation 18:7-8, is identical with Isaiah 47:8-9.
- In the last verse of Isaiah 47, we have summed up all that is contained in Revelation 18:9-18.

- In Revelation 17:5-6 we have the parallel to Isaiah 47:6-7.

Now just as surely as the prophecy concerning Babylon, in the Revelation, has not yet been fulfilled, so surely does the prophecy in Isaiah yet await its fulfillment.

A Rival to God

Note that this Babylon is represented both in Isaiah and Revelation as being opposed to God and His people. She is opposed to them, not as an atheistic power, but as a power professing to be above God. God says, "there is none beside me. ... I am the Lord; and there is none else. ... There is no God else beside me ... there is none beside me. I am God, and there is none else." (Isaiah 45:6,18,21-22) "I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me." (Isaiah 46:9)

And Babylon says, "I am, and there is none else besides me." (Isaiah 47:10)

So we see that she sets herself up as the rival of God, claiming to be all that He is. This was the position of ancient Babylon. In the 4th chapter of Daniel we have an account of a test as to whether Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, or God, was supreme. Although Nebuchadnezzar had learned of the true God, and had been told that "the heavens do rule," (Daniel 4:26) and that "The God of heaven had given him his kingdom, and power, and strength, and glory," (Daniel 2:37) he said, as he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" (Daniel 4:30)

Then the judgment of God came upon him, until he learned and acknowledged that the God of heaven "lives for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He does according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What are You doing? ... And those that walk in pride He is able to abase." (Daniel 4:34-35,37)

Babylon's Blasphemous Pride

But that did not settle the question with Babylon, for although Nebuchadnezzar doubtless went to his grave in the faith of this confession, Belshazzar, who knew all these things did not profit by them, but in his insolent impiety, in the midst of the heathen revel, "brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone. ... Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let your gifts be to yourself, and give your rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation. O you king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honor: And for the majesty that He gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down. But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him: And he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that He appoints over it whomsoever He will." (Daniel 5:3-4,17-21)

Daniel recalled to Belshazzar the pride and humiliation of Nebuchadnezzar, and said, "And you his son, O Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this; But have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you, and your lords, your wives, and your concubines, have drunk wine in them; and you have praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand your breath is, and whose are all your ways, you have not glorified." (Daniel 5:22-23)

The Same Spirit Still Alive

In 2 Thessalonians 2:3-8 we have a description of a power identical with this, which is to exist and work even till the coming of the Lord to Judgment. It is called the "man of sin, ... 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." (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4,RV)

Compare this with what we have just been reading about Babylon, and it will appear that the cases are identical. Babylon was the rival of God, yet its greatest king acknowledged God at the last; but the lesson was not learned, and Babylon perished in its proud boasting of supremacy over the God of all the earth.

Transmitted to the Successors

The Medo-Persian kingdom immediately took the place in the world, that had been occupied by Babylon, and although Cyrus publicly acknowledged the true God, the most of the kings of Persia received honors themselves as gods, instead of according the honor to God. They, like Belshazzar of Babylon, were weighed in the balances and found wanting.

The same spirit was prominent throughout the Grecian supremacy; and when Rome took its place as mistress of the world, the spirit of idolatrous pride reached a pitch never before dreamed of. To that power, more than to any other ever known on earth, applies the title, "Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth;" (Revelation 17:5) and in her are fulfilled these words: "I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus." (Revelation 17:6)

Thus we see the very same power described in the prophecy of Isaiah exists unchanged until the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not that in ancient Babylon we have a type of that which is described in the Revelation, but that it is one and the same power in each case; and the people of God have never been fully out of Babylon since the days of Nebuchadnezzar.

Sudden Destruction

"Therefore shall evil come upon you; you shall not know from whence it rises: and mischief shall fall upon you; you shall not be able to put it off: and desolation shall come upon you suddenly, which you shall not know." (Isaiah 47:11)

But deliverance is sure. Babylon is to be utterly destroyed, and the call of God is, "Come out of her, my people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues." (Revelation 18:4)

How quickly utter destruction may follow the greatest seeming prosperity, is seen in the case of Belshazzar. When the kingdom of Babylon had reached the height of its glory, and her kings were most self-complacent, destruction came. That, however, was but the beginning of the end. It was a warning. Just as surely as the ancient city of Babylon fell at the height of its pride and splendor, when she said, "I shall be a lady for ever," (Isaiah 47:7) so surely will the judgments of God come on the whole earth, when religion, no matter by what name it is called, has reached the place where it is identified with and controls the destinies of the nations. At the time when "the church" is universally acknowledged, so that men begin to say, "Peace, and safety, then will sudden destruction come upon them." (1 Thessalonians 5:3) "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 also shall the coming of the Son of man be." (Matthew 24:38-39)

Pride, the Religion of Human Nature

It is a sad mistake for anyone to apply all these prophecies to some specific organization, and some special "system of religion." While they undoubtedly have their most complete fulfillment in certain ecclesiastical bodies, the principle is that of human nature, instilled into all men by "the god of this world," (2 Corinthians 4:4) "the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience," (Ephesians 2:2) who is himself called the king of Babylon. (Isaiah 14:4-27) "Your wisdom and your knowledge it has perverted you." (Isaiah 47:10)

This was what caused the fall of Lucifer. (Ezekiel 28:12-18) Wisdom and knowledge are not to be despised, but the only wisdom and knowledge that are of any real worth, are "the wisdom that comes from above," (James 3:17) and the knowledge of God, which is life eternal. The wisdom that puffs one up with pride, that is connected with strife and vainglory, is "earthly, sensual, devilish. ... But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits," (James 3:15, 17) even the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ.

Complete renunciation of self, and absolute dependence upon God, deliver souls from Babylon, and from her plagues.--Present Truth, January 25, 1900--Isaiah 47:1-15.

The Peace of Righteousness

"Hearken unto me, O Jacob, and Israel, my called; I am He; I am the first, I also am the last. My hand also has laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand has spanned the heavens: when I call unto them, they stand up together. All you, assemble yourselves, and hear; which among them has declared these things? The Lord has loved him: He will do His pleasure on Babylon, and His arm shall be on the Chaldeans. I, even I, have spoken; yea, I have called him: I have brought him, and he shall make his way prosperous. Come near unto me, and hear this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord God, and His Spirit, has sent me. Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord your God which teaches you to profit, which leads you by the way that you should go. 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: Your seed also had been as the sand, and the offspring of your bowels like the gravel thereof; his name should not have been cut off nor destroyed from before me. Go forth of Babylon, flee from the Chaldeans, declare with a voice of singing, tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth; say, The Lord has redeemed His servant Jacob. And they thirsted not when He led them through the deserts: He caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them: He clave the rock also, and the waters gushed out. There is no peace, says the Lord, unto the wicked." (Isaiah 48:12-22)

Never forget for a moment that the message of Isaiah is to the end of the world; that he was not prophesying merely for those who lived at the time he spoke and wrote, but for everybody who should live until everything of which he prophesied is completed. He foretold the coming of the Lord, and no matter how long that event may seem to be delayed, the message is to all who live until Christ comes.

Come Out of Babylon!

"Go forth of Babylon, flee from the Chaldeans, declare with a voice of singing, tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth; say, The Lord has redeemed His servant Jacob." (Isaiah 48:20)

Babylon, the power that thought that the strength received from God was inherent in itself, (Isaiah 47:8,10) and that exalted itself above God, (2 Thessalonians 2:4) is still before us. The houses and walls built by Nebuchadnezzar were long since destroyed, and the kingdom of Babylon has long since ceased to be named among men; nevertheless Babylon is today as really in existence, and is as active, as it was in the days of Isaiah. The message that we are now studying proclaims, "Go forth of Babylon, ... say, The Lord has redeemed His servant Jacob." (Isaiah 48:20)

This message is so important that the Lord repeated it several hundred years later, when, as the world reckons, Babylon was out of existence. In the Scriptures called the New Testament, which are not by any professed Christians handed over to the Jews, as their especial property, but which are claimed as the Christian Scriptures, we read, "Come out of her, my people." (Revelation 18:4)

Isaiah wrote, "Go forth of Babylon, flee from the Chaldeans, declare with a voice of singing, tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth; say, The Lord has redeemed His servant Jacob." (Isaiah 48:20)

John, by the same Spirit, uttered the same message, in almost identical words: "Rejoice over her, heaven, and holy apostles and prophets; for God has avenged you on her." (Revelation 18:20)

The message is no more true or important because it is repeated; but the repetition makes it more emphatic. The fact that it is repeated after the time when men would unthinkingly say that Babylon is a thing of the past, and believers in the fulfillment of prophecy might say that the words of the Lord by Isaiah have been fulfilled, and are now a mere matter of history, to be studied merely as showing that God's Word cannot fail, shows that Babylon still exists, and that Isaiah's prophecy is as live, present truth as any portion of the Bible.

Nothing of God's Word has failed, and all that has already come upon Babylon is but a pledge that every prediction will be fulfilled to the letter. Babylon, that proud power that reigns in the hearts of men, leading them to exalt themselves against God, and to ignore Him, and even openly to defy Him, is yet to receive the fullness of her punishment. Come out of her!

Babylon Ancient and Modern

Christ is the one whose arm will accomplish the destruction of Babylon, even as it is He who redeems the people of God. The destruction of Babylon is merely a portion of the work of redemption. "The Lord has loved Him: He will do His pleasure on Babylon, and His arm shall be on the Chaldeans." (Isaiah 48:14)

He is the Beloved of the Lord. The capture of Babylon by Cyrus was only a foretaste, a pledge, of the final destruction of that "mystery of iniquity," (2 Thessalonians 2:7) the "man of sin," "the son of perdition," (2 Thessalonians 2:3) of which Babylon and its king, putting human laws above the law of God, (Daniel 7:25) stood as the representative to the end of the world. The spirit of Nebuchadnezzar, when he made a golden image, and commanded all to worship it, thus setting at nought the law of God; and the spirit of Belshazzar, who in the pride of his dominion defied God, and thought that he had conquered Him, has been transmitted through all the kingdoms to the present time. And not only is the spirit of Babylon in the kingdoms of the earth, but it is in the professed church of God.

When Nebuchadnezzar saw that there was a power above him, and acknowledged it, he presumed to legislate for God, as though God were not able to execute His own laws, and defend His own honor. He began to serve God in the same spirit with which he had just defied Him, and said, "I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort." (Daniel 3:29)

There speaks religion in Government--the Church working through the State. Nebuchadnezzar was sincere in this supposed service to God--as sincere as he was when he defied God, and no more,--but his last decree was no more Christian than the first. In both of them he showed that he thought himself at least equal to God.

The proclamation recorded in the 4th chapter of Daniel, where Nebuchadnezzar makes his public confession, not as a king, but as a man, is a Christian confession. Although he was king of the mightiest kingdom that ever existed on this earth, he could serve God only as an individual. His example and influence would be more far-reaching

than that of any other man; but as a true Christian he could use no other means to make men serve God than his personal confession by faith.

But that is not the spirit of Babylon. Babylon did not become imbued with the spirit that possessed Nebuchadnezzar at the last. He died, and the same old spirit of self-exaltation, and of rejection of God, resumed sway. It still exists in the world, in so-called "Christian nations," and even in the professed church of Christ, because it is the spirit of human nature. The call is to forsake it. "Come out of her, my people!" (Revelation 18:4)

God's Right and Power to Speak

The Lord speaks. It is He who has "laid the foundation of the earth," (Psalm 102:25) who with the span of His hand has measured the heavens. (Isaiah 40:12) "He has made a memorial for His wonderful works," (Psalm 111:4,Literal) in order that we may know that He is God. Every week it comes to us, so that we are without excuse if we forget God, and fail to put our whole trust in Him. "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 20:11) "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 20:20)

He is the one who "teaches us that which will be of profit to us, and who leads us in the way that we ought to go." (Isaiah 48:17,paraphrase) "We have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way;" (Isaiah 53:6) and, "The way of peace we have not known," (Isaiah 59:8; Romans 3:17) therefore God cries to us appealingly: "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." (Isaiah 48:18)

What Righteousness Is

Righteousness is right-doing; it is the opposite of unrighteousness, and: "All unrighteousness is sin." (1 John 5:17) "Sin is the transgression of the law." (1 John 3:4)

Therefore righteousness is the keeping of the law. It is also peace, because it is the way of the Lord, (Psalm 119:1-3) and He is "the very God of peace." (1 Thessalonians

5:23) "Great peace have they which love your law: and nothing shall offend them." (Psalm 119:165) "[They have] none occasion of stumbling." (1 John 2:10) "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:1)

Thank God, "the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed." (Isaiah 53:5)

Even though we have sinned, and have departed from the law of peace and righteousness, we may in Christ be brought into the right way, because He is the way, the true way. His name is: "The Lord our righteousness." (Jeremiah 23:6) "He is of God made unto us wisdom, and righteousness." (1 Corinthians 1:30) "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes." (Romans 10:4)

Those who forsake their own way, and come to Christ, allowing Him to dwell in their hearts by faith, attain unto righteousness, (Romans 9:30-33) even that righteousness which is "witnessed by the law and the prophets." (Romans 3:21)

What Peace Means

What is peace? Alas, very few know. Even those who accept the Lord, very often are content with but a fragment of the peace which He bestows. It is wonderfully comprehensive. The Hebrew word here rendered "peace," is a very common one, conveying the idea of wholeness, soundness, health, welfare of every kind. A few instances of its use may be of service to us. In the following texts, the words which are identical with the word "peace" in our lesson, are given in *Italic*. "Jacob asked the shepherds concerning Laban, *Is he well?* And they said, *He is well.*" (Genesis 29:6) "Joseph asked his brethren of their welfare, and said, *Is your father well?* And they answered, *Your servant our father is in good health.*" (Genesis 43:27-28) "When David came near to the people, he saluted them." (1 Samuel 31:21)

The margin has it, "He asked them how they did."

We ask people how they do; so did the men of old, only instead of saying, "How do you do?" they said, "How is your peace?" meaning the same thing. "And when Uriah

was come unto him, David demanded of him how Joab did, and how the people did, and how the war prospered." (2 Samuel 11:7)

Literally, he asked after the peace of the people, and after the peace of the war! "And Joab said to Amasa, Are you in health, my brother?" (2 Samuel 20:9)

The Hebrew verb from which the noun meaning "peace" is derived, means finishing, completion, restoration. It occurs, for example in the following texts: "If a man borrow aught of his neighbor, and it be hurt, or die, the owner thereof not being with it, he shall surely make it good." (Exodus 22:14) "He shall make amends for the harm that he has done in the holy thing." (Leviticus 5:16)

Peace is Health of Soul and Body

These illustrations of the use of the word rendered "peace" are sufficient to show that peace, in the Bible use of the term, is not an abstract thing, a mere sentiment or state of mind. It comprises everything that pertains to man. That which is expressed in Isaiah 48:18, as the condition of those who hearken to God's commandments, is identical with what we have in: "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thessalonians 5:23)

The peace which comes as the result of keeping the commandments, or, rather, the peace which is the keeping of the commandments, means perfect health of body, as well as perfect purity of soul. It is indicated in the words of John: "Beloved, I wish above all things, that you may prosper and be in health, even as your soul prospers." (3 John:2)

If men had hearkened to the commandments of God, their health of body and of mind would have been as continuous as the current of a river, and as full as the fullness of the sea. We have not hearkened to God's commandments; but there is forgiveness with Him, and the bestowal of righteousness through the Lord Jesus Christ; and in Him we are made complete, (Colossians 2:10) for: "He is our peace." (Ephesians 2:14) "Of His fullness have all we received." (John 1:16)

If we will but allow the Holy Spirit to strengthen us according to the riches of the glory of God, so that Christ may dwell in us by the Spirit, we shall "be filled with all the fullness of God." (Ephesians 3:19)

Peace Like a River

God's life flows as a river. From His throne proceeds the "river of water of life, clear as crystal," (Revelation 22:1) because, "with Him is the fountain of life." (Psalm 36:9)

That life flows through the universe, bringing perfect health and righteousness wherever it is allowed to flow unhindered. If we give the Word of life free course in us, then our peace, our righteousness, our physical health, everything that pertains to our welfare, will flow as a river, even as the river of God, because we shall be having the saving health of God's life constantly in us. The stream "flowing, ever flowing,"--W. V. Miller, Hymn: The Well of Living Water, 1908--will wash away all impurities, so that no evil of any kind can remain behind to clog the system.

He makes the poor sinner, sick in body and mind, "every whit whole. He gives" (John 7:23) "perfect soundness." (Acts 3:16)

The holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord, is but the wholeness which the life of God in Christ imparts. "The peace of God which passes all understanding will keep our hearts" (Philippians 4:7) when we trust God for everything. That means that our life will be redeemed from destruction, (Psalm 103:4) for "out of the heart are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23)

Oh, what a salvation this,

That Christ liveth in me!

--D. W. Whittle, Hymn: Christ Liveth in Me, 1891.

The Fountain Ever Flowing

In proof of the fact that He will make our peace--complete health of spirit, soul, and body--flow as a river, "[God] caused the waters to flow out of the rock: He clave the rock also, and the waters gushed out." (Isaiah 48:21)

And this very thing He continues to do until the present time. Every river that is fed by the rain that descends from heaven, is but one of the branches of the river of life. "You visit the earth, and water it: You greatly enrich it with the river of God, which is full of water: You prepare them corn, when You have so provided for it. You water the ridges thereof abundantly: You settle the furrows thereof: You make it soft with showers: You bless the springing thereof." (Psalm 65:9-10)

That fountain of water gushing forth from the rock, which so many of us have seen, from which we have slaked our thirst, and the beauty of which we have admired, is caused to flow by the Lord, and comes truly from the Rock Christ Jesus. "And [they] 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) "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." (Exodus 17:6)

Every drink and every bath that we take should be a reminder to us that we drink in the life of Christ, which can also cleanse us from all sin; and that that life is perfect peace for us, if we will but take it,--the healing of every wound, every disease, that tends to spoil our peace.

Shall we not make it the business of our lives to seek this fountain of peace?--
Present Truth, February 1, 1900--Isaiah 48:12-22.

The Despised One Chosen

"Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, you peoples, from far: the Lord has called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother has He made mention of my name: And He has made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of His hand has He hid me: and He has made me a polished shaft; in His quiver has He kept me close: And He said unto me, You are my Servant; Israel, in whom I will be glorified. But I said, I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and vanity; yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my recompense with my God. And now says the Lord that formed me from the womb to be His Servant, to bring Jacob again to Him, and that Israel be gathered unto Him (for I am honorable in the eyes of the Lord, and my God is become my strength); Yea, He says, It is too light a thing that You should be my Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give You for a light to the Gentiles, that You may be my salvation unto the end of the earth. 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, and they shall worship; because of the Lord that is faithful, even the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you. Thus says the Lord, In an acceptable time have I answered 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 raise up the land, to make them inherent the desolate heritages: Saying to them that are bound, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and on all bare heights shall be their pasture. They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for He that has mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall He guide them. And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted. Lo, these shall come from far; and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim." (Isaiah 49:1-12,RV)

Christ the Speaker

The first thing to be noted in the reading of this lesson is the unmistakable reference to Christ. "Called ... from the womb ... [to be] a light to the Gentiles, [and the] salvation [of God] unto the end of the earth ... the Chosen of God ... to restore Israel ... and to establish the earth ... although despised and rejected of men ... His mouth made

like a sharp sword." (Isaiah 49:1,6-7,5-7,2,some paraphrasing; Compare with Revelation 19:15,21)

There is not the slightest possibility for a doubt that Christ the Redeemer, is the one here speaking. It is doubtful if anybody could read the passage, and get any other idea.

Christ Stands for His People

It would be a great mistake, however, if any should get the idea that the Scripture is fulfilled in the person of Jesus of Nazareth alone. The trouble is that most people rest content with the thought that the language means Christ, and let it pass at that, as though it had no further interest for them. As a matter of fact, we have in this portion of Scripture a good demonstration of the truth that whatever concerns Christ concerns His people, and that He has fully identified himself with the human race, binding himself to mankind by cords that can never be broken. Jesus of Nazareth is the Representative Man.

Men Called From Their Birth Take the first item:

"The Lord has called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother has He made mention of my name." (Isaiah 49:1)

This is, of course pre-eminently true of Jesus; for the angel of the Lord said to Joseph when he was thinking of putting Mary away, "She shall bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21)

But our minds involuntarily turn to the great ancestor of Jesus according to the flesh, and we recall the words of the Lord to Abraham: "Sarah your wife shall bear you a son indeed; and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him." (Genesis 17:19)

Read the 13th chapter of Judges, and see how the character and work of Samson were described before he was born. John the Baptist is another striking instance. The angel Gabriel said to Zacharias: "Your wife Elizabeth shall bear you a son, and you

shall call his name John. And you shall have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice at his birth. And he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and 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." (Luke 1:13-16)

We may say that the language in Isaiah applies to John the Baptist as well as to Christ; and the same thing might also be said of Isaac. Indeed, if we should attempt to limit it to any one person, we should have a difficult task; for read these words of the Lord to the prophet Jeremiah: "Before I formed you in the belly I knew you; and before you came forth out of the womb I sanctified you, and I ordained you a prophet unto the nations. ... Behold, I have put my words in your mouth. See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant." (Jeremiah 1:5,9-10) "My substance was not hid from You, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in your book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." (Psalm 139:15-16)

Then as another striking instance, we have the Apostle Paul, of whom God said, "He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel," (Acts 9:15) and Paul himself tells us that he was chosen to this work from his birth. "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 all this list, we have to add the name of Cyrus, who was called by name many years before his birth, and appointed to an important work in the restoration of Israel. (Isaiah 44:28, 45:1-13)

The reader must remember that the Bible does not deal in exceptions. We are not treated to a history of certain, exceptional cases, "freaks of nature," as it were, but to illustrations of God's dealing with all men, and of what is possible for all. The cases just referred to, together with the scripture that we are studying, are to show us that God has a plan for every human being, and calls him to it from his birth, and even before he sees the light. Few ever recognize the voice of God calling them, but they are called nevertheless.

God has chosen you, and called you to your work; do you know His voice, and are you doing your work "heartily as to the Lord," (Colossians 3:23) "giving diligence to make your calling and election sure?" (2 Peter 1:10)

There is marvelous encouragement for us in the fact that God has called us as surely as He called Christ, and has chosen and called us in Him. (Ephesians 1:4; Revelation 17:14)

You are the Light of the World

Another proof that Jesus associates all His people with himself in the work of the Gospel: "I will also give You for a light to the Gentiles, that You may be my salvation unto the end of the earth." (Isaiah 49:6)

Now read the words of Paul and Barnabas, spoken when the Jews rejected their message, contradicting and blaspheming: "It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing you put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. 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 13:46-47)

They, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, took the words as applying to them personally, and so we may know that they apply equally to all who are chosen and called by the Lord to His service. Jesus says, "As my Father has sent me, even so send I you;" (John 20:21) and, "God, sent not His Son into the world, to condemn the world; but that the world though Him might be saved." (John 3:17)

Everybody who receives the Spirit of God is sent forth equally with Christ, to work for the salvation of mankind. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and has committed unto us the word of reconciliation. 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 5:17-20)

Workers Together with God

But there is more yet for us. How often have we heard these words in Gospel talks: "I have heard you in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured you: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." (2 Corinthians 6:2)

We have thought that this meant merely that the Lord is willing to accept us when we come to Him. It means that, and much more. It is a light thing for Him to accept and save those for whom He died; but the great wonder of His grace is this, that He accepts us as "workers together with Him." (2 Corinthians 6:1)

This is most encouraging, because it puts the matter of our own personal salvation entirely beyond all question; inasmuch as we are chosen to be His salvation to the end of the earth, it is self-evident that we ourselves must be saved. We cannot carry salvation to others unless we have it ourselves to carry.

So while working with the Master we are relieved from all care as to our own safety. The Lord accepts us, not merely for salvation, but for service.

No Volunteer Rejected

Whom does the Lord accept for service? Is He very particular as to the persons who present themselves for labor in His cause? Must they come with a certificate of good character, and be those who are well spoken of by all men? Listen: "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." (Isaiah 49:7-8)

The Lord is in need of laborers in His vineyard, and He stands and calls for whosoever will, to come. No applicant will be rejected; all will be accepted and set to work.

The Government has called for volunteers to serve in the army; out of thousands who present themselves, only hundreds are accepted; the majority are rejected as unfit for service. Not so with the Lord; He accepts every volunteer, "whosoever will," (Revelation 22:17) and makes him fit for service, "thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Timothy 3:17)

No matter how despised and rejected and cast off by men,--the Lord will receive us, and take us into partnership with himself. Here is encouragement for the weakest. There is no ground left for anybody to indulge in doubts because of his unworthiness; if you are despised, no matter for what cause, justly or unjustly, the Word of the Lord singles you out, and says, "I have specially chosen you for a very delicate piece of work that I must have done."

What wonderful honor God has placed upon fallen man!

Free Agents--Agents of Freedom

What is the work that we are called and chosen to do? "That you may say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves." (Isaiah 49:9)

He calls the bondservants of Satan, the slaves of sin, all who labor, and are heavy laden with iniquities, bound by the cords of their own sins, and not only sets them free, but makes them the agents of releasing others who are in cruel bondage. What more could He say? Come, and enter His service, and taste His power to save,--power not only to save you, but power working in you to save others. "Base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought 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 1:28-31)

The weaker and more despised you are, the greater will be the glory to God in that which He accomplishes through you. We hear a great deal about man being a "free moral agent." That is only half the truth; he is not only himself free to choose what he will, and in Christ given the freedom of the universe, but is made God's agent in setting at liberty those that are bound.

Courage in Despondency

Yet with all this for our encouragement, feelings of despondency will sometimes oppress us. We say to ourselves, if not to others, "It is no use; my work doesn't amount to anything."

Well, the Lord has provided help for just such a time as that; nay, more, He has provided that you should be able to find encouragement even from your despondency. Remember that all the language of this chapter applies to Christ, primarily. Now read again: "But I said, I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nought." (Isaiah 49:4)

What! did Christ ever have such feelings of discouragement? Certainly He did, else it would not be the case that He was in all things "made like unto His brethren," (Hebrews 2:17) "in all points tempted like as we are." (Hebrews 4:15)

The weakness as well the burden of humanity was on Him, and He was tempted many times to give up the struggle. But, thank God ... without sin." (Hebrews 4:15)

He never gave way to temptation. With the temptation the way of escape is always prepared, and He always took advantage of it.

Even in His greatest depression of spirits, He said, "surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God." (Isaiah 49:4) "[He] himself took our infirmities," (Matthew 8:17) so that we may know in every temptation and trial that Christ not only has suffered the same thing, but that He has conquered it by the very same power which He gives to us. If we know that "Christ lives in me," (Galatians 2:20) then whenever the despondency comes, we may know that He is bearing it. The very words of discouragement that come to our mind should be a reminder of these words of Christ, and so should turn to encouragement; and when we have learned this lesson, we shall be reminded of Christ before the words get to our lips. Then that which started as a wail of discouragement will end as a song of triumph. "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13) "When I am weak, then am I strong." (2 Corinthians 12:10)

Led to Living Fountains of Water

Verse 10 makes very clear to the thoughtful student what this deliverance from Babylon means, and shows incidentally that as Babylon was a world empire, so Babylon, whether in the Old Testament or the New, is "this present evil world," (Galatians 1:4) whether under the garb of Christianity or not. Concerning those who are set free, we read: "They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for He that has mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall He guide them." (Isaiah 49:10)

Now turn to the book of Revelation, which has so much to say about Babylon. John saw in prophetic vision the closing work of redemption, and "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 cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. Then one that stood by said to John: ... These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sits on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." (Revelation 7:9-10,14-17)

We cannot fail to see that the two prophets, Isaiah and John, are describing the same thing, and that deliverance from Babylon is deliverance from sin, and sickness, and sorrow, and death. The scene in the Revelation is undoubtedly in "the heavenly Jerusalem;" (Hebrews 12:2) but we must know that if we are believers indeed, we even now "do enter into rest," (Hebrews 4:3) and that we already "are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem ... to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant." (Hebrews 7:22-24)

Not as a mere empty song does the Christian say with David, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me

beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

Even now God dwells among His people, and with Him is the fountain of life, for He is indeed "the Fountain of living waters." (Jeremiah 2:13)

The water is real, and is as refreshing and life-giving as it is real. It is only for us to appreciate the reality.

Christ is Israel

In this lesson the question of who constitute Israel is plainly answered. "You are my Servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified." (Isaiah 49:3)

But it has already been made clear that Christ is the One who is speaking here, and who calls upon the people from far to understand that from birth He has been called to accomplish the work of God. So we learn that Israel is one of the names of Christ. Why should it not be? Rather, How could it be otherwise? For "Israel" means "A Prince of God," or, "He who conquers," and Christ is "the Lion of the tribe of Judah, [who] has prevailed," (Revelation 5:5) "the great Prince which stands for the children of your people." (Daniel 12:1)

He is most emphatically Israel, and since we overcome only through the blood of the Lamb, (Revelation 12:11) it follows that we become Israel only as we are in Him. "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." (Isaiah 45:25)

No person on this earth has, or ever has had, or ever will have, any right to be called Israel unless he has the victory over sin, through faith in Christ. "If you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:29)--Present Truth, February 8, 1900--Isaiah 49:1-12.

The Earth's Interest in Redemption

"Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the Lord has comforted His people, and will have mercy upon His afflicted. But Zion said, The Lord has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget you. Behold I have graven you upon the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me. Your children shall make haste; your destroyers and they that made you waste shall go forth of you. Lift up your eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, and come to you. As I live, says the Lord, you shall surely clothe yourself with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on yourself as a bride does. For your waste and your desolate places, and the land of your destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, and they that swallowed you up shall be far away. The children which you shall have, after you have lost the other, shall say again in your ears, The place is too strait for me: give place to me, that I may dwell. Then shall you say in your heart, Who has begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who has brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been? Thus says the Lord God, Behold, I will lift up my hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring your sons in their arms, and your daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. And kings shall be your nursing fathers, and queens your nursing mothers: they shall bow down to you with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of your feet; and you shall know that I am the Lord: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me." (Isaiah 49:13-23)

Different Calls to the Earth and Heavens

"Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the Lord has comforted His people, and will have mercy upon His afflicted." (Isaiah 49:13)

This is not the first time that earth and heaven have been called upon to take part in something pertaining to men in their relation to God. In the 1st chapter of Isaiah we

read, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord has spoken. I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." (Isaiah 1:2)

The call is very much more emphatic in the 2nd chapter of Jeremiah: "Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be very desolate, says the Lord. For my people have committed two evils: They have forsaken me, the Fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." (Jeremiah 2:12-13)

In Deuteronomy 32:1-3 the heavens and earth are called upon to listen to the good doctrine which the Lord imparts to His rebellious children. "Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass: Because I will publish the name of the Lord: ascribe greatness unto our God." (Deuteronomy 32:1-3)

But in the text before us the heavens are called upon to sing, and the earth to be joyful, and the mountains to break forth into singing, because the Lord has redeemed His people.

The Earth's Existence Depends on the Gospel

It is easy to see that the heavens and earth are deeply concerned in man's salvation, since they are called in to witness every step in the transgression, and in the progress of redemption. Not only so, but they tremble with terror at the sight of man's causeless rebellion, and sing for joy when he is brought back saved. From these things we can see that the stability of the heavens and the earth depends upon the success of God's work of saving men. "The earnest expectation of the creation waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of Him who subjected it in hope That the creation itself shall also be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God." (Romans 8:19-21,RV)

When God comes to Judgment, "the heavens and the earth shall shake," (Joel 3:16; Isaiah 13:13, Haggai 2:6,21) "The heavens shall depart as a scroll when it is rolled

together," (Revelation 6:14) "[And] the earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage, because of the transgression that is on it." (Isaiah 24:20)

But when God's people come to their own land in peace, the mountains will greet them with songs of rejoicing, and all the trees of the forest will clap their hands in delight. "For you shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." (Isaiah 55:12)

The Earth Given to Man

Why is all this? The answer opens to us a fine, large truth, which is full of encouragement to every soul. "In the beginning the Lord laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of His hands," (Hebrews 1:10) and at the same time "He made man, and crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of His hands," (Hebrews 2:7) that is, over the heavens and the earth. "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)

But all things are not under him now. Nevertheless, man having been placed in authority in the beginning, as the ruler of the things that God has made, so far as they have intimate connection with this planet, it must needs be that they can of right have no other ruler than man; because: "Whatsoever God does, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it." (Ecclesiastes 3:14)

God never takes back a gift; He never undoes what He has once done; He is never forced to retreat from any position that He has taken. Should such a thing ever be necessary, it would show that He was not supreme and all-wise. Man, therefore, has been placed in authority over this earth, once for all.

The Earth Lost

But behold, what a sad state of things has occurred. Man, the ruler, has lost control of himself; he can no longer control his own body or spirit, much less the heavens and earth. Therefore they are left without a ruler, so far as man is concerned.

That is why we see earthquakes, and disturbances in the heavens; and the nearer we approach the end, and as the wickedness of man increases, the greater and more frequent are these disturbances. Creation is groaning in pain because of man's sin. "For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now." (Romans 8:22)

If it should be that "the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24) should fail, and men should not be saved, then the earth would have been created in vain, that is, for chaos, for nothingness. "Fear, and the pit, and the snare, are upon you, O inhabitant of the earth. And it shall come to pass, that he who flees from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that comes up out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare: for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth do shake. The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly." (Isaiah 24:17-19) "All nations before Him are as nothing; and they are counted to Him less than nothing, and vanity." (Isaiah 40:17)

We are sometimes told that God could have destroyed man at once, as soon as Adam sinned, and could have peopled the earth with another race of beings. Those who say that, do not understand the works and gifts of God. He could not have destroyed man without destroying the earth also. They both belong together. One was created for the other. In the days of Noah, when "the earth ... was corrupt, because all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth, God said, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth." (Genesis 6:12-13)

When man is destroyed, the earth must perish with him. God's word made them both in the beginning, and placed the earth under the dominion of man; the same word destroyed them both together in the flood; and, "The heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of Judgment

and perdition of ungodly men. ... Nevertheless, we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness." (2 Peter 3:7,13)

This is the reason why the heavens and earth mourn when man falls, and rejoice when he is redeemed. Their salvation is bound up with man's.

The Universe Pledged for Man's Redemption

But this is not the whole story. "When God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He swore by himself. ... For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, wherein it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolidation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us." (Hebrews 6:13,16-18)

God is the One whose great power upholds the earth and heavens. His ability to hold them up is given as the reason why His people need not be discouraged, but always be strong. "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. 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. 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 40:26-31)

The word which created the heavens and the earth in the beginning, and which now upholds them, is the same word that brings salvation to man. In swearing by himself, God placed the heavens and the earth in the balance against man's salvation. If "the word of truth, the Gospel of salvation," (Ephesians 1:13) should fail, then the heavens and the earth would fail. Not only would they be deprived of man's sovereignty, but God's word having been broken, they would be no longer under His dominion, and

would at once vanish into nothing. But they will not be annihilated, because God's word cannot fail. "He cannot lie." (Titus 1:2)

This is our "strong consolation." (Hebrews 6:18)

The weakest and meanest soul on earth has this consolation in fleeing to Christ for refuge. He may know that if God should refuse to pardon him, and give him overcoming grace, the heavens and earth would instantly cease to be. If he asks in faith, and does not instantly hear the wreck of matter and the crush of worlds, he may know that his prayer is answered, and that his sins are forgiven.

Then let men join in the song of the starry host, and shout for joy over the fact that "God ... has visited and redeemed His people." (Luke 1:68)

God Cannot Forget His People

Who has not heard the complaint, almost in the identical words, "The Lord has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me." (Isaiah 49:14)

Impossible. "Behold, I have graven you upon the palms of my hands." (Isaiah 49:16)

In the hands of the Lord are the prints of the nails that fixed Him to the cross. But it was our sins that nailed Him there. It was our sins that He bore on the tree. Therefore we are crucified with Him, and in the nail prints He sees us. It is not simply a few people who "belong to church," that the Lord remembers; but every sinner on earth is engraved upon His hands, carried in His heart. Zion's walls are continually before Him. What are her walls? "Salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." (Isaiah 26:1)

Salvation, the salvation of sinners is continually before the Lord, for "with His stripes we are healed." (Isaiah 53:5)

He has reminded himself of mankind, and of each individual, in such a way that He cannot possibly forget.

The Story of Zion

"But Zion said, The Lord has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget you. Behold, I have graven you upon the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me." (Isaiah 49:14-16)

Zion is here represented as speaking. Where is Zion? It is the place where the sanctuary of God was built, in Jerusalem. That place is now forsaken, and desolate, given over to strangers. The city of Jerusalem, and its temple, might have stood for ever, if the people had obeyed the Lord; for that was the promise of God. "And it shall come to pass, if you diligently hearken unto me, says the Lord, to bring in no burden through the gates of this city on the sabbath day, but hallow the sabbath day, to do no work therein; Then shall there enter into the gates of this city kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their princes, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: and this city shall remain for ever." (Jeremiah 17:24-25)

But they disobeyed. They slew those who foretold the coming of the Just One, and when He came they betrayed and murdered Him. So Christ, just before His crucifixion, said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the prophets, and stone them which are sent unto you, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, You shall not see me henceforth, till you shall say, Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord." (Matthew 23:37-39)

Forsaken it is indeed, but not for ever. Nay, it is not really forsaken at all; because as we have just read, its walls are continually before Him. Christ is anointed upon the holy hill of Zion, in "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." (Hebrews 12:22)

That city is yet to come down "from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." (Revelation 21:2)

Its adornment will be her inhabitants, "the nations of them that are saved," (Revelation 21:24) "For Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." (Galatians 4:26)

When the city is restored, and her children "come again to their own border, ... from the land of the enemy," (Jeremiah 31:17,16) there will be so many more inhabitants than old Jerusalem ever had, that they will say, "The place is too strait for me: give place for me that I may dwell." (Isaiah 49:20)

A few hundred thousand people inhabited old Jerusalem at the time of its greatest prosperity, but the New Jerusalem will be peopled by a "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues." (Revelation 7:9)

Of the enlarging of the place of the city, to make room for its great increase of population, we read in: "Behold, the day of the Lord comes, and your spoil shall be divided in the midst of you. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle." (Zechariah 14:1-3)

When the Lord goes forth to fight against the nations that fight Jerusalem,

"And His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley." (Zechariah 14:4)

Of the greatness of the valley thus formed we can get some idea when we read that "The city lies four square, and the length is as large as the breadth; and he measured the city with a reed, twelve thousand furlongs." (Revelation 21:16)

Taking this at the smallest, that is, not as the length of each side, but as the distance round the city, we find that it will be three hundred and seventy-five miles square,--a very fair sized city. It is not generally supposed that all of the inhabitants of any country will be able to find room in its capital; but the New Jerusalem will be so large that it

could contain every person that as ever been born since the days of Adam; so that none will have been crowded out for lack of room. It will therefore hold all the inhabitants of the new earth, as they come up from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, to worship before God. "For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, says the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, says the Lord." (Isaiah 66:22-23)

The Inhabitants of Zion

Who will inhabit this city? The answer is, Israel. The city has twelve gates, three on each side, and on these gates are "the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel." (Revelation 21:12)

All who enter that city will have to enter as members of some one of the tribes of Israel. "Then shall you say in your heart, Who has begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who has brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been? Thus says the Lord God, Behold, I will lift up my hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring your sons in their arms, and your daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders." (Isaiah 49:21-22) "After this I will return, and I 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, who does all these things." (Acts 15:16-17)

And this is done by visiting the Gentiles, "to take out of them a people for His name." (Acts 15:14) "Blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles to come in. And so all Israel shall be saved; as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." (Romans 11:25-26)

Israel is now scattered among all the nations. That is, there are in all nations on earth some who will allow ungodliness to be turned away from them, and that will constitute them Israel, and they will dwell in the New Jerusalem. "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 8:11-12)

Who will come to the standard which God sets up for the people? All who will, may come, and none who come will ever be put to shame or confusion because of their confidence.--Present Truth, February 15, 1900--Isaiah 49:13-23.

The Triumph of Submission

"Thus says the Lord, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, wherewith I have put her away? or which of my creditors is it to which I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities were you sold, and for your transgressions was your mother put away. Wherefore, when I came, was there no man? when I called, was there none to answer? Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver? Behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness; their fish stinks, because there is no water, and dies for thirst. I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering. The Lord God has given me the tongue of them that are taught, that I should be able to sustain with words him that is weary: He wakens morning by morning, He wakens my ear to hear as they that are taught. The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away backward. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that I plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord God will help me; therefore have I not been confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near, that justifies me; who will contend with me? let us stand up together: who is my adversary? let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord God will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? behold, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up. Who is among you that fears the Lord, that obeys the voice of His Servant? he that walks in darkness, and has no light, let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God. Behold, all you that kindle a fire, that gird yourselves about with firebrands: walk in the flame of your fire, and among the brands that you have kindled. This shall you have of my hand; you shall lie down in sorrow." (Isaiah 50:1-11,RV)

Read Galatians 4:25-26, in order to understand the reference "your mother." Jerusalem which now is, old Jerusalem, answers to the old covenant, and "is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all," (Galatians 4:25-26) and this answers to the new covenant. Recall what was said concerning Jerusalem, in the last lesson. Although Jerusalem is forsaken, "When the Lord shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His glory," (Psalm 102:16) and the new Jerusalem will come with Him, to take the place of the present city, so that it is considered as a continuation of the Jerusalem that has existed so long. It is the old city

rebuilt. So the Lord has not cast off Jerusalem, although the city known on earth as Jerusalem will be destroyed with the rest of "this present evil world." (Galatians 1:4)

He has not divorced her. Read in this connection Isaiah 54, especially verses 4-7, and the first verse of this chapter will be much more easily understood. "Fear not; for you shall not be ashamed: neither be confounded; for you shall not be put to shame: for you shall forget the shame of your youth, and shall not remember the reproach of your widowhood any more. For your Maker is your husband; the Lord of hosts is His name; and your Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall He be called. For the Lord has called you as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when you were refused, says your God. For a small moment have I forsaken you; but with great mercies will I gather you." (Isaiah 54:4-7)

God is Not Reduced to Poverty

"Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have you sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away." (Isaiah 50:1)

Among the nations of old it was often the case that a father sold his children into slavery, in order to satisfy a creditor, and this was practiced even among the Jews, as we learn from: "And if a man sell his daughter to be a maidservant, she shall not go out as the menservants do." (Exodus 21:7) "And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews. For there were that said, We, our sons, and our daughters, are many: therefore we take up corn for them, that we may eat, and live. Some also there were that said, We have mortgaged our lands, vineyards, and houses, that we might buy corn, because of the dearth. There were also that said, We have borrowed money for the king's tribute, and that upon our lands and vineyards. Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children: and, lo, we bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants, and some of our daughters are brought unto bondage already: neither is it in our power to redeem them; for other men have our lands and vineyards." (Nehemiah 5:1-5)

But God never became so poor that He was obliged to resort to that plan. No creditor ever had so great an advantage over the Lord that he could compel Him to sell His children. He had not sold any of His children, even when He allowed them to go

into captivity; but they sold themselves. "You have sold yourselves for nought; and you shall be redeemed without money." (Isaiah 52:3)

So far is the Lord from having been obliged to sell His people to satisfy His creditors, that He is able to buy them back, after they have sold themselves.

The Power That Redeems

"Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver? behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stinks, because there is no water, and dies for thirst." (Isaiah 50:2)

Who dares doubt God's power to redeem? How can anybody think that He has no power to deliver? We have only to read the account of the deliverance of Israel from the land of Egypt, to see how easy a matter it is for God to save His people. Compare verse 2 with: "And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided." (Exodus 14:21) "And the Lord said unto Moses, Pharaoh's heart is hardened, he refuses to let the people go. Get unto Pharaoh in the morning; lo, he goes out unto the water; and you shall stand by the river's brink against he come; and the rod which was turned to a serpent shall you take in your hand. And you shall say unto him, The Lord God of the Hebrews has sent me unto you, saying, Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness: and, behold, hitherto you would not hear. Thus says the Lord, In this you shall know that I am the Lord: behold, I will smite with the rod that is in my hand upon the waters which are in the river, and they shall be turned to blood. And the fish that is in the river shall die, and the river shall stink; and the Egyptians shall loathe to drink of the water of the river. And the Lord spoke unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Take your rod, and stretch out your hand upon the waters of Egypt, upon their streams, upon their rivers, and upon their ponds, and upon all their pools of water, that they may become blood; and that there may be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood, and in vessels of stone. And Moses and Aaron did so, as the Lord commanded; and he lifted up the rod, and smote the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants; and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood. And the fish that was in the river died; and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river; and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt." (Exodus 7:14-21)

That very same power is put forth to save us from our sins, which have been the cause of our being sold into bondage. Don't be afraid of confusing the spiritual and the literal. Every act of God is literal and also spiritual.

If God only told us of what He can do, we should not have anything tangible to lay hold of; no foundation for our faith; for no matter how much we might be disposed to believe Him, our minds could not grasp the meaning; the reality, of what He said; so He gives us visible examples of His power to save, referring us to all His constant working in nature, and also to special working in the past. That is for the purpose of letting us know that the power which He promises to exert on our behalf is so real that we can perceive it in our own bodies; we may know that He saves us.

Christ is the One "who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." (1 Corinthians 1:30)

Therefore it is He who speaks here. He is "the everlasting Father;" (Isaiah 9:6) and the New Jerusalem is "the bride, the Lamb's wife." (Revelation 21:9)

So we see that the prophecy of Isaiah is in perfect accord with that in Revelation. Unmistakable proof that it is Christ who is speaking in this chapter, is found in verse 6: "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)

As we read what He says, we must remember that He suffered in our behalf, as the representative Man; His courage and victory are ours.

The Wisdom of Christ

"The Lord God has given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakens morning by morning, He wakens my ear to hear as the learned." (Isaiah 50:4)

The learned person is the one who has been taught, and who is still a disciple. So it makes no difference whether we read verse 4 as in the Revision or in the Common Version; "the tongue of the learned" [KJV] is "the tongue of them that have been

taught." [RV] "I speak that which I have seen with my Father." (John 8:38) "The Word which you hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me." (John 14:24)

It may be even so with us; for we read, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God." (John 6:45)

If we come to the Lord to learn, He will give us, as well as Christ, the tongue of the learned. But the learning does not come without labor. Learning of God is not a mere lazy assent to certain doctrines, not a sentimental yielding to Him, and a fancy that because we say that God is our Teacher, we are necessarily taught by Him. Many people have had good teachers, but have not profited by them, because they were too lazy to study.

It is often the case that people think to make their religion a substitute for real knowledge. They have an idea that if God is their teacher, they must never study anything. That is the reason why they should study a great deal more.

Here is a man with a thirst for knowledge, but his opportunities are few. At last he has a chance of studying under a celebrated teacher. Ah, it is a rare chance, and he will exert himself in study to the utmost. One must not throw away such an opportunity as that!

Even so it ought to be with those who have an opportunity of studying under God's teaching. No moment should be neglected; the Word of God, printed in the Bible, and spread out in all creation, should be studied with zeal and patience. The "royal road to learning" {"The easiest, most direct, or most effective way to reach or achieve something. This expression alludes to a remark attributed to the Greek mathematician Euclid (c. 300 BC). When the Egyptian ruler Ptolemy I asked whether geometry could not be made easier, Euclid is said to have replied: "There is no royal road to geometry." (thefreedictionary.com)} is laid down by the wisest of men in: "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." (Proverbs 2:1-6)

No person in the world ought to be content with his present attainments. We cannot exhaust the "treasures of wisdom and knowledge," (Colossians 2:3) that are hid in Christ. Dig for them, it is worthwhile. What will God's teaching enable us to do? "To speak a word in season to him that is weary;" (Isaiah 50:4) not to speak empty phrases, but words that "sustain the weary one." [RV] The One of whom we are to learn is "meek and lowly in heart." (Matthew 11:29) "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits." (James 3:17)

Some Word of Comfort

Listen to some of the "words" with which Jesus sustained the weary when He was here on earth. "Son, be of good cheer; your sins be forgiven you." (Matthew 9:2) "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." (Luke 7:50) "Neither do I condemn you; go, and sin no more." (John 8:11) "Daughter, be of good comfort; your faith has made you whole." (Matthew 9:22) "Go in peace." (Luke 8:48)

With many such words did Jesus sustain the weary ones; may we speak the same words to sorrowing souls? Indeed we may, for we are ambassadors on behalf of Christ, as though God were beseeching by us even as by Christ. Sin is the cause of all tribulation, and "[God] 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 1:4) "God sent ... His Son into the world ... that the world through Him might be saved;" (John 3:17) and He says, "As my Father has sent me, even so send I you." (John 20:21)

We are therefore to be able, from personal experience, to speak words that will set at liberty the groaning captives of sin. But we must first receive a tongue from the Lord, and allow Him to control it.

The Lord's Submissive Servant

The secret of success is submission. "The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back." (Isaiah 50:5)

This reminds us of the words of Christ: "My ears have You opened." (Psalm 40:6)

And this also reminds us of what is written in the law. When a servant refused to go away from his master when the year of release came, but said, "I love my master, ... I will not go out free," (Exodus 21:5) the order was, "Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the doorpost; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for ever." (Exodus 21:6)

That act signified that his ear was his master's, always open to hear his commands. We are the Lord's servants, if we yield ourselves to Him as His servants: "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)

And we are to do the will of God on earth as it is done in heaven, (Matthew 6:10) where the angels "do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word." (Psalm 103:20)

Our ears are to be at the service only of God, and what we hear we are to accept as our "reasonable service." (Romans 12:1)

If we thus submit to the Lord, we may have the support, and the power to sustain others, that Christ had. "He that has ears to hear, let him hear." (Matthew 11:15)

Christ was not rebellious. He had, as "the Man Christ Jesus," (1 Timothy 2:5) given himself to be the Lord's servant for ever, and He was not rebellious, and did not draw back, even when the service involved the receiving of blows, and still worse treatment, and also the vilest insults. That was in the contract, when He made the bargain, and He did not back out. So it was with the Apostle Paul. God said, "I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake;" (Acts 9:16) and Paul submitted himself to be the Lord's servant for ever, knowing what it involved; and so when "bonds and afflictions" (Acts 20:23) awaited him in every city, he could calmly say, "None of these things move me." (Acts 20:24)

Power Gained by Submission

The Master is responsible for the servant, and, knowing this, the Servant says, "The Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." (Isaiah 50:7)

Even so Paul said: "Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day." (Acts 26:22) "Well, what is the practical use of all this to me?" someone will ask, "I am neither Jesus nor Paul, and cannot expect to do such work as they did, nor to be noticed by the Lord as they were."

Why, my dear man, you are losing the benefit of the whole Gospel story. Do you not see that the strength of Jesus and of Paul was their weakness? Jesus said, "I can of my own self do nothing." (John 5:30) "I do nothing of myself." (John 18:38) "The Father that dwells in me, He does the works." (John 14:10)

It was only when Paul was weak, that he was strong: "Therefore 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)

God said to him, "My grace is sufficient for you: for my strength is made perfect in weakness;" (2 Corinthians 12:9) and Paul exclaimed, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest on me." (2 Corinthians 12:9)

"The power of Christ" that rested on him in weakness, was the same power that rested on Christ in His infirmity. Now here is the comfort for you, whosoever you are: Are you weak, the very weakest of the weak? very good; then you afford the Lord the most excellent opportunity for manifesting the perfection of His strength. Christ's power was His submission to the Father; you certainly are not too weak to allow yourself to rest in the hands of God, that He may do what He will with you. If Christ dwells in your heart, you may, like Him, be "filled with all the fullness of God." (Ephesians 3:19)

Every experience of Christ may be ours. He says that the Lord God will help Him, and that therefore He shall not be confounded nor ashamed; and have we not but

recently learned that: "Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation: you shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end?" (Isaiah 45:17)

Then let us also set our faces like a flint.

Our Deliverer Near

"He is near that justifies me; who will contend with me? let us stand together: who is my adversary? let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord God will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up." (Isaiah 50:8-9) "[God is] not far from everyone of us." (Acts 17:27) "It is God that justifies;" (Romans 8:33) therefore we may say with Christ, "He is near that justifies me." (Isaiah 50:8)

And then we may be as bold as He, in saying, "who will contend with me? let us stand up together: who is my adversary? let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord God will help me." (Isaiah 50:8) "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? ... Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear;" (Psalm 27:1,3) "[For] the angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him, and delivers them." (Psalm 34:7) "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." (James 4:7)

The True Light

"But the way is so dark!" you exclaim.

Very well; "Who is among you that fears the Lord, that obeys the voice of His Servant? although he walks in darkness, and has no light, let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." (Isaiah 50:10,RV,margin)

So we can say with a humble man of old, "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. ... He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold His righteousness." (Micah 7:8-9)

None that put their trust in the Lord shall be ashamed. (Psalm 25:3) Take heed, however, not to manufacture a light for yourself. "Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that

compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow." (Isaiah 50:11)

The sparks of your own kindling are a very poor substitute for "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God." (2 Corinthians 4:6) "This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. ... 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 1:5,7)

Our ideas, our opinions, whatever proceeds from us, is darkness, even though it seems for a moment to flash as light. The word of God is light and with that in our hearts we may successfully resist "the rulers of the darkness of the world." (Ephesians 6:12) "The true light now shines." (1 John 2:8)

Let us therefore give thanks to God, "Who has delivered us from the power of darkness, and has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son." (Colossians 1:13)--Present Truth, February 22, 1900--Isaiah 50:1-11.

Everlasting Righteousness Our Salvation

"Hearken unto me, you that pursue righteousness, You that seek Jehovah. Look unto the rock, from whence you were hewn; And to the hollow of the cave, whence you were dug. Look unto Abraham your father; And unto Sarah, who bore you: For I called him, being a single person, And I blessed him, and I multiplied him. Thus therefore shall Jehovah console Sion; He shall console all her desolations: And He shall make her wilderness like Eden; And her desert like the garden of Jehovah: Joy and gladness shall be found in her; Thanksgiving, and the voice of melody. Attend unto me, O you peoples; And give ear unto me, O you nations: For the law from me shall proceed; And my judgments will I cause to break forth for a light to the peoples. My righteousness is at hand; my salvation goes forth; And my arm shall dispense judgment to the peoples: Me the distant lands shall expect; And to my arm shall they look with confidence. Lift up unto the heavens your eyes; And look down unto the earth beneath: Verily the heavens shall dissolve, like smoke; And the earth shall wax old, like a garment; And its inhabitants shall perish, like the vilest insect: But my salvation shall endure for ever; And my righteousness shall not decay. Hearken unto me, you that know righteousness; The people, in whose heart is my law: Fear not the reproach of wretched man; Neither be borne down by their revilings. For the moth shall consume them, like a garment; And the worm shall eat them, like wool: But my righteousness shall endure for ever; And my salvation to the age of ages." (Isaiah 51:1-8,Lowth)

The reader cannot fail to notice the difference between Lowth's translation and the ordinary rendering of verse 6, and some may wonder what warrant there can be for so much difference, and how we can be sure of anything when translators differ so widely. What similarity can there be between "in like manner" [KJV] and "like the vilest insect" [Lowth]?

The matter is easily explained. It is well known that in our own language there are many instances of words spelled alike, yet having entirely different meanings. We have no difficulty with them, because the connection always tells us which meaning is intended. Even so it is in the Hebrew.

The word of "thus" or "so" is spelled the same as that for "gnat" or "fly." All other translations of which the writer has any knowledge, read, "the inhabitants shall die like gnats," and this rendering is suggested in the margin of the Revised Version of the English. A moment's thought is sufficient to show anybody that "like gnats" is much more striking than "as so," which our translators preferred, and that it is evidently what the Lord really says. It is not a vital matter, but is worthy of note.

Abraham an Example of Righteousness

"Hearken to me, you that follow after righteousness, you that seek the Lord: look unto the rock whence you are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence you are dug. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bore you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him." (Isaiah 51:1-2)

Here we have a call direct to those who would follow the Lord,--to those who seek righteousness. There are many who are seeking it in the wrong way. "Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law." (Romans 9:31-32)

We are therefore directed to Abraham, for an example of how righteousness is obtained. "If Abraham were justified by works, he has whereof to glory; but not before God. For what says the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that works is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that works not, but believes on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describes the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputes righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered." (Romans 4:2-7) "The Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith." (Romans 9:30)

Abraham was a Gentile, brought up a heathen. In Joshua 24 we have almost the exact language as in our lesson in Isaiah: "And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus says the Lord God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods. And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led

him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac." (Joshua 24:2-3)

He was but one, yet God gave him a numerous posterity through faith, for: "If you be Christ's then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:29)

Look to him, and learn the power of faith. Learn how God can work against all human probabilities. Look also to Sarah, who by faith "received power to conceive seed when she was past age, since she counted Him faithful that promised." (Hebrews 11:11) "Thus therefore shall Jehovah console Sion." (Isaiah 51:3, Lowth)

In that way, and by that means, will God build up and restore Jerusalem; by the preaching of the Gospel among all nations, will God from among the Gentiles raise up a faithful seed to inherit the land of promise, even as He raised up Abraham in the first place. And herein is comfort for the individual, for it matters not how lonely and weak a man may be, God is able to multiply him and make him great.

The Mercy of God's Justice

It is common for people to look upon the law of God with dread. They regard it as a terrible thing, the instrument only of wrath. That depends wholly upon how they receive it. Out of Christ, it is but an instrument of death, but if we receive it in Christ, it is "the law of the Spirit of life. The throne of grace, to which we are invited to come with boldness," (Romans 8:2) "that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need," (Hebrews 4:16) is the very same throne out of which proceed "lightnings, and thunders, and voices." (Revelation 4:5)

But we must not forget that it was even so at the cross, were we look for salvation. All the terrors of Sinai were there, yet it is from the cross that all our comfort comes. And the cross was the throne of God, having God's law as its basis, with the stream of life flowing from it.

The law is not opposed to the Gospel, and does not even have to be reconciled with it; but the law of God in Christ is the Gospel. Justice does not have to give way to mercy, nor even to be blended with it; but it is the justice of God that justifies the

ungodly. "Being justified 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 of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of Him which believes in Jesus." (Romans 3:24-26)

There's a wideness in God's mercy,
Like the wideness of the sea;
There's a kindness in His justice,
That is more than liberty.
For the love of God is broader
Than the measure of man's mind;
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind.

--Frederick William Faber, Hymn: There's a Wideness in God's Mercy, 1862.

But God's heart is just, for God himself is just. Therefore, because God is just, and His law is His own life, people will learn to trust and hope in it, and will walk in the light of it. God's law is to be loved and delighted in, instead of to be feared and rejected. God's law is salvation to everyone who accepts it in Christ.

God says, "My righteousness is near." (Isaiah 51:5)

Yes, for God himself is "not far from everyone of us," (Acts 17:27) and He is our righteousness. "Christ [is] of God made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." (1 Corinthians 1:30)

His righteousness is near, and His salvation has gone forth. His life is righteousness and salvation, and it has been given freely for all. The gift has been bestowed, and we have not even to ask for it, but only to take it. What a blessed thing it is to know that we may trust on the arm of Jehovah! "The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." (Deuteronomy 33:27)

God's Law Everlasting

"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." (Isaiah 51:6) "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away," (Matthew 24:35) says Christ. "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) "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail." (Luke 16:17)

Everything that can be shaken will be removed; but God's law will stand for ever; it is unchangeable, for it is God's own righteousness, and He is "from everlasting to everlasting." (Psalm 90:2)

It is the expression of God's will, (Romans 2:17-18) therefore "He that does the will of God abides for ever." (1 John 2:17)

God's Righteousness is the Law

That God's righteousness is His law, is seen from verse 7. God says, "Hearken unto me, you that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law." (Isaiah 51:7)

That is to say, the people who know righteousness are the people in whose heart God's law is. If this were the only statement of the kind in the Bible, it would be sufficient to show that there can be no righteousness where the law of God is not; but it must be there by faith; for this perfect righteousness of the law is found only in Christ, and He dwells in the heart by faith.

This verse shows another thing also, and that is that no one can know the law except by experience. It is with the heart that man believes unto righteousness. One may be able to repeat the commandments as glibly as he can the alphabet, he may discourse beautifully about "the plan of salvation," but he knows nothing of God or His righteous law unless he has experienced the power of His salvation. We know what we have

lived, and nothing more. All the rest we have merely heard about. "Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and your law is the truth." (Psalm 119:142)

It is the law of God, therefore, that is to be the shield and buckler of God's people in the time of trouble. "He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings shall you trust: His truth shall be your shield and buckler." (Psalm 91:4)

The law of God will be the defense of His people. It is the one enduring thing, therefore we are exhorted, "fear not the reproach of men, neither be afraid of their revilings. For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool." (Isaiah 51:7-8)

Why then should anybody be afraid of the reproaches of men? They have all fallen on Christ, (Romans 15:3) and He has deprived them of all their sting. It is no shame to be reproached with Him. "If you be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are you; for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you." (1 Peter 4:14)

Ancient Egypt was a wonderfully rich country, and Moses was well acquainted with it; for he had been brought up at the court; yet he esteemed "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." (Hebrews 11:26)

If the reproach of Christ is so wondrously rich in blessing, what must the unveiled glory be?

Review these verses, and note how much stress is laid upon the fact that God's righteousness and salvation are forever; they cannot be abolished. This constitutes all our hope. Many professed Christians seemed to think that it is their duty as ministers of the Gospel to teach people to disregard the law of God. They forget that in so doing they are ranging themselves with the heathen, who vainly say, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." (Psalm 2:3)

At all such feeble efforts as these God will laugh. And we should laugh also, for in the stability of God's law is our salvation. If God's law could be abolished, that would show that His Government is weak, and that He is not able to protect those who put their trust in Him. Therefore we may say, "Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage," (Psalm 119:54) and also, "O how I love your law! it is my

meditation all the day. And well it may be, for God's commandment is "exceeding broad," (Psalm 119:96) and contains more than the mind of man can fathom even in the ages of eternity. If we long for God's salvation, He will open our eyes, that we may behold wonderful things out of His law. (Psalm 119:18)

Salvation That Lasts

"My salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished. ... My righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation." (Isaiah 51:6,8)

Remember this; it will help you all your life through. When you are inclined to doubt if you can endure unto the end, and you think that sin and sickness must necessarily overtake you once in a while, recall these words of the Lord. His righteousness is an everlasting righteousness; (Psalm 119:142) it cannot be abolished. His salvation, the health and strength of the body and soul, that He gives, is forever.

You are well today; is it an accident? or is your health from God? From God undoubtedly. Well, then, since He has given you health today, can He not continue it indefinitely? You say, "He can if He will."

Well, do you think that He wishes anything else than that you should be well? The leper said, "Lord, if You will, You can make me clean;" (Matthew 8:2) and Jesus said, "I will." (Matthew 8:3)

He has said through His beloved disciple, "Beloved, I wish above all things that you may prosper, and be in health." (3 John:2)

Be sure, then, that the Lord does not wish that you should be ill. It is no credit to Him to have His children in poor health. If then He wishes you to be well, what can hinder it? You say, and rightly, too, "My ignorance of the laws of health will hinder it."

So it is really an accident that you are well today; because you have accidentally come into harmony with the law of your being. But Christ is the law of your being, and for you to say that you do not know the laws of life, is the same as saying that you do not know the Lord. Then get acquainted with Him. Study His life as revealed in all

creation, and learn how to come into harmony with it. Then that which happens once in a while accidentally, will be the rule.

And likewise with your soul. The life that keeps you from the power of the devil today, will, if yielded to intelligently, keep you every day, even through eternity. "His Divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that has called us to glory and virtue." (2 Peter 1:3)

So, "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calls you, who also will do it." (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24)--Present Truth, March 1, 1900--Isaiah 51:1-8.

The Power that Saves

"Awake, awake, clothe yourself with strength, O arm of Jehovah! Awake, as in the days of old, the ancient generations. Are You not the same that smote Rahab, that wounded the dragon? Are You not the same that dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep? That made the depths of the sea a path for the redeemed to pass through? Thus shall the ransomed of Jehovah return, And come to Sion with loud acclamation: And everlasting gladness shall crown their heads; Joy and gladness shall they obtain, And sorrow and sighing shall flee away. I, even I, am He that comforts you: Who are you, that you should fear wretched man, that dies; And the son of man, that shall become as the grass? And should forget Jehovah your Maker, Who stretched out the heavens, and founded the earth; And should every day be in continued fear, Because of the fury of the oppressor, As if he were just ready to destroy? And where now is the fury of the oppressor? He marches on with speed, who comes to set free the captive; That he may not die in the dungeon, And that his bread may not fail. For I am Jehovah your God; He, who at once stills the sea, though the waves thereof roar; Jehovah God of Hosts is His name. I have put my words in your mouth; And with the shadow of my hand have I covered you: To stretch out the heavens, and to lay the foundations of the earth; And to say unto Sion, You are my people." (Isaiah 51:9-16)

Two words in this lesson, namely, "Rahab" and the "dragon," need a little explanation, in order that the student may read understandingly. But let everybody note that the explanation is given in the Bible itself, so that there is no room for the complaint that "we are not learned, and cannot expect to know all these things."

The book of God may be understood by everybody who will study it, no matter though he be not learned; he will become intelligent by the study. True, a previous knowledge of different languages may be a help to him, provided he uses his knowledge in the right way, although those who know the most of language are not the ones who know the most of the Bible; but when a knowledge of languages becomes necessary, then the man who knows the Bible has the advantage of everybody else. "The Lord gives wisdom: out of His mouth comes knowledge and understanding." (Proverbs 2:6)

What "Rahab" Means

"Are You not the same that smote Rahab, that wounded the dragon?" (Isaiah 51:9,Lowth)

Take your Revised Bible (for everybody who studies the Bible ought to have this as well as the so-called Authorized Version, and should read them both together) and read: "For Egypt helps in vain, and to no purpose, therefore have I called her Rahab that sits still." (Isaiah 30:7,RV)

This is sufficient, and will enable the reader to understand the following: "You have broken Rahab in pieces, as one that is slain; You have scattered your enemies with your strong arm." (Psalm 89:10)

Now read Job 26:12 in both versions, comparing them. "He divides the sea with His power, and by His understanding He smites through the proud," (Job 26:12) or, as in the margin, "through pride." We turn to our Revised Version, and read, "by His understanding He smites through Rahab." (Job 26:12)

From this we can learn that the word "Rahab" means "pride." That "Rahab" is a pure Hebrew word, untranslated, we may know from the fact that it is a proper name, the name of one of the ancestors of Christ. When used in other connections, untranslated, it is simply the personification of pride, and is specially applied to Egypt. Egypt is the proud boaster, that does nothing. We are to learn that as God smote through Egypt, so will He bring down the pride of all that rise up against Him. "The day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon everyone that is proud and lofty, and upon everyone that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low." (Isaiah 2:12)

The Dragon

And now for the dragon. Read: "Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I am against you, Pharaoh King of Egypt, the great dragon that lies in the midst of his rivers, which has said, My river is my own, and I have made it for myself." (Ezekiel 29:3)

The succeeding verses tell of the judgments to be brought upon Egypt, all of which have been fulfilled, as a token of the still greater fulfillment yet to come. That this

judgment which was visited upon Egypt was but the beginning of the great day of judgment, we may learn from: "Come, my people, enter into your chambers, and shut your doors about you: hide yourself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain." (Isaiah 26:20-21) "In that day the Lord with His sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and He shall slay the dragon that is in the midst of the sea." (Isaiah 27:1)

Deliverance from "The Pride of Life"

We see, therefore, that both "Rahab" and "the dragon" are terms for Egypt. But that does not exhaust their meaning, since Egypt does not have a monopoly of the pride that is in the earth. The pride of Egypt is but "the pride of life," instilled by "the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience." (Ephesians 2:2)

So primarily the dragon is "that old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan," (Revelation 20:2) "which deceives the whole world." (Revelation 12:9)

It is in heathenism that the characteristics of the devil are fully manifested in the flesh; therefore in prophecy the dragon is sometimes used as a name to indicate the nations that have been openly and completely heathen, opposed to the worship of the one, true God. So we see that the judgments that of old have been visited upon Egypt and Babylon, and other heathen nations that in their pride have boasted against God, are but assurances of the great judgment that is to come upon all pride, in the person of the devil himself.

These judgments, indicating the approaching downfall forever of Satan, the author of pride, are assurances to each individual that God will here and now save him from "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." (1 John 2:16)

These two words, therefore, furnish the key to the whole lesson. Verses 9 and 10 show us that we have a right to call upon the Lord to awake and come to our help with the power by which He in ancient times overcame Egypt, and delivered His people from bondage. He delivered them then, in order "that they might observe His statutes, and keep His laws." (Psalm 105:45)

Therefore we may know that with the same mighty arm, and the same power He will now deliver us from the bondage of sin, "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 1:74-75)

The lesson that we are to learn from the scripture before us is a personal one; it means that everyone of us individually has at his disposal all the power by which Israel of old was delivered from Egypt. The same God still lives, and His arm has not lost any of its strength.

Sing the Promises of God

"Are You not it which has dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that has made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?" (Isaiah 51:10)

In ancient times the Lord made the depths of the sea a path for the redeemed to pass over, and thus, "The ransomed of Jehovah shall return, and come to Sion." (Isaiah 35:10) "Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away." (Isaiah 51:11)

They shall come with loud acclamations, with singing and gladness. "But," you say, "there is to be long wandering in the wilderness of sin before that can take place."

Not a bit of it. That was not at all God's plan for Israel, but was the result of their unbelief. You see, they stopped singing, and began murmuring. That is the secret of their wandering in the wilderness. Keep on singing, not a forced song, but a song from the heart because God is your strength and your song and your salvation, (Exodus 15:2) and you will find that these "songs of deliverance [that] compass you about," (Psalm 32:7) will be a shield that will protect you from every assault of the enemy. This is not theory, but fact that has been demonstrated. "But I am the Lord your God, that divided the sea, whose waves roared: The Lord of hosts is His name." (Isaiah 51:15)

The power that divided the Red Sea is the power that is ours every day in our struggle to escape from the bondage of sin. He that believes shall not be confounded.

The "exceeding great and precious promises [of God make us] partakers of the Divine nature;" (2 Peter 1:4) therefore sing them.

The Need of These Promises

"I, even I, am he that comforts you: who are you, that you should be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; And forget the Lord your maker, that has stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and has feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor? The captive exile hastens that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit, nor that his bread should fail." (Isaiah 51:12-14)

These verses have a peculiar significance in view of what the prophecy tells us will come in the very last days. Revelation 13 brings to view a power, a beast, which is the direct representative of the devil, since it is the devil--the dragon--that gives this beast "his power, and his seat, and his great authority." (Revelation 13:2)

Here we have, therefore, the personification of the arrogant pride of the devil in his fight against God; and this is carried out, as is seen by the reading of the entire chapter. Then later on still another power rises, seeking to enforce the worship of "the beast," that is, to compel men to refuse to worship God, and to substitute the commandments of men for His commandments. He makes an image to the beast, and will "cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed." (Revelation 13:15)

The highest point of proud opposition to God is seen in the attempted changing of the commandments.

The Papacy, which under the name of Christianity, overpasses the deeds of the heathen, having gone farther in opposition to God, in blasphemy against Him, and in persecution of His true followers, than any heathen nation ever did, has presumed to set itself above the law of God, teaching men that, while the commandments teach that the seventh day, commonly called Saturday, is the Sabbath, they need not observe that day, but must instead observe the first day of the week, Sunday.

The substitution of this day for that appointed by God is claimed by the Roman Catholic Church as the badge of its authority, and the keeping of it by most of the professed Christians is the only thing by which they all, in spite of their protests against Papal assumptions, acknowledge her power.

Many of those who call themselves Protestants are with all their might seeking to enforce this mark of the Papacy, and so far will they yet go that they will issue a decree authorizing anybody to kill those who do not receive this mark. All the faithful commandment-keepers will be "placed under ban," even as Luther was after the Diet of Worms, and as so many others have been in the past.

That will be a time of sore trial for the people of God. It will be a time to try men's souls, and it will then be determined who has learned to trust in God for salvation. Happy will it then be for everybody who can hear God say to him,

"I, even I," (Isaiah 51:12) the one who divided the sea, and delivered Israel, and who made even the greatest obstacle in their way a path of escape, "am He that comforts you; who are you, that you should be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass." (" (Isaiah 51:12))

Why should you be afraid of a puny man that shall die? The One who delivers you is marching on with speed, and will quickly come, so that you need not die in the pit, and your bread will not fail, even though it run low. It will be well to learn this lesson thoroughly. We shall, if faithful to the Lord, have occasion to remember it before many years have passed.

Present Deliverance

Yes, even now we need to remember it. If we have not learned and applied the lesson in our personal contest with "this present evil world," (Galatians 1:4) "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," (1 John 2:16) which are seeking to hold us captive, we shall not be able to use it in the coming time of trouble. The promise is, "Because you have kept the word of my patience, I also will keep you from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." (Revelation 3:10)

We cannot afford to lose any time in making a literal, personal application of these lessons to ourselves.

A Wondrous Gift

"And 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 51:16)

In this verse we have a most wonderful statement. God says to us,--to everyone who follows after righteousness, and seeks the Lord: "To stretch out the heavens, and to lay the foundations of the earth, and to say unto Sion, You are my people." (Isaiah 51:16,Lowth)

That is to say, the word of the Gospel, which God has committed unto us, is the same word that in the beginning made the heavens and all their host, (Psalm 28:6) and which will yet make all things new. It is the Word that makes men new creatures, and which will make the earth new for them to dwell in. Here is the climax of all.

Not only does God by the power by which He rules the heaven and earth and sea, deliver us from evil, but He puts the power in us to deliver others who are in bondage. Who with this assurance need ever fear bonds or imprisonment?

Every child of God has given him a power greater than that of all the kings of earth. This power he is not to use against those who would do him physical injury, even as Christ did not, but he is to use it in the delivering even his enemies from the bondage of sin. With this word in our mouth, we may bid the devil depart from us, and he will flee. Do you value this gift of the Word of God, and do you use it?

How firm a foundation, you saints of the Lord
Is laid for your faith in His excellent word;
What more can He say than to you He has said,
To you, who to Jesus for refuge have fled?
--R. Keith or George Keen, Hymn: How Firm a Foundation, 1787.

--Present Truth, March 8, 1900--Isaiah 51:9-16.

Beautiful Preachers of a Glorious Message

"Awake, awake; put on your strength, O Zion; put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for thenceforth shall no more come into you the uncircumcised and the unclean. Shake yourself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem: loose yourself from the bands of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion. For thus says the Lord, You have sold yourselves for nought; and you shall be redeemed without money. For thus says the Lord God, My people went down aforetime into Egypt to sojourn there; and the Assyrian oppressed them without cause. Now therefore what have I here, says the Lord, that my people is taken away for nought? they that rule over them make them to howl, says the Lord; and my name continually every day is blasphemed. Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore they shall know in that day that I am He that speaks: behold, it is I. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that brings good tidings, that publishes peace; that brings good tidings of good, that publishes salvation; that says unto Zion, Your God reigns! Your watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion. Break forth into joy, sing together you waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord has comforted His people, He has redeemed Zion. The Lord has made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. Depart, depart, go out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go out from the midst of her; be clean, you that bear the vessels of the Lord. For you shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the Lord will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your reward {Reward: the rear guard of an army (Webster); same as "rearward" (Chambers)}." (Isaiah 52:1-21)

Called Out of Babylon

The last paragraph [verses 11-12] gives us the key to the whole chapter. It is the call to go out of Babylon, the same call that we found in: "Go forth of Babylon, flee from the Chaldeans, with a voice of singing declare, tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth; say, The Lord has redeemed His servant Jacob." (Isaiah 48:20)

God's people are called forth from Babylon, "that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues." (Revelation 18:4)

And so here the call is to come out, and be clean. It is the last call, before the final Judgment at the coming of the Lord. The chapter before us presents the closing of the work: "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." (Luke 1:17)

It presents the people prepared, and waiting for His coming. This is seen from the first verse: "Awake, awake; put on your strength, O Zion; put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for thenceforth shall no more come into you the uncircumcised and the unclean." (Isaiah 52:1)

It takes people to make a city. So all that is said of Zion applies to those who are prepared to dwell in her. The holy city means a holy people. The preceding chapter presents the people in captivity, longing for freedom, and here we have the deliverance complete.

Beautiful Garments

Zion is called upon to put on her beautiful garments. The city itself, the new Jerusalem, is "the bride, the Lamb's wife." (Revelation 21:9) "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife has made herself ready." (Revelation 19:7) "And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God," (Revelation 21:9-10) "Jerusalem which is above, is free, which is the mother of us all." (Galatians 4:26)

But as a mother lives only for her children, so the new Jerusalem exists only for her inhabitants--her children. They are her ornament. "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." (Revelation 21:2) "Your children shall make haste; your destroyers and they that made you waste shall go forth of you. Lift up your eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, and come to you. As I live, says the Lord, you shall surely clothe yourself with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on you, as a bride does." (Isaiah 49:17-18)

Therefore the beautiful garments of Zion are the beautiful garments of the inhabitants of Zion. What are they? "To her it was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." (Revelation 19:8)

The call, "put on your beautiful garments," (Isaiah 52:1) indicate that they are all prepared. We have not to manufacture them; they have been woven in the loom of heaven, by the Master workman; and they are laid up waiting for "whosoever will" (Revelation 22:17) take them. "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)

In this connection read Zechariah 3:1-5. Joshua the priest stood before the angel of the Lord, clothed in filthy garments, and Satan stood at his right hand to resist him [verse 1]. The Lord rebuked Satan, and the words are very striking when compared with these in Isaiah. "The Lord rebuke you, O Satan; even the Lord that has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you." (Zechariah 3:2)

Then the Lord said, "Take away the filthy garments from him;" (Zechariah 3:4) and to Joshua, He said: "Behold, I have caused your iniquity to pass from you, and I will clothe you with change of raiment." (Zechariah 3:4)

So there is no possible doubt as to what these beautiful garments are. They are God's salvation, to which the corruption and filth of this present evil world will not stick. "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) "For the Lord takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the meek with salvation." (Psalm 149:4)

Clothed with this salvation, we are preserved from "the corruption that is in the world through lust." (2 Peter 1:4)

Liberty for the Captive

Christ has become partaker of flesh and blood, in order 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) "He has visited and redeemed His people." (Luke 1:68)

Freedom from all bondage is already theirs. It will be remembered that when Jesus saw the woman in the synagogue, who had been bound by Satan with a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years, and who could in no wise lift herself upright, He said to her, "Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity." (Luke 13:12)

She was loosed, even while she was bowed over; Jesus simply proclaimed to her that she was free to rise if she chose; and she did so. Even so Jesus has come to proclaim liberty to the captives. There is not a bond upon a single person on earth, that might not at once be shaken off, if the individual only knew and believed that God had given him his freedom. "Shake yourself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem: loose yourself from the bands of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion." (Isaiah 52:2)

The captive daughter of Zion is told to loose herself from the bands of her neck. The bands are broken; she has only to throw them off. This is the message that every minister of the Gospel, and every person who has been made one with Christ, is commissioned to proclaim to a world of sinners,--that they have only to assert their liberty in the name of Jesus, and they have it. Christ has broken the bands; it remains only for them to show their desire for freedom, by casting them off.

Surely everything has been done that could be done. Let it be proclaimed with a loud voice to the ends of the earth, that there is no soul bound by any sin whatever, except by his own will. He is at liberty, if he wishes to exercise his freedom. Whoever is in bondage to any evil habit, is in bondage because he loves to be, or else he has not yet learned the proclamation of freedom. Then let the sound ring out everywhere, that all who love liberty may have it.

Satan makes great promises, but he never fulfills them. He has nothing to give. His promises are empty. Whoever yields to him, sells himself to be a slave, for nothing. He made Eve believe that by disobeying God she would be like God, but instead she became like him. Instead of life, she found death. "For thus says the Lord, You have

sold yourselves for nought; and you shall be redeemed without money." (Isaiah 52:3)
"You were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; But with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ." (1 Peter 1:18-19,RV

Money is not the most necessary thing in this world. Common things can be bought with it; with money we can buy things that are of no value, and which perish with the using; but the most valuable things cannot be bought with money; there are things so valuable that nothing can buy them, and they must be received as a gift. These are the things that are lasting, things that become more enduring with the using.

Egypt and Babylon

"For thus says the Lord God, My people went down aforetime into Egypt to sojourn there; and the Assyrian oppressed them without cause." (Isaiah 52:4)

Recall the circumstances under which Israel went into Egypt. It was at the invitation of the king, because he and his whole land and people were under the greatest obligation to the son of Israel. They owed their lives to Joseph. Joseph died, and the people of Israel multiplied exceedingly, and "There arose a new king, which knew not Joseph." (Exodus 1:8)

There arose another dynasty, a line of kings of Assyrian origin, and they of course had no regard for the sacred traditions of the country, and what Joseph had done for the land was nothing to them. So it was that, going into Egypt, God's people were oppressed by the Assyrian.

Babylon was the continuation of Assyria, and Egypt and Babylon are both the personification of pride, and of haughty insolence against God. By both nations have the people of God suffered special hardships, having been in captivity in both countries. The deliverance, therefore, of the people of God is from Egypt and Babylon. Out of both Egypt and Babylon are God's children called. "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt." (Hosea 11:1)

The Model Preachers

We have already noted the good tidings of peace and freedom that all who know the Lord are to announce to the world. Those who bring these glad tidings are beautiful even to their feet. How beautiful they are, and how they are to give their message, may be learned by comparing a few texts of Scripture. We have to start with this one in Isaiah: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that brings good tidings, that publishes peace; that brings good tidings of good, that publishes salvation; that says unto Zion, Your God reigns!" (Isaiah 52:7)

Here are the others: "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 words to the end of the world." (Psalm 19:1-4) "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? 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 says, 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 10:13-18)

Notice that in this last portion we have quotations from the first two. The argument is that whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved; but some might object that many have not had an opportunity to call upon His name, and so the apostle meets this objection, by showing:

1. That provision has been made for belief, in that preachers have been sent, and he quotes from Isaiah to prove it; and
2. He shows that everybody has heard the message of peace, and good news of salvation, which these preachers publish, because "their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world."

But it is the firmament and the host of heaven, whose words have gone unto the ends of the earth, reaching "every creature which is under heaven." (Colossians 1:23)

Therefore it is the sun, moon, and stars, whose beautiful feet are seen upon the mountains, proclaiming glad tidings of good. They are our models in preaching.

How the Heavens Preach

How do the heavens preach? Simply by giving out the light that God has given them. That is all, and it is all that He expects of any person on earth. Light is life, and we can give out the light that God has given us, only by allowing the life of Jesus to be manifested in our mortal flesh. "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)

Nobody can make known a thing that he himself does not know; and nobody can know the Gospel unless Christ lives in him. "To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen." (Galatians 1:16) "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)

He who talks that which is not his own life, is giving only empty sound; it is like sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. Christ is the Word, and the Word is life: so that every word that He uttered was simply the giving out of the fullness of His life. When the Gospel is presented in that way, it beautifies the preacher. So, "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." (Daniel 12:3)

The Lord at Work

"The Lord has made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God." (Isaiah 52:10)

What an expressive figure is presented in verse 10! We have all seen the farmer or the blacksmith at work. When we see him take off his coat and roll up his sleeves, we know that he intends to work in earnest. He does not wish to be hindered by anything in his way. To "strip for the fight" or for the race, is a well-known term. So the scripture tells us that: "The Lord has made bare His holy arm in the sight of all the nations,"

(Isaiah 52:10) and as the result, "all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God." (Isaiah 52:10)

Who need fear, with God at work in that manner for his salvation?

The preceding chapter presented to us the view of God's people under ban, captive exiles waiting the coming of Him who is to set them free: here we have it stated that they shall not run from their prisons like jail-breakers: "You shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight." (Isaiah 52:12)

Why not? Because the Lord is before and behind them. Very forcibly is it translated by Lowth: "For Jehovah shall march in your front; And the God of Israel shall bring up your rear." (Isaiah 52:12)

Therefore "the arrow that flies by day" will cause no fear. No weapon ever forged or cast in any arsenal of earth can possibly pierce the rampart that the presence of God makes for His people. "The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even my enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise up against me, in this will I be confident. One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I see after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple. For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion: in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me; He shall set me up upon a rock. And now shall my head be lifted up above my enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in His tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord." (Psalm 27:1-6)--Present Truth, March 15, 1900--Isaiah 52:1-12.

The Arm of the Lord

"Behold, my Servant shall deal wisely, He shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high. Like as many were astonished at You, (His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men,) So shall He startle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths at Him; for that which had not been told them they shall see; and that which they had not heard shall they understand." (Isaiah 52:13-158,RV,margin) "Who has believed our report? and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For He grew 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 see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and as one from whom men hid their face. He was despised, and we esteemed Him not." (Isaiah 53:1-3,RV)

We have quoted these verses from the Revised Version, and have been given the alternative reading found in the margin of verse 15, chapter 52. Right here at the beginning we call attention to the difference, so that we may have the change fixed in our minds once for all. It is impossible to say how many people have rested the whole case for sprinkling instead of baptism, upon the faulty rendering of: "So shall He sprinkle many nations." (Isaiah 52:15)

Now it is true that the Hebrew word from which this word is translated has the idea of "spouting forth," and this idea is found in leaping, starting, whether for joy or astonishment. It is used of liquids, as to sprinkle blood or water upon a person or thing. But note carefully this distinction, which is strictly observed, that it is not used of things that are not fluid, and which cannot be scattered forth in fine streams.

The word is often used in the Bible, where it is rightly translated "sprinkle," but it is the liquid that is sprinkled upon the thing. It would be impossible to use it of persons, because men cannot be sprinkled upon anything. We have in the English the accommodated expression, "to sprinkle a man," "to sprinkle clothes," although it is not strictly correct. The washerwoman does not sprinkle the clothes, but sprinkles the water upon the clothes. This distinction is most strictly observed in the Hebrew. It does not

say that the Lord will sprinkle His people, but He says, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean." (Ezekiel 36:25)

In the passage before us, the rendering "sprinkle" is strained and unnatural, and does violence to the sense; the word "startle" or "astonish" is literal, and consistent. That, or its equivalent is given as the rendering in many translations other than the English.

The Wisdom of God's Servant

"Behold, my Servant shall deal wisely." (Isaiah 52:13,RV)

Again we have the Servant of the Lord brought before us. In chapters 42, 43, and 49, we have had Him introduced before. Here we are told that He shall deal wisely, or prudently. "He shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high." (Isaiah 52:13,RV)

That this is true of Christ, the whole history of His life shows. So wisely did He deal, that the utmost efforts of all the scribes and Pharisees and doctors of the law failed to entangle Him in His talk. He knew perfectly when to answer a question, and when to hold His peace, and refrain from answering; and when He answered a carping question He always discomfited the questioner, and encouraged the listeners. "And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, He said unto him, You are not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that dared ask Him any question. And Jesus answered and said, while He taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the Son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit on my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool. David therefore himself calls Him Lord; and whence is He then his son? And the common people heard him gladly." (Mark 12:34-37)

And as to exaltation, He is "by the right hand of God exalted," (Acts 2:33) to the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, "Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named." (Ephesians 1:21)

But that is not the whole of the story. It is "Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, [who is] crowned with glory and honor; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man." (Hebrews 2:9)

It is "the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5) who dealt prudently, and who is now exalted. It was all done in the flesh, that He might show His power over all flesh. If we yield to God as completely as He did, then are we the servants of the Lord just as surely as He was, (Romans 6:19) and all that is said of Him as the Servant of the Lord applies to us in Him. What a comforting thought it is to know that the servant of the Lord will deal wisely, because we know that if we are truly His servants we shall also deal wisely. "Christ is of God made unto us wisdom, as well as righteousness." (1 Corinthians 1:30)

This means, however, that we must indeed serve. We must not be idle, lazy servants. We must be alive to know what the will of the Lord is, and must be so filled with the Spirit that the mind of the Spirit, which is the mind of God, will be our mind. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ, and since we are filled with all the fullness of God when He dwells in our hearts by faith, it follows that all the fullness of God's wisdom may be displayed in us. "You have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things." (1 John 2:20)

This comes only with the utmost humility, for "the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits." (James 3:17)

Then comes the exaltation; for "he that humbles himself shall be exalted." (Luke 14:11)

How highly shall we be exalted as the servants of the Lord? Even to the right hand of God in the heavenly places: "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." (Ephesians 2:4-6) "He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree." (Luke 1:52) "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) "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)

Kings Terrified by Christ's Humiliation

"As many were astonished at You; His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men." (Isaiah 52:14)

We read the account of the mock trial of Jesus: "Herod with his men of war set Him at nought and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him again to Pilate." (Luke 23:11) "And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged Him, to be crucified. And the soldiers led Him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they called together the whole band. And they clothed Him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it upon His head, and began to salute Him, Hail, King of the Jews! And they smote Him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon Him, and bowing their knees, worshiped Him. And when they had mocked Him, they took off the purple from Him, and put His own clothes on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him." (Mark 15:16-20)

That was rare sport for those rough soldiers. To them he seemed only a half-crazy pretender to the throne, who was about to suffer for His presumption. They would crucify Him today, and forget all about it tomorrow. Nay, so little did they regard the whole affair, that they could calmly sit down at the foot of the cross, and gamble for His clothes.

His visage was marred, and His form likewise; but by the power of those very sufferings He will astonish many nations. Then the rabble could mock Him, and set Him at nought; soon kings will crouch in dumb terror at His feet, and will frantically call for the rocks and mountains to fall on them, and hide them from His face. "And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake terribly the earth." (Isaiah 2:19)

And all that power will be only a manifestation of the power by which He "endured the cross, despising the shame." (Hebrews 12:2)

The Arm of God Mocked

"So shall He sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at Him: for that which had not been told them they shall see; and that which they had not heard they shall consider." (Isaiah 52:15) "Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" (Isaiah 53:1)

Men did not know it, and they would not have believed it if a man had told it to them, that this poor, silent, despised prisoner was "the arm of the Lord." (Isaiah 53:1)

Often had the Jews who persecuted Jesus chanted in their synagogues, "You have a mighty arm; strong is your hand, and high is your right hand." (Psalm 89:13)

And again: "We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work You did in their days, in the times of old. How You did drive out the heathen with your hand, and planted them; how You did afflict them, and cast them out. For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but your right hand, and your arm, and the light of your countenance, because You had a favor unto them." (Psalm 44:1-3)

But never did they think that the humble, despised, and rejected Man before them was the arm of the Lord, by whom all this was done. The prophets were read every Sabbath day; but none of the men who cried for the blood of Jesus to be shed, and were willing to take all the guilt of it upon themselves, had any idea that they were seeing the fulfillment of the prophecy, "The Lord has made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God." (Isaiah 52:10)

Yet so it was. The arm of the Lord, which brings salvation, is Christ the Crucified. The isles shall wait for Him, and on His arm shall they trust, (Isaiah 51:5) because: "He shall gather the lambs with His arm," (Isaiah 40:11) the very same arm that "shall rule for Him." (Isaiah 40:10)

But although these things have been proclaimed for centuries, even now it may be asked, "Who has believed our report?" (Isaiah 53:1)

The Beauty of the Lord

"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: and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not." (Isaiah 53:2-3)

Who would think that a little baby, the child of one of the poorest people, born in a manger, growing up in seclusion and poverty, was the manifestation of the arm of the Lord? What is weaker and more lacking in wisdom than a little babe? "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." (1 Corinthians 1:27)

A root out of a dry ground! "He grows up in their sight like a tender sucker; And like a root from a thirsty soil." (Isaiah 53:2,Lowth)

One would not expect any beauty in such a plant. Indeed, one would scarcely expect it to live. It seems not to have enough earth and moisture to supply life to it, yet it supplies life to all the world.

A grape vine is one of the barest of things at certain seasons of the year. In some countries the vines are not trained upon supports, but are cut back each year, near to the ground, so that in a few years each vine is a gnarled stump. Such a vineyard looks very much like a field of dry stumps left to rot away in the ground after the timber has been carried away.

Yet from that very field, and from those very unsightly stumps, flows a stream of rich wine. Hundreds of huge clusters of the most luscious grapes will be gathered from that root that springs from a dry, rocky soil. And that is the beauty of the plant. It is not what it seems to be, but the fruit that it bears, that determines its beauty.

Christ had no beauty that the world could see. His beauty was "the hidden man of the heart, ... the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit;" (1 Peter 3:4) the beauty of holiness.

To Whom is the Arm Revealed?

If we read this lesson as a mere historical prophecy, we lose the whole of it. If we think merely of what has taken place in the past, of the rejection of Jesus nineteen hundred years ago, because He did not meet the expectation of the people, we have read to no profit. In that case the arm of the Lord has not been revealed to us. We have not believed the report.

What does it mean to us, to you and me? It means that however dry and barren our lives are, God can bring forth from them rich streams of blessing; that tender though we may be, and growing in a dry soil, the mighty power of God may reveal itself in us. "Our circumstances are very unfavorable; we have so many difficulties to contend with; everything is against us; there is no prospect of our ever being able to amount to anything."

Ah, yes, we have often mourned in that fashion. We have not believed the report about the root out of the dry ground. That has been the trouble with us, and the only trouble; for when we see the arm of the Lord, there can be no trouble. "With God nothing is impossible." (Luke 1:37)

Jesus was born and reared under the most unfavorable conditions, in order that nobody might have any cause for discouragement. Nobody was ever any poorer than He was; nobody could ever have any fewer advantages; nobody was ever so despised and ill-treated, and was so little appreciated, as He was. And what was it all for? To show us that if the life of God is allowed to flow through the deadest root in the driest possible soil, it will not only find nourishment for itself, but will be able to furnish support for all the world.

Have you believed the report? Has the arm of the Lord been revealed to you? Whenever you are inclined to grumble over your situation, and your lack of opportunities, or to become discouraged at the prospect, stop and ask yourself these questions. "Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith." (2 Corinthians 13:5)

See if you yet believe the first principles of the Gospel. (Hebrews 5:12)--Present Truth, March 22, 1900--Isaiah 52:13-18; 53:1-3.

The Silent Sufferer

"Surely He has borne our sicknesses, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; and the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord has made to light on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, yet He humbled himself, and opened not His mouth; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before her shearers is dumb; yea, He opened not His mouth. By oppression and judgment He was taken away; and as for His generation, who among them considered that He was cut off out of the land of the living, for the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due? And they made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death; although He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief; when You shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied: by His knowledge shall my righteous Servant make many righteous; and He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He poured out His soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors: yet He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." (Isaiah 53:4-12,RV,margin)

The basis of the foregoing text is the Revised Version, together with the marginal renderings; but in a single instance there has been a slight change from that text, the warrant for which is found in other translations. Do not be content with one reading of it; in every sentence there is food for abundance of meditation.

The central thought of this scripture is Christ the Sin-bearer, but there is a depth in it, which few of those who can so glibly repeat the words of the chapter, have ever thought of. Let us see if we cannot come a little closer to the heart of the matter.

Definition of Prophecy

In the first place, note that although these words were written fully seven hundred years before the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, they are in the past tense. There has been a failure to grasp the breadth of their meaning, owing to a faulty idea of what prophecy is. People have fallen into the idea that a prophet is one who foretells future events, and that all prophecy is merely the statement of something to take place in the future; yet that is not at all the Scripture use of the words. When the woman at the well of Samaria said to Jesus, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet," (John 4:19) it was because He had just told her certain things about her own past life; and when she went into the city to call her friends, she said, "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" (John 4:29)

Also when the Jews had seized Jesus, and He was being mocked by them in the High Priest's court, "When they had blindfolded Him, they struck Him on the face, and asked Him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote You." (Luke 22:64)

Here we see that to prophesy is to tell things either past or present, which people could not be expected to know of their own wisdom, and that a prophet is one who has the power, the Divine gift, to declare such things.

Again, in the call of Moses we have the Lord's own statement of what a prophet is. When Moses objected to going to Egypt to stand before Pharaoh, on the ground that he was not eloquent, the Lord said, "Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he comes forth to meet you; and when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. And 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 4:14-16) "And the Lord said unto Moses, See, I have made you a god to Pharaoh; and Aaron your brother, shall be your prophet." (Exodus 7:1)

Aaron was the speaker for Moses, acting merely as the mouth of his brother, and therefore he was his prophet. Thus we see that a prophet is one who speaks for another, giving exact utterance to another's thoughts; and so a prophet of God is one who gives exact expression to the thoughts of God, in words which the Holy Ghost teaches.

Prophecy therefore is any statement of God's everlasting truth;--not man's statement, take notice, but God's own statement by the mouth of a man.

So this 53rd chapter of Isaiah is prophecy, but not in the mistaken sense that it is merely a statement of something that was to take place at some time in the future. It is prophecy, because it tells the truth of God, which can never be known without the special enlightenment of the Holy Spirit of God. "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." (1 Corinthians 12:3)

The things contained in this chapter were as true when Isaiah wrote them as they are today. Prophets are not something out of the ordinary course of God's plan, but are indications of what God would do with all men. God would have all men know Him, and everyone able to recognize His truth; but when all go astray, the prophet supplies the lack. It is in God's plan for all to be prophets: "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 11:29) "Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that you may prophesy. ... I would that you all spoke with tongues, but rather that you prophesied: for greater is he that prophesies than he that speaks with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying. ... 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." (1 Corinthians 14:1,5,25)

Yet this does not indicate that if this blessed state of things existed, no one would have a more full revelation than another, so that he would be able to impart to the rest; for we find that in all times God's acknowledged prophets have learned from one another. Isaiah simply gave utterance in this chapter to that which everybody ought to have known by the Spirit's own revelation to him personally.

How the Lord Knows Men

We do not need to take time or space to recount the things that are stated in the Gospels concerning Jesus and His sufferings. All are familiar with them. This chapter lets us into the secret of those sufferings. "With His stripes we are healed. ... by His knowledge shall my righteous Servant make many righteous." (Isaiah 53:5,11)

Here we have a parallel to the statement, "By the obedience of One shall many be made righteous." (Romans 5:19)

How can the obedience of one make many righteous? Manifestly only by that One's presence in the many, living the obedience. So we have the answer to the question as to how Christ by His knowledge shall make many righteous. How does He know? Not by laborious search and study, but by personal experience. "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, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature that is not manifest in His sight; but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." (Hebrews 4:12-13)

And this statement comes in connection with the statement that He is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." (Hebrews 4:15) "Surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." (Isaiah 53:4)

The Lord knows our frame, not simply because He has made us, but because He himself bears everything that humanity bears. "That which was from the beginning, ... the Word of life," (1 John 1:1) "[Which] was in the beginning with God, ... and ... was God, ... And [which] became flesh, and dwelt among us," (John 1:2,1,14) penetrates to every fiber of every being, and suffers everything to which human flesh is heir. There is not a sickness, not a pain, not a temptation, not an injustice, that oppresses any of the children of men, that does not press with equal weight upon the Lord; nay, it presses even more strongly upon the Lord than it does upon us, because but for His sensibility to the touch of pain or sorrow, we ourselves should have no consciousness of it. It is only His life in us, that makes us conscious of anything. "[He] bears the sin of the world." (John 1:29,RV,margin)

He says, "You have made me to serve with your sins, and wearied me with your iniquities." (Isaiah 43:24)

He is one with all mankind, and everything that touches humanity touches Him.

The Silent Long-Suffering of God

"He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth." (Isaiah 53:7)

Yet He keeps silence. Century after century has the human race been piling sin and misery upon the Lord, by their deviation from the truth, the way of life, yet He bears it without a murmur. Here we catch a glimpse of the meaning of the phrase, "the long-suffering of God." (1 Peter 3:20)

We have ignored His life in us, and have not sought to learn its ways, so that we might yield to them, and so allow Him to bear the load in His own way, and to live His own life unhindered and unfettered, and He has borne it all uncomplainingly.

It was not simply in the High Priest's palace, and in Pilate's court, and on Calvary, that Jesus bore insult and abuse and pain without murmuring; He has been doing that for the last six thousand years; and the very thing which is to His everlasting honor, has been set down to His reproach. Men have charged the Lord with indifference to human suffering, because He did not rise up in His might, and suddenly put an end to it all. How little they knew!

They did not understand that He was literally suffering all these evils, allowing them to be heaped upon Him, and that His silence under the burden of sin and oppression and injustice was the only way of salvation from them, to the human race. They did not know that if at any time He had risen up in His might, and cast off the burden, putting a sudden end to all misery, it would at the same time have put an end to the greater part of the human race. "The long-suffering of our God is salvation." (2 Peter 3:15)

Blessed thing that He does keep silence, even though wicked men take advantage of His silence, to accuse Him of being altogether such a one as themselves! (Psalm 50:21) "The long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah," (1 Peter 3:20) and even yet, "The Lord ... is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9) "He was taken from prison and from

judgment: and who shall declare His generation? for He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was He stricken." (Isaiah 53:8)

But who among the men of His generation consider that He was stricken for the transgression of the people, to whom the stroke was due? Even as nineteen hundred years ago, so today, men do not know the time of their visitation. They do not know that God has visited His people, even coming into their flesh, and has thereby redeemed them, suffering all things for their sakes. If they did, they would know that "by His stripes we are healed." (Isaiah 53:5)

In the fact that the Lord is personally present with each individual, not merely sharing, but bearing, all his infirmities, his sicknesses, his sorrows, and his sins, is absolute and complete deliverance from all these things. Marvelous Gospel! No wonder that it is called, "the glorious Gospel." (2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 Timothy 1:1)

It makes known to us the fact that our very consciousness of our fallen condition carries with it the remedy. What could God possibly do for men that He has not done?

Let Us Be Still

Shall we stop without learning the lesson of silence for ourselves? Who has not been made to suffer unjust accusation, and even to feel the smart the more keenly in that it came from friends, who ought to have been more charitable. A knowledge of the fact that the Lord has from the beginning borne infinitely more, which He did not deserve, and that He has borne it silently and uncomplainingly, will help us wonderfully to "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad." (Matthew 5:12)

And then when we remember that He bears every ill that comes upon us, and that it comes upon us only through Him, how the sting is removed! Surely we ought to be able to endure our little portion uncomplainingly, when it only comes to us secondarily, and the Lord bears the whole at first hand.

This is but a suggestion of the comfort that there is in this Gospel of Isaiah; but whoever receives the Lord Jesus by faith may have daily fresh revelations of His presence and power.--Present Truth, March 29, 1900--Isaiah 53:4-12.

The Building Up of Jerusalem

"Shout for joy, O you barren, that did not bear; Break forth into joyful shouting, and exult, you that did not travail: For more are the children of the desolate, Than of the married woman, says Jehovah. Enlarge the place of your tent; And let the canopy of your habitation be extended: Spare not; lengthen your cords, And firmly fix your stakes: For on the right hand, and on the left, you shall burst forth with increase; And your seed shall inherit the nations; And they shall inhabit the desolate cities. Fear not, for you shall not be confounded; And blush not, for you shall not be brought to reproach: For you shall forget the shame of your youth; And the reproach of your widowhood you shall remember no more. For your husband is your Maker; Jehovah God of Hosts is His name: And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall He be called. For as a woman forsaken, and deeply afflicted, has Jehovah recalled you; And as a wife, wedded in youth, but afterwards rejected, says your God. In a little anger have I forsaken you; But with great mercies will I receive you again: In a short wrath I hid my face a moment from you; But with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you; Says your Redeemer Jehovah. The same will I do now, as in the days of Noah, when I swore, That the waters of Noah should no more pass over the earth: So have I sworn, that I will not be wroth with you, nor rebuke you. For the mountains shall be removed; And the hills shall be overthrown: But my kindness from you shall not be removed; And the covenant of my peace shall not be overthrown; Says Jehovah, who bears towards you the most tender affection. O you afflicted, beaten with the storm, destitute of consolation! Behold, I lay your stones with cement of vermilion, And your foundations with sapphires: And I will make of rubies your battlements; And your gates of carbuncles; And the whole circuit of your walls shall be of precious stones. And all your children shall be taught by Jehovah; And great shall be the prosperity of your children. In righteousness shall you be established: Be far from oppression; yea, you shall not fear it; And from terror; for it shall not approach you. Behold, they shall be leagued together, but not by my command; Whosoever is leagued against you, shall come over to your side. Behold, I have created the smith, Who blows up the coals into a fire, And produces instruments according to his work; And I have created the destroyer to lay waste. Whatever weapon is formed against you, it shall not prosper; And against every tongue that contends with you, you shall obtain your cause. This is the heritage of

Jehovah's servants, And their justification from me, says Jehovah." (Isaiah 54:1-17,Lowth)

A Key to the Understanding of the Prophecy

We have in the New Testament an inspired comment upon this scripture, which wholly relieves us of any necessity of making conjectures as to its application. "Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, you barren that bore not; break forth and cry, you that travail not: for the desolate has many more children than she which has a husband." (Galatians 4:26-27)

We know, therefore, from God's own word, that "Jerusalem which is above,"--the New Jerusalem,--is the subject of this chapter. This also serves as a key to many other references to Jerusalem, in the prophecies. From the promises in this chapter, telling of the stability of Jerusalem, and of the return of her children, which plainly refer to the Jerusalem which is above, "which comes down from God out of heaven," (Revelation 3:12) we may understand all the other promises to Jerusalem and its inhabitants. They all apply to the New Jerusalem, which is to take the place of the present city of Jerusalem, and to abide for ever, after the earth has been made new.

The Present Jerusalem and the Old Covenant

"Jerusalem which now is, ... is in bondage with her children." (Galatians 4:25)

Still more: the covenant from mount Sinai, "which genders to bondage, ... is Hagar; For this Hagar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answers to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children." (Galatians 4:24-25)

Everyone, therefore, who builds his hopes upon Jerusalem which now exists in the land of Palestine, and who makes every promise of God depend upon the return of the people of God, or any part of them, to that city, is still in the bondage of the old covenant, with the vail still over his face. He is tarrying at mount Sinai, instead of coming to mount Zion, and to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the Living God.

Jerusalem Old and New

Many cities on this earth have suffered almost total destruction by fire, and have been rebuilt, yet that fact is not considered as making any break in the continuity of those cities. Rome, for instance, is still said to have been built seven hundred and fifty years before Christ, although there is scarcely a building in the city that was in existence in the days of Christ, and the city was almost wholly destroyed by fire in the reign of Nero, and has suffered from fire many times before and since.

Take the city under consideration, namely Jerusalem. It was laid in ruins, its walls demolished, and its chief buildings burned, by Nebuchadnezzar, and afterwards it suffered still greater ravages by the hands of the Romans under Titus, yet it is always thought and spoken of as the city of David and Solomon.

When we speak of Rome and Jerusalem, we do not feel compelled to designate whether we refer to the time before their destruction, or after, since it is Rome and Jerusalem from beginning to end, no matter what vicissitudes they have passed through.

Even so it is in the prophecies concerning Jerusalem. The Bible does not always specify, and say that now it refers to the old city, and now to the New Jerusalem, but speaks simply of Jerusalem, leaving the context, and the promises or threatenings, as the case may be, to determine to which state in the history of the city the words apply.

The Lord has gone to prepare a place in the heavens, to build up a new city, (See John 14:1-3; Psalm 102:16) which is to come down from God out of heaven, to occupy the place now occupied by the city known among men as Jerusalem; and when that city comes down, it will be considered as the old city rebuilt, made new; and so it is always spoken of in the Bible.

It may be taken as a fact beyond all contradiction, that there is not a single Bible promise concerning Jerusalem, which applies to Jerusalem in its present condition, or as it has been at any time in its history. Every promise of restoration embraces its being so changed by the Lord as to be incorruptible, imperishable.

The Bride, The Lamb's Wife

"Fear not; for you shall not be ashamed: neither be confounded; for you shall not be put to shame: for you shall forget the shame of your youth, and shall not remember the reproach of your widowhood any more. For your Maker is your husband; the Lord of hosts is His name; and your Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall He be called." (Isaiah 54:4-5)

From the very beginning, God has considered himself as occupying the close relation of husband to His people. Read the prophecies of Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and the whole of Hosea. The 3rd chapter of Jeremiah is especially plain. "Turn, O backsliding children, says the Lord; for I am married unto you." (Jeremiah 3:14)

And then the Lord tells what He will do if they will return, using words that can apply only to the redeemed state. Speaking of the making of the new covenant, God says that His people broke the old covenant, "although I was a husband unto them." (Jeremiah 31:3)

So, coming to the New Testament, we read that we are to be "married ... to Him that is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." (Romans 7:4)

Paul writes, "I have espoused you to one husband, and I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." (2 Corinthians 11:2)

And in the 5th chapter of Ephesians we read that the same close relation exists between Christ and His people that exists between a man and his wife. "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That He might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourishes and cherishes it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. For this cause

shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." (Ephesians 5:22-32)

So by a change in the metaphor, or an enlargement of it, the city of God, Jerusalem, is considered as married to Christ. The very land itself where God's people dwell, is married to Him. This is perfectly in harmony with the fact that Christ, who is "the firstborn among many brethren," (Romans 8:29) is also "the everlasting Father." (Isaiah 9:6)

It is not a mixed metaphor, but the expression of a deeper meaning, a more intimate relation, than human minds have conceived. "For the Lord has called you as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when you were refused, says your God. For a small moment have I forsaken you; but with great mercies will I gather you. In a little wrath I hid my face from you for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you, says the Lord your Redeemer." (Isaiah 54:6-8)

The chapter before us, therefore, presents Jerusalem as a wife forsaken by her husband, and mourning her widowhood and childlessness, but comforted by the assurance that she has not really been cast off, and is not forgotten, but is still owned by her husband, and will be honored by Him.

The time when these promises will be fulfilled is set forth in Revelation 21; Zechariah 14:1-11; and Isaiah 49:13-23, all of which should be read in this connection. It is the Bride, the Lamb's wife, that is addressed.

The Different Phases of Jerusalem's Experience

There was a time when the glory of God was seen resting over the temple in Jerusalem, and filling it. "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. And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the Lord upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and

worshipped, and praised the Lord, saying, For He is good; for His mercy endures for ever." (2 Chronicles 7:1-3)

God owned that city as His earthly dwelling place, and the promise to its inhabitants was that if they obeyed Him, and refrained from breaking the Sabbath, the city should stand for ever. "And it shall come to pass, if you diligently hearken unto me, says the Lord, to bring in no burden through the gates of this city on the sabbath day, but hallow the sabbath day, to do no work therein; Then shall there enter into the gates of this city kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their princes, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: and this city shall remain for ever." (Jeremiah 17:24-25)

They did not heed His words, and the city was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar; yet a holy seed was left in it, and the promise of restoration accompanied the threat of its destruction. According to the promise, Christ, "the Desire of all nations," (Haggai 2:7) came to the city and temple, but was rejected. Then He wept over it, mourning in bitterness of grief, that the city had so persistently refused His gracious calls, and said, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." (Matthew 23:38)

But this was not to be for ever, for He added, "I say unto you, You shall not see me henceforth, till you shall say, Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord." (Matthew 23:39)

The centuries that have passed since that time have been only "a little moment" (Isaiah 26:20) with Him in whose sight a thousand years are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. (Psalm 90:4) Not for a moment has the Lord forgotten Zion; its walls are continually before Him, and it is graven upon the palms of His hands. (Isaiah 49:16) "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, says the Lord that has mercy on you." (Isaiah 54:10)

Even though the mountains depart, and the hills be removed, yet His kindness and love will not depart from the city which He has chosen, nor from her children. Consequently even today the faithful worshipers of God direct their prayers to Him, and "look up," (Luke 21:28) thus praying with their faces towards Jerusalem.

The Rebuilding of Jerusalem

No; God has not divorced His spouse, (Isaiah 50:1) nor cast away His people. (Romans 11:1) He loves them with tender affection. He will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down, and will build again the ruins thereof, and will set it up; (Amos 9:11) "That the residue of men might seek after the Lord;" (Acts 15:17) and this He will do by the proclamation of the Gospel to the Gentiles; for it is only from the Gentiles, the nations, that Israel is taken. God chose Abraham from among the Gentiles, for there was no such thing as a Jew or an Israelite, in name, until long after the days of that patriarch. He called Israel out of Egypt, that through them His name might be made known in all the earth. "Enlarge the place of your tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of your habitations: spare not, lengthen your cords, and strengthen your stakes." (Isaiah 54:2)

Their business was to be missionaries to the heathen; but instead of performing their mission, they were content to settle down in the land of Palestine, around Jerusalem. Instead of enlarging the place of their habitation, to include all the world, they became conservative, which is another name for selfish, and shut everybody else away from the blessings which they enjoyed, and thereby lost the blessings themselves.

Whoever would exclude another from the blessings of the Lord, excludes himself. But God's purpose will be carried out. All who are really born from above, having the New Jerusalem for their mother, will make its glories and its power known, until its fame reaches every part of the earth. As a consequence the place that Jerusalem now occupies will be too small; "[It] shall break forth and spread abroad on the right hand, and on the left, and [its] seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited." (Isaiah 54:3,RV) "And His [Christ's] feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south." (Zechariah 14:4)

Jerusalem, as it will be when the Lord appears in His glory, will be such a city as the world has never yet seen.

Jerusalem's Beautiful Stones

"O you afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay your stones with fair colors, and lay your foundations with sapphires. And I will make your windows of agates, and your gates of carbuncles, and all your borders of pleasant stones." (Isaiah 54:11-12) "You shall arise, and have mercy upon Zion; for the time to favor her, yea, the set time, is come. For your servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof. So shall the heathen fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth your glory." (Psalm 102:13-15)

What is there in the dust and stones of Jerusalem, in which one can take pleasure? Nothing whatever, in "Jerusalem which now is." (Galatians 4:25)

The stones of old Jerusalem are no better than the stones of any other city, and its dust is as disagreeable as that of Constantinople, or any other Eastern city. The stones in which the children of Jerusalem take pleasure as the sapphires and agates and carbuncles, which are laid in "fair colors." Read the list of them: "And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl." (Revelation 21:18-21)

The dust of its street is "pure gold, as it were transparent glass." (Revelation 21:21)

There is something in which to delight; there is a city that will indeed be "the joy of the whole earth." (Psalm 48:2)

The Gathering of Armed Forces About Jerusalem

"In righteousness shall you be established: you shall be far from oppression; for you shall not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near you. Behold, they shall surely gather together, but not by me: whosoever shall gather together against you shall fall for your sake." (Isaiah 54:14-15)

The closing portion of this chapter presents a picture that is drawn out more fully in the book of Revelation. We have already seen that the New Jerusalem, prepared in heaven, comes down to this earth; but nothing that has thus far been noted indicates what condition of things it finds when it comes. This we learn from Revelation 20, and incidentally from other Scriptures.

The passage before us says that although the city with its inhabitants will "be far from oppression," and will be free from fear, yet "they shall surely gather," and that, too, against the city. In the chapter referred to in the Revelation we learn that after the close of the thousand years, during which Satan will be bound, while all the righteous who have ever lived on earth will be in heaven, sitting on thrones of judgment, deciding the penalty due to the wicked, (Revelation 20:3-6; 1 Corinthians 6:2-3; Psalm 149:4-9) Satan will be loosed, because all the wicked of earth will be raised, and he will go forth among them, to gather them to battle against the Lord. The statement that all the nations thus gathered "went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them," (Revelation 20:9) shows that the beloved city will come down to this earth before the earth has been purified by the fires of the last day, and while the wicked are yet here. As Eden remained on the earth a time after the curse came, so it will come back before the curse is removed.

But though the wicked, under the leadership of Satan himself, will gather together against the city of God, they cannot prosper, because they are not gathered by the Lord. No weapon that they can forge against the city will have any effect upon it. (Isaiah 54:17) No cannon ball will ever be able to touch one of its stones. God himself has "created the smith that blows the coals of fire," (Isaiah 54:16) in order to manufacture the weapon to destroy, and therefore since the man himself is nothing in comparison with God, the weapon that he makes cannot be anything. When the wicked come against the city, "fire comes down from God out of heaven, and devours them," (Revelation 20:9) and at the same time melts the earth, while the city of God will ride upon the sea of fire as the ark rode safely upon the waters of the flood. Then will the saints "dwell with the devouring fire, [and] with everlasting burnings." (Isaiah 33:14)

The saints safe in the city will behold, and see the reward of the wicked, but it will not come nigh them.

The Safety of Jerusalem and Its Inhabitants

What will constitute their safety in that terrible time? The answer is, "In righteousness shall you be established." (Isaiah 54:14)

The righteousness in which they will be established is the righteousness of God, that is by the faith of Jesus Christ. But that righteousness is theirs now. Therefore the lesson that is designed for us to learn from the statement of the things to come is the perfect security that we now have against all the assaults of the devil. "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)

Just as safe as the people of God will be in the holy city amid the fires that will destroy the wicked, so safe are they now from every sort of evil that Satan would bring upon them, if they but trust in the Lord, and abide in Him. Satan and all his host cannot forge a weapon of any sort, visible or invisible, whether designed to destroy the body or the soul, which can pierce the armor that is provided for the people of God. "The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." (Deuteronomy 33:27)

Not walls nor hills could guard so well
Fair Salem's happy ground,
As those eternal arms of love,
That every saint surround.

--Isaac Watts, Paraphrase of Psalm 125:2: Unshaken as the Sacred Hills.

And no one can pluck a saint out of those protecting arms. Blessed be the name of the Lord, into which the righteous run, and are safe! "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runs into it, and is safe." (Proverbs 18:10)--Present Truth, April 5, 1900--Isaiah 54:1-17.

A Gracious Offer to the Poor

"Ho! everyone that thirsts, come to the waters! And that has no silver, come, buy, and eat! Yea, come, buy without silver; And without price, wine and milk. Wherefore do you weigh out your silver for that which is no bread? And your riches, for that which will not satisfy? Attend, and hearken unto me; and eat that which is truly good; And your soul shall feast itself with the richest delicacies. Incline your ear, and come unto me; Attend, and your soul shall live: And I will make with you an everlasting covenant; I will give you the gracious promises made to David, which shall never fail. Behold, for a witness to the peoples I have given Him; A leader, and a lawgiver to the nations. Behold, the nation, whom you knew not, you shall call; And the nation, who knew you not, shall run unto you, For the sake of Jehovah your God; And for the Holy One of Israel, for He has glorified you. Seek Jehovah, while He may be found; Call upon Him, while He is near at hand: Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return unto Jehovah, for He will receive him with compassion; And unto our God, for He abounds in forgiveness. For my thoughts are not your thoughts; Neither are your ways my ways, says Jehovah. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are my ways higher than your ways, And my thoughts than your thoughts. Verily, like as the rain descends, And the snow, from the heavens; And thither it does not return, Except it moistens the earth, And makes it generate, and put forth its increase; That it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall be the word, which goes forth from my mouth; It shall not return unto me fruitless; But it shall effect what I have willed; And make the purpose succeed, for which I have sent it. Surely with joy shall you go forth, And with peace shall you be led onward: The mountains and the hills shall burst forth before you into song; And all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorny bushes shall grow up the fir tree; And instead of the bramble shall grow up myrtle: And it shall be unto Jehovah for a memorial; For a perpetual sign, which shall not be abolished." (Isaiah 55:1-13, Lowth)

Real, Spiritual Water

In this chapter we have the very same call that is given in John 7:37, (John 7:37; 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) and Revelation 22:17. (Revelation 22:17; 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) With God is the Fountain of Life: "For with You is the fountain of life: in your light shall we see light." (Psalm 36:9) "[He is] the Fountain of living waters." (Jeremiah 2:13)

Jesus Christ is the Rock whence flows the streams of water for the refreshing of the people. "And [they] 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 last reference, namely to the giving of the water to the Israelites in the desert, shows that the water which the Lord offers is real water. It is such water as will support life, even animal life; for the beasts as well as the people drank of the water in the wilderness. Nevertheless it was "spiritual drink." Thus we are taught that if we recognize the Lord in His gifts day by day,--in our daily food and drink,--we shall find them not only nourishment to our bodies, but to our souls as well.

We have nothing whatever, except what the Lord gives us. All things proceed from Him, from His very Being, His life. But God is Spirit, therefore everything that proceeds from Him must be spiritual. He gives nothing to mankind, except that which is spiritual. "[He] has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ." (Ephesians 1:3,margin)

If the Israelites in the desert had recognized the Source of that water which they drank every day, and had given Him the glory due to His name, they would not only have experienced the power of an endless life, but they would have been able to impart the same to others wherever they went. "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 shall flow rivers of living water. (But this He spoke of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)" (John 7:37-39)

God calls us to realities. We have today the same opportunity of drinking from the Living Rock that Israel of old had. May we make better use of it than they did! Let us not fall after the same example of unbelief!

The Best Things to be Had for Nothing

"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 best things are to be had for nothing, because money cannot be mentioned in connection with them; they are above all price. Men strive for money; they scheme, and plan, and even fight for it, as though it were the chief thing to be desired; yet it will not purchase the things that they most stand in need of: health, life, love. Someone will say, "Money is necessary in this world, under the present circumstances, since even the necessaries of life, as for instance, water, must be bought of corporations that have gained a monopoly of them."

True; but the promise is, "Your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matthew 6:32-33)

The first thing is not to make a living; indeed, we do not have that to do at all, for God gives us our living, our life, for He is our life. Our first and only business is to glorify God with the life which He has given us so freely. If men would but believe this fact, and would always remember it, there would not be so many compromises and denials of the truth, on the ground that it is necessary in order to live. No; the Lord says, "Hear, and your soul shall live." (Isaiah 55:3)

Again the objection will be made, "But that means spiritual life!"

Well, suppose it does: which is greater and more enduring, physical life or spiritual life? Is not the "life everlasting" greater than the life for a few days? Does not the greater include the less? If God can give us life for eternity, does it not stand to reason that He can keep us in life the short time that we have to spend in this present world? "O you of little faith!" (Matthew 6:30)

How can a man persuade himself that he believes in and trusts the Lord for salvation to all eternity, when he is afraid to keep His commandments, lest he should lose his living? "Hear, and your soul shall live." (Isaiah 55:3)

The God who says this is the God who gives life to the dead. Men will repeat day after day, and year after year, "I believe in the resurrection of the dead," and yet when it comes to trusting the Lord for daily bread wherewith to sustain their life in this present time, they dare not risk it. Do you not see that belief in the power of God to raise the dead involves belief in His power to sustain our present life, and to give us all things necessary thereto? Why will men persist in separating the things of religion from their daily life? The proof that God is "abundantly able to save"--Elisha A. Hoffman, Hymn: Whoever Receiveth the Crucified One--is the fact that He saves us and gives us life now.

God's Gifts All Good

"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)

God wishes all people to enjoy life and all good things. The trouble with them is that they have a false idea of what good things are. Our taste has been perverted, so that we naturally call evil good, and good evil. We need to accept the exceeding great and precious promises of God, by which we are made partakers of the Divine nature, and then we shall have correct taste and judgment. We shall then like that which is really good, even though to our present, perverted taste it is insipid.

That was the lack with Israel of old. They were fed with spiritual food, bread from heaven; but they did not appreciate it, and did not recognize and thank the Giver, and so they were not transformed and made spiritual by it. It was the very best food that anybody on this earth ever had to eat, the food of the angels which excel in strength, "the bread of the mighty," (Psalm 78:25,RV) calculated to give inconceivable strength, yet they said, "Our soul is dried away," (Numbers 11:6) and, "our soul loaths this light bread." (Numbers 21:5)

Two things are to be taken into consideration in determining whether or not a thing is good:

1. The effect that it has; is it productive of good or ill results?

If it is to be followed by good results, then it is good; if evil results follow, then it must be bad, no matter how pleasant it may be to our sight and taste.

2. Then follows the matter of taste.

Everything that is really good tastes good, although our perverted senses may not think so at first. But when we know that a certain thing is good, and that it produces only good, then we can educate our taste so that it will recognize the good, and will find it exceedingly pleasant. In due time, if we allow our senses to be educated by the Lord, we shall find that everything that is harmful is disgusting. But it is so only to one who has the Divine nature.

The Sure Mercies of David

"I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."
(Isaiah 55:3)

Note that this follows the statement, "Hear, and your soul shall live." (Isaiah 55:3)

That is, the sure mercies of David embrace the resurrection of the dead. God made great promises to David, but none of them could be fulfilled except by the resurrection, and David so understood them. He confessed that he was a stranger and a sojourner as all his fathers--Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were. "Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear unto my cry; hold not your peace at my tears: for I am a stranger with you, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were." (Psalm 39:12)

Now, "All that say such things declare that they seek ... a better country, that is a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He has prepared for them a city." (Hebrews 11:14,16)

Christ is the Son of David, and He is to sit upon the throne of His father David, and to "reign over the house of Jacob for ever." (Luke 1:33)

But the fact that the sure mercies of David are performed only through Christ and the resurrection, shows that everybody who believes and accepts Christ has a share in

them; for Christ died and rose again for all. Indeed, this is seen from the text before us, for the call is unlimited. The call to drink, and to buy bread and wine and milk without money and without price, is issued to all who need. It is the gracious call of the Gospel to all needy, thirsty, sin-sick souls. Well, to the very same ones is it said, "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David," (Isaiah 55:3) and this shows that whoever accepts the Gospel becomes a member of the house of David, a subject of the kingdom of Israel. So we find that Israel is not any nation known and recognized on this earth, but is "the righteous nation which keeps the truth." (Isaiah 26:2)

For such the gates of the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, will open. "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." (Revelation 22:14)

Israel the Banner

"Behold, you shall call a nation that you know not, and nations that knew you not shall run unto you because of the Lord your God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified you." (Isaiah 55:5)

Christ is Israel. "You are my Servant; Israel, in whom I will be glorified." (Isaiah 49:3,RV)

Nobody can be saved, except in Christ, and all who are in Christ are Abraham's seed, "and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:29)

Therefore all who are in Christ are Israel, and none others are. But since Christ is Israel, and Christ is the Banner that is lifted up to the people, (Isaiah 11:10-12) it follows that Israel is the ensign to the nations, the banner round which all people are called to rally. (Zechariah 9:16) From every "nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" (Revelation 14:6) will men come, and form part of the nation of Israel, and that which will attract them will be the indwelling Christ glorifying His people. "Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." (Isaiah 55:6-7)

He is near to all who call upon Him. Yea, He is near to all, waiting to be called by them. He has not forsaken any man, but has come seeking them, and all who will but turn to Him, instead of running away from Him, will find abundance of pardon, and, being pardoned, they will be enrolled as members of the kingdom of Israel.

Not only so, but they will be reckoned as princes, even kings, and priests; for the kingdom of David, over which Christ rules, counts among its subjects none of lower rank than king.

The Thoughts of God

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:8-9)

Who can think the thoughts of infinity? Manifestly none except Him who is infinite. Therefore God must dwell in us, thinking His own high thoughts. Otherwise all our thoughts will be wrong, and to no purpose.

In calling upon us to forsake our ways and our thoughts, God does not wish us to be non-entities; He wishes us to think and act, but the spring of all our acts and thoughts must be himself. He is the Fountain of real life; therefore unless He dwells in us, and His real presence is continually recognized, our life will be but a mirage.

What a wonderful truth, that we may have God to think in us, so that our brains will be but the organ of the mind of God! Then will be manifest the miracle of God dwelling and acting in the flesh. This wonderful privilege is offered to all. It is part of the everlasting covenant, the sure mercies of David.

The Word of God Bearing Fruit

We have ventured to change one word in the translation given by Lowth. He has translated the 10th verse the same as it is rendered in the ordinary version, namely, "For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and returns not thither, but waters the earth." (Isaiah 55:10)

This is not an exact rendering of the Hebrew, and is misleading. The Hebrew expression is the same as in: "I will not let You go except You bless me." (Genesis 32:26)

Therefore the text should read that the rain and the snow return not to the heaven except they water the earth. In the Polychrome Bible the verse is so rendered, and also in the French of Segond, and therefore we have taken the liberty to put it into Lowth's translation, in order that the reader may not overlook it.

The scripture does not say that the rain and the snow do not return to heaven at all, but that they do not return thither without having watered the earth, and caused it to bring forth. Then they return laden with the fruit of the earth.

Even so shall it be with the Word of the Gospel. It shall not return to the Lord empty, but shall bring forth fruit. To our short sight it may seem as if the Word of God were spoken to no purpose; but God says that it shall accomplish that to which He has sent it.

He does not speak in vain. If therefore we will but speak the Word of the Lord, God will see that as in the case of Samuel, none of our words fall to the ground and perish. God's Word is the seed whence everything that grows from the ground comes; it is also the seed that regenerates men, and makes them bring forth fruit unto God.

The Earth Renewed

"Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." (Isaiah 55:13)

The closing verses of this chapter present a picture of the earth made new, purified from the curse of thorns and thistles, and bringing forth in perfection, as in the beginning. All this is to be accomplished by the Word of God, the same word which He puts into the mouth of His servants. "And 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 51:16)

This is a still further indication that the sure mercies of David, assured, by the everlasting covenant, to all who heed the gracious call to come to the Lord and to eat and drink from Him, are fulfilled only in the world to come, in the new earth. That is, the new earth is the consummation of them; but they must be accepted and enjoyed here in this present time, or else they will never be realized. It is only as men receive the Word of the Lord, and are transformed by it,--tasting the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,--that the earth is made new for their habitation.

A Grand Concert

"For you shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." (Isaiah 55:12)

What a blessed concert that will be, when the mountains and the hills break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field clap their hands in applause! Who would not like to be there to hear and see? But, says some wise objector, "That is all figurative; it is not meant to be taken literally, because the mountains and the hills cannot sing, and the trees cannot clap their hands; indeed, they have no hands to clap."

Oh, foolish wisdom, which knows so much that it shuts out all knowledge! Even so the disciples of Jesus wondered what He meant when He said that He should rise from the dead. They were sure that His words could not be taken literally, because they thought they knew that He could not die, and rise again. But they were mistaken. If instead of "reasoning" as they did, they had believed His words, they could have been saved much shame and confusion.

Suppose that instead of disputing with the Word of the Lord, we allow it to teach us. He says that the mountains and the hills shall break forth into singing, and therefore we believe that they will do so, and that we shall hear them. We shall then learn something about music, which the greatest composers of earth cannot teach us.

There is light which human eyes cannot see, and there are many sounds which human ears are too dull to hear; but God both sees and hears. When we become so spiritual that we are worthy to have spiritual bodies, then we shall be able to see and

hear things that have never yet come within man's comprehension. These things are made known to us by the Holy Spirit; let us therefore yield ourselves to Him, that we may be made wholly spiritual, and thus be able to attain true wisdom, the wisdom of God. "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." (1 Corinthians 2:9-10)--Present Truth, April 12, 1900--Isaiah 55:1-12.

Height of Mercy

This being the close of the quarter, the choice is given of reviewing or of substituting a lesson on temperance or on missions. The scripture suggested for one of the substituted lessons is Isaiah 55:8-13, and on this a few comments will be made. The text reads thus: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and returns not thither, 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. For you shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." (Isaiah 55:8-13)

The text quoted begins with "for," indicating that it is a conclusion from something preceding. The sixth and seventh verses contain an exhortation: "Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." (Isaiah 55:6-7)

Then naturally follows the statement, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts," (Isaiah 55:8)

The unrighteous man is to forsake his thoughts, because they are not the thoughts of God. From this we learn the wonderful fact that men must think the thoughts of God, in order to please Him. What are the thoughts of God? It is evident that we must be able to determine this, to some extent at least, or else we should not know whether or not to forsake the thoughts that we have, as not being His thoughts.

Since the Bible is the word of God, it is plain that it must express His thought. In it we find what He thinks of different actions of men. But that which is most specifically the thought of God is His law, the ten commandments. This is His revealed will, comprehending in itself all that is drawn out in detail in the various books of the Bible.

The law of God is a law of love. It was given as love. "And he said, 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 saints: from His right hand went a fiery law for them. Yea, He loved the people; all His saints are in your hand: and they sat down at your feet; everyone shall receive of your words." (Deuteronomy 33:2-3)

The object of it is love. "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." (1 Timothy 1:5)

Love is the fulfilling of it. "Love works no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." (Romans 13:10)

The keeping of the commandments is the only complete manifestation of the love of God. "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous." (1 John 5:3)

And it is in vain that anybody makes a profession of love to God, while he does not keep His commandments. "If you love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15) "And why do you call me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46)

From these Scripture facts we may know that when the apostle Paul says that "Love thinks no evil," (1 Corinthians 13:5) he means that perfect obedience to the law of God consists in being free from evil thoughts. This must necessarily follow, because the law of God is the thoughts of God. These thoughts are as much higher than the thoughts of the natural man as the heaven is higher than the earth. Therefore when a man fully turns to the Lord, his thoughts must be elevated as much as from earth to heaven.

And this one point shows the exceeding greatness of God's law, and how far short of it all men come. Men in their self-righteousness may boast, like the Pharisee, over those whom they regard as great sinners, but their boasting is vain, for, while there are

indeed degrees of sin, the difference in the guilt of different men, when compared with that heavenly standard, the law of God, is only as the difference in the height of different trees on earth compared with the distance of earth from the farthest star.

The statement that as the heavens are high above the earth so are God's thoughts higher than our thoughts, may remind us that the heavens themselves may enable us to think God's thoughts after Him. As the law of God is an expression of God's thoughts as to morals, so the material universe is an expression of God's thoughts in concrete form. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows His handiwork." (Psalm 19:1)

In them we see what great thoughts God had to mind when he planned the universe. They show His eternal power and godhead, and thus are an aid in lifting our thoughts to the level of God's, in the realm of morals. Surely it is impossible for a person to gaze upon the heavens thoughtfully, and with reverent recognition of their Creator, and at the same time to harbor evil thoughts.

But there is comfort as well as instruction in the fact that God's thoughts are as much higher than ours as the heavens are higher than the earth. It is in connection with the statement that God will "abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:7) those who turn to Him. Now of His thoughts toward us we read: "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)

His thoughts toward us are thoughts of peace, and they are as much higher than ours as the heavens are higher than the earth. This agrees with the statement in: "Your mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and your faithfulness reaches unto the clouds." (Psalm 36:5)

Also: "For your mercy is great above the heavens; and your truth reaches unto the clouds." (Psalm 108:4)

And: "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him." (Psalm 103:11)

It would be well sometimes if doubting souls could think of their own good traits in contrast with those of God. I do not mean for them to think how evil they are, but to rate at a fair value any good qualities they may possess, and then, holding to that valuation, think in how infinitely greater degree those same good qualities exist in God.

For instance, take the quality of mercy; let a man think how he would receive one who, having injured him, comes to him with tears in his eyes, making a humble confession, and asking pardon. There are few who would even wait for the penitent one to finish his confession before assuring him of full pardon. His thoughts toward him would be all kindness; but God's thoughts are as much higher than ours as heaven is higher than earth. God is as much more merciful than man as He is greater. Whoever will institute such a comparison as this, will become ashamed of his own thoughts.

That which should be of special encouragement in the line of missionary effort is the statement that God's word will accomplish that which He pleases, and prosper in the thing whereto He sends it. This does not mean that it will result in the conversion of the whole world. The word of God has been as powerful in every age of the world as it is now, or as it ever will be; yet in no age of the world, not even when the word was incarnate, have even a large minority of people acknowledged God.

It is true, however, that even then it accomplished God's purpose. It gathered out of the multitude a people for His name, and left the remainder without excuse. Of one thing we may be sure, that the word will prosper. Therefore consecrated effort to spread abroad a knowledge of the word will not be in vain. "In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening withhold not your hand; for you know not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good." (Ecclesiastes 11:6)

It is certain that either this effort or that will prosper, and there is a possibility that both may yield abundant returns. And the few from every age, who have heeded the word of God, will at last form a great multitude whom no man can number, who "shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God," (Matthew 8:11) "[When] the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads," (Isaiah 35:10) and the whole earth shall resound with the praises of God.--Signs of the Times, June 23, 1890--This article was not part of the series on Isaiah, but is included because it fits well into this collection.--Notes on the International Lesson, June 29--Isaiah 55:8-13.

Israel, the Gentiles, and the Sabbath

"Thus says Jehovah: Keep the law, practice righteousness; for my salvation will soon come, and my righteousness be soon manifested. Happy the man who practices this, the mortal who holds fast thereto, keeping the Sabbath, so as not to profane it, and keeping his hand from any evil. Let not the foreigner, who has joined himself to Jehovah, say: Jehovah will surely separate me from His people; and let not the eunuch say: Behold, I am a dry tree. For thus says Jehovah: As for the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, and choose that which I delight in, I will give them, in my house and within my walls, a monument and a memorial better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting memorial which shall not be cut off. And as for the foreigners who join themselves to Jehovah to minister to Him, and to love the name of Jehovah, to be His servants,--everyone who so keeps the Sabbath as not to profane it, and who lays hold on my covenant, I will bring to my holy mountain, and gladden in my house of prayer; his burnt offerings and his sacrifices shall be accepted upon my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples. The oracle of the Lord, Jehovah, who gathers the outcasts of Israel is: Yet will I gather others to Israel, to those of Israel who are already gathered. All you wild beasts in field and forest, come here to devour! My watchmen are all blind, and know not how to give heed; they are all dumb dogs which cannot bark, crouching and lying down, loving to slumber. And the dogs are greedy, they know not how to be satisfied, they all turn to their own way, each for his own lucre. Come, they say let me fetch wine, let us carouse with mead, and tomorrow shall be as today, an exceeding high day." (Isaiah 56:1-12, Polychrome)

This is a wonderfully comprehensive chapter, showing the essential unity of the Gospel message in all times, and linking the days of the ancient prophets with ours. Here we have an exhortation to keep the law, based on the fact that the salvation of the Lord is near. This corresponds with the message in: "Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His Judgment is come; and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." (Revelation 14:7)

In this chapter we find that the conditions of salvation were the same in the days of Isaiah that they are today, and that the relation between God and all people, whether called Jews or Gentiles, has not changed in the least in the last four thousand years.

Gentiles Commanded to Keep the Sabbath

We often hear the question asked, "Where in the Bible do you find that the Gentiles were ever commanded to keep the ten commandments or the Sabbath?"

The answer is that we find it everywhere in the Bible; for God's commandments are for all mankind; but here in this chapter we have the matter very definitely stated. First, we have the general command, "Keep the law, practice righteousness." (Isaiah 56:1, Polychrome)

Then the foreigner, the Gentile, is especially singled out, and the promise is made to him, if he will keep the Sabbath. "Neither let the son of the stranger, that has joined himself to the Lord, speak, saying, The Lord has utterly separated me from His people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree. For thus says the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; Even unto them will I give in my house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve Him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be His servants, everyone that keeps the sabbath from polluting it, and takes hold of my covenant; Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all people. The Lord God which gathers the outcasts of Israel says, Yet will I gather others to him, beside those that are gathered unto him." (Isaiah 56:3-8, Polychrome)

Then, as well as in the days of Peter, the promise was unto all that were "afar off": "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." (Act 2:39)

There can be no question as to which day is referred to in this connection. Nobody ever questions the fact that in the times before the first advent of Christ, at least, no other day than that kept by the faithful Jews, the seventh day of the week, was ever called the Sabbath. This is the day that the Gentiles are exhorted to keep. And since the special exhortation is based on the nearness of the salvation of the Lord, it follows that

until the coming of the Lord, the call to the Gentiles to keep the Sabbath holds good. "The Sabbath was made for man," (Mark 2:27) and every creature that comes under that head is under obligation to God to keep it.

Only One Nation Acknowledged

God recognizes only one nation on earth, and it is not one of the nations of earth. That nation is the nation of Israel, of whom it was said by inspiration of God, "the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations." (Numbers 23:9)

It is "the righteous nation which keeps the truth," (Isaiah 26:2) and that does not describe any nation recognized as a nation on this earth. The people of Israel, God's own chosen nation, are on this earth counted as strangers and foreigners, (Hebrews 11:13) their names and their citizenship being recorded only in heaven. "Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." (Luke 10:20) "To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven," (Hebrews 12:23) "For our citizenship is in heaven; whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." (Philippians 3:20,RV)

On the other hand, all "Gentiles in the flesh ... [are] aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." (Ephesians 2:11-12)

Only when they come to God, being reconciled to Him through the blood of the cross of Christ, are they "no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." (Ephesians 2:19-20)

It is God's "eternal purpose" (Ephesians 3:11) to "gather together in one all things in Christ," (Ephesians 1:10) and the kingdom of which He is the Head is that of Israel. It is a nation of overcomers. Israel means a prince, (Genesis 32:28) and everyone of the subjects of Christ is a prince, a king. Jesus Christ is King of kings. (Revelation 17:14) All His subjects have high rank. There are no "mean persons" in all His dominions.

The God of the Gentiles Also

From this chapter we learn that God was as solicitous for the salvation of the Gentiles in the days of Isaiah as He is today. There was never a time when God was exclusive, shutting himself up to a particular class. He was the God of the Gentiles then as well as now. "Is He the God of the Jews only? is He not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith." (Romans 3:29-30)

And He is the God of the Jews today as much as He was then, for He has not cast off His people. The text says, "my house shall be called a house of prayer for all people," (Isaiah 56:7) and these are the words that Jesus quoted when He cleared the temple of the buyers and sellers. "And He taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but you have made it a den of thieves." (Mark 11:17)

Therefore we find that never was the temple designed by the Lord exclusively for the people called Jews. It was never the design of God that any person should be deprived of the privileges of His sanctuary. The wall separating the "court of the Gentiles" from the sanctuary proper, where the Jews were permitted to enter, was the "middle wall of partition" (Ephesians 2:14) which the Jews themselves, in their selfish pride, had erected.

Gathering the Gentiles to Israel Jesus said: "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one Shepherd." (John 10:16)

This is exactly the same thing that is stated in our lesson. "The Lord God which gathers the outcasts of Israel says, Yet will I gather others to him, besides those that are gathered to him." (Isaiah 56:8)

And this also is the same thing that was stated by James at the meeting of the apostles and elders in Jerusalem: "Simeon has declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name. And to this agree 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 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, who does all these things. Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world." (Acts 15:14-18)

The Lord is the same from the beginning, and His works are always the same. He works no differently in the closing part of the Gospel from what He did in the beginning. He called Abraham when he was but one, (Isaiah 51:2) and took him from among the heathen. "Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bore you; for when he was but one I called him, and I blessed him, and made him many." (Isaiah 51:2,RV) "And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus says the Lord God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods. And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac." (Joshua 24:2-3)

All along in the history of Israel He kept adding to them from among the heathen, as in the case of the harlot Rahab, and Ruth the Moabitess, both of whom are among the ancestors of Christ after the flesh. God also sent prophets to the Gentiles, as in the case of Jonah, warning them to repent; and one prophet, Jeremiah, was even before his birth ordained to be a prophet to the Gentiles. "Before I formed you in the belly I knew you; and before you came forth out of the womb I sanctified you, and I ordained you a prophet unto the nations." (Jeremiah 1:5)

The word "nations" is exactly the same that is rendered elsewhere "heathen" or "Gentiles." In the Bible, "nations," "heathen," and "Gentiles," are all the same. Israel was begun by the calling of one from among the heathen; it was built up by the calling of others, in spite of the prejudices of those who did not understand the plan of the Lord, and who wished to make Him as exclusive as they were; and the promise still is, "Yet will I gather others to Israel, to those of Israel who are already gathered." (Isaiah 56:8,RV)

And when all have been gathered out, through the preaching of the Gospel, there will then be but one nation in all the earth, for the word of the Lord is, "The nation and kingdom that will not serve you shall perish." (Isaiah 60:12) "And the Lord shall be King over all the earth; in that day shall there be one Lord, and His name One." (Zechariah 14:9)

The people who are thus gathered to Israel will all be Sabbath keepers. The characteristic of that nation will be that every individual will keep the truth, the law of God. It will be established in righteousness. "In righteousness shall you be established: you shall be far from oppression; for you shall not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near you." (Isaiah 54:14)

Of those who obey the message, "Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His Judgment is come: and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters," (Revelation 14:7) which is the message set forth in this chapter, it is said, "Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." (Revelation 14:12)

There are glorious promises to those Gentiles who keep the Sabbath of the Lord in spirit and in truth, and who by their faith and trust in Christ become members of God's household, the commonwealth of Israel. (Ephesians 2:10-22) Who will accept the whole Gospel, and not be content with man's narrow perversion of it?

Perils of the Last Days

The last days are to be perilous, because "Men shall be lovers of their own selves, ... lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." (2 Timothy 3:2,4-5)

The prophecy before us, like to many others in the Bible, warns us that in the church of God, among those who have been set to be watchmen, to feed the flock of God, and to give warning of danger, there will be those who will feed themselves rather than the flock, and will feed upon the flock. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." (Acts 20:28-30) "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus says the Lord God unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? You eat the fat, and you clothe yourselves with the wool, you kill them that are fed: but

you feed not the flock. The diseased have you not strengthened, neither have you healed that which was sick, neither have you bound up that which was broken, neither have you brought again that which was driven away, neither have you sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have you ruled them. And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them." (Ezekiel 34:2-6)

Men's hearts will be "overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, ... and so the day of the Lord will come upon them unawares." (Luke 21:34)

Eating and drinking will be the snare of the last days. Not that people should not eat and drink; that is a necessity of nature, and is designed by God to be the great means by which He is recognized and glorified. In the preceding chapter God calls men to "eat that which is good;" (Isaiah 55:2) but the trouble is that men have perverted the good gifts of God, and as their table has become a snare to them, they have been overcome with a spirit of slumber. "But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. You are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober." (1 Thessalonians 5:4-6)

This chapter is given to us as a warning; shall we not heed it?--Present Truth, April 19, 1900--Isaiah 56:1-12.

Dwellers on High

The righteous man perishes, and no one considers; And pious men are taken away, and no one understands, That the righteous man is taken away, because of the evil. He shall go in peace: he shall rest in his bed; Even the perfect man; he that walks in the straight path. But you, draw near hither, O you sons of the sorceress; You seed of the adulterer, and of the harlot! Of whom do you make your sport? At whom do you widen your mouth, and loll the tongue? Are you not apostate children, a false seed? Burning with the lust of idols under every garden tree; Slaying the children in the valleys, under the clefts of the rocks? Among the smooth stones of the valley is your portion; There, these are your lot: Even to these have you poured out your libation, Have you presented your offering. Can I see these things with acquiescence? Upon a high and lofty mountain have you set your bed: Even there have you gone up to offer sacrifice. Behind the door and the doorposts have you set your memorial: You have departed from me, and are gone up; you have enlarged your bed; And you have made a covenant with them: You have loved their bed; you have provided a place for it. And you have visited the king with a present of oil; And have multiplied your precious ointments; And you have sent your ambassadors afar; And have debased yourself even to Hades. In the length of your journeys you have wearied yourself; You have said, There is no hope: You have found the support of your life by your labor: Therefore you have not utterly fainted. And of whom have you been so anxiously afraid, that you should thus deal falsely? And have not remembered me, nor revolved it in your mind? Is it not because I was silent, and winked; and you fear me not? But I will declare my righteousness; And your deeds shall not avail you. When you cry, let your associates deliver you: But the wind shall bear them away; a breath shall take them off. But he that trusts in me shall inherit the land, And shall possess my holy mountain. Then will I say: Cast up, cast up the causeway; make clear the way; Remove every obstruction from the road of my people. For thus says Jehovah, the High and Lofty; Inhabiting eternity; and whose name is the Holy One: The high and holy place will I inhabit; And with the contrite and humble of spirit; To revive the spirit of the humble; And to give life to the heart of the contrite. For I will not always contend; Neither for ever will I be wroth: For the spirit from before me would be overwhelmed; And the living souls, which I have made. Because of his iniquity for a short time I was wroth: And I smote him; hiding my face in my anger. And he departed, turning back in the way of his own heart. I have seen his

ways; and I will heal him, and will be his guide; And I will restore comforts, to him, and to his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips: Peace, peace, to him that is near, And to him that is afar off, says Jehovah; and I will heal him. But the wicked are like the troubled sea; For it can never be at rest; But its waters work up filth and mire. There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked." (Isaiah 57:1-21,Lowth)

A View of the Last Days

In this chapter we have a picture of the last days,--of the time of trouble immediately preceding the coming of the Lord.

The student should remember that the destruction of ancient Babylon, and also of Jerusalem, which fell simply because it was dominated by the spirit of Babylon, was but a foretaste of the great destruction at the last day. The characteristic of those times was:

- haughtiness,
- rejection of God,
- the exaltation of self above Him, and
- the persecution of those who were loyal to the truth.

Even so will it be, only to a much greater degree, in the days of the coming of the Son of man. "In the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God. ... Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." (2 Timothy 3:1-4,12-13)

All this wickedness is to be found in the professed church of Christ, and the professed ministers of God are to be the leaders in the persecution of the despised faithful ones, even as it was in the former days when the Roman Babylon had the ascendancy.

It will be remembered that in the 56th chapter of Isaiah, which was studied last week, where the Sabbath truth is presented as the standard for the rallying of God's people, the watchmen are represented as living only for themselves; and when a man lives only to please himself, he naturally despises those that are good.

Spiritual Adultery and Its Fruit

"But draw near hither, you sons of the sorceress, the seed of the adulterer and the whore." (Isaiah 57:3)

Verse 3 of our present lesson addresses the children of the harlot, the apostate church which is described in: "And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will show unto you the judgment of the great whore that sits upon many waters: With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: And upon her forehead was a name written, mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration." (Revelation 17:1-6)

The church is Christ's lawful bride; for all the true members of it are set free from sin, that they "should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that they may bring forth fruit unto God." (Romans 7:4)

When the professed church departs from "the simplicity that is in Christ," (2 Corinthians 11:3) and forsakes His law, that is adultery of the worst kind. "Against whom do you sport yourselves? against whom make you a wide mouth, and draw out the tongue? are you not children of transgression, a seed of falsehood, Enflaming yourselves with idols under every green tree, slaying the children in the valleys under the cliffs of the rocks?" (Isaiah 57:4-5)

The evil is always opposed to the good, and therefore we have in the fourth and fifth verses of our lesson the statement of the fact that this "false seed," these children of the harlot, are engaged in mocking and persecuting the good, even to death. This corresponds to the words in: "And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus." (Revelation 17:6)

James 5:5-8 shows that feasting and rioting, and persecution of the just, will be the characteristics of the last days: "You have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; you have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. You have condemned and killed the just; and he does not resist you. 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 5:5-8)

And the verses just referred to in Revelation show from what quarter these persecutions emanate. Compare also verses 7-9 of our lesson with Revelation 18:7-9 and onward, where we have a picture of the church's dalliance with the secular power, by which she obtains exalted position and wealth. "Upon a lofty and high mountain have you set your bed: even there you went up to offer sacrifice. Behind the doors also and the posts have you set up your remembrance: for you have discovered yourself to another than me, and are gone up; you have enlarged your bed, and made a covenant with them; you loved their bed where you saw it. And you went to the king with ointment, and did increase your perfumes, and did send your messengers far off, and did debase yourself even unto hell." (Isaiah 57:7-9) "How much she has glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she says in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judges her. And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning." (Revelation 18:7-9)

These points amply establish the time when our lesson applies, and the events to which it refers. These things being settled, the rest is easy.

The Righteous Taken Away by Wickedness

"The righteous perishes, and no man lays it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil [to come]." (Isaiah 57:1)

In order also rightly to understand this chapter, it should be noted that in the Hebrew there is no trace of the words "to come," in the first verse. Accordingly Lowth and many other translators very properly omit them. The Hebrew word, a compound, is the same that is used in: "All the land of Canaan fainted by reason of the famine;" (Genesis 47:13) also in: "The land wherein they were strangers could not bear them because of their cattle;" (Genesis 36:7) and in: "I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth." (Genesis 27:46)

The same word occurs in verse 16 of this chapter, and is rendered "from before," where the sense plainly indicates that the meaning is "because of." "For I will not always contend; neither for ever will I be wroth: for the spirit from before [because of] me would be overwhelmed; and the living souls, which I have made." (Isaiah 57:16,Lowth)

If God were forever wroth, the spirits of men would be overwhelmed because of Him, or through Him. From this it will be seen that if the rendering placed in the margin of the Revised Version were inserted in the text, we should have the correct statement of the case. Thus: "The righteous perishes, and no man lays it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away through wickedness." (Isaiah 57:1,RV,margin)

The ordinary rendering leads to the supposition that God takes away the righteous to save them from evil that is coming, whereas the true rendering teaches us that in the last days righteous men will be taken away, by the evil. The Hebrew word rendered "taken away" indicates that violence is used.

In the very last days, when God's Spirit shall have been fully and finally rejected by the apostate church, and the decree goes forth that anybody is at liberty to kill the righteous, we may be sure that none will be slain, because everyone of God's people will in that time of trouble be delivered; (Daniel 12:1) their death would not result in

bringing anybody to the Lord, and God will not allow righteous blood to be shed uselessly.

But before that point shall have been reached, when the blood of martyrs can yet be the seed which shall result in bringing in a harvest of souls, many will be obliged to witness for the truth with their lives.

Why not? Why should anybody shake his head at this statement? The world is always enmity against God, and since evil men and seducers are to wax worse and worse, how can it be supposed that the last days will be more free from persecution than former times have been?

Of the little horn of Daniel 7, which represents modern Babylon, the apostate church, we read, "I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; 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 7:21-22)

Those who are counting on an easy time in the service of the Lord, as the end approaches, are preparing themselves for a terrible disappointment.

A Substitute Memorial

Still further: In verse 8, we read, "Behind the door and the door posts have you set up your memorial." (Isaiah 57:8)

This is evidently in opposition to God's memorial, which is the Sabbath of the fourth commandment, the seventh day of the week. The words of this law were commanded to be written "upon the posts of your house, and on your gates," (Deuteronomy 6:9) a sign that God was the Master of the house, and His law its rule; but in the place of this, "the church" has of its own motion, and without the slightest hint of Divine authority, introduced the observance of the first day of the week, as an indication that it occupies the place of God, setting itself forth as God. This is the crowning act of spiritual adultery and idolatry.

It will be over the Sabbath, over the question of whether God or "the church" is to be recognized as sole and supreme authority, that the persecutions of the last days will rage.

A Blessing for the Despised and Persecuted

But although the righteous may be slain by the wicked, and none may mark the place where he falls, and he himself, like his Lord, may be reckoned among the transgressors, "He shall rest in peace," (Isaiah 57:2) while to the wicked who boast in their fancied security and power, there is no peace. Men may cast out the names of the humble ones who fall for the sake of the truth, and may esteem them as lost, but the voice from heaven, speaking especially of the perils and persecutions of the last days, says, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them." (Revelation 14:13)

For none of those who die in the Lord should we sorrow as do those who have no hope; but for those who fall in the last struggle of the truth against error there is a special blessing pronounced. Those whom the world and the worldly church most despise, are the ones whom the Lord most esteems. "They shall dwell on high." (Isaiah 33:16) "For thus says the High and Lofty One, that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit." (Isaiah 57:15)

He dwells in both places at the same time. While dwelling in the high and holy place, God is also in the hearts of the humble and contrite ones. How can that be? It is because the hearts of such ones are His sanctuary, a holy place for the habitation of God through the Spirit, and He has raised them up, made them sit with Christ in the heavenly places, and has given them dominion, "far above all principality and power." (Ephesians 1:21) "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." (Ephesians 2:4-6)

The promise is, "He that overcomes, and keeps my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations." (Revelation 2:27)

Those whom the rulers of earth destroy are the real rulers, and never is their power greater than when they yield their bodies that they may not worship any false god. The kings of this world and the "princes" of the church will not know until the Judgment how many kings in the garb of laboring men they have caused to suffer martyrdom. As it was with Christ, even so will it be with His faithful followers. "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also." (John 15:20)

What wonderful riches there are in "the reproach of Christ," (Hebrews 11:26) and what a privilege to be permitted to share it! But there is hope held out to all. The Lord has "no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that he should turn from his wicked way, and live;" (Ezekiel 33:11) and so He sends Christ, preaching "Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near." (Isaiah 57:19)

The Lord has healing for all who will turn to Him. His anger endures but for a moment, (Psalm 30:5) while His mercy endures for ever. (Psalm 136) The long-suffering of our God is salvation, and His salvation is very great. Jesus prayed for forgiveness for those who put Him to death, (Luke 23:34) and Peter, filled with the Spirit, said to those who were His betrayers and murders, "Repent therefore, and be converted." (Acts 3:19) "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." (2 Corinthians 6:2)--Present Truth, April 26, 1900--Isaiah 57:1-21.

A Delightful Day

"Cry aloud; spare not: Like a trumpet lift up your voice: And declare unto my people their transgression; And to the house of Jacob their sin. Yet me day after day they seek; And to know my ways they take delight: As a nation that does righteousness, And has not forsaken the ordinance of their God. They continually inquire of me concerning the ordinances of righteousness; They take delight to draw near unto God. Wherefore have we fasted, and You see not? Have we afflicted our souls, and You do not regard? Behold, in the day of your fasting you enjoy your pleasure; And all your demands of labor you rigorously exact. Behold, you fast for strife and contention; And to smite with the fist the poor. Wherefore fast you unto me in this manner; To make your voice to be heard on high? Is such then the fast which I choose; That a man should afflict his soul for a day? Is it, that he should bow down his head like a bulrush; And spread sackcloth and ashes for his couch? Shall this be called a fast, And a day acceptable to Jehovah? Is not this the fast which I choose? To dissolve the bands of wickedness; To loosen the oppressive burdens; To deliver those that are crushed by violence; And that you should break asunder every yoke? Is it not to distribute your bread to the hungry; And to bring the wandering poor into your house? When you see the naked, that you clothe him; And that you hide not yourself from your own flesh? Then shall your light break forth like the morning; And your wounds shall speedily be healed over: And your righteousness shall go before you; And the glory of Jehovah shall bring up your rear. Then shall you call, and Jehovah shall answer; You shall cry, and He shall say, Lo, I am here! If you remove from the midst of you the yoke; The pointing of the finger, and the injurious speech: If you bring forth your bread to the hungry, And satisfy the afflicted soul; Then shall your light rise in obscurity, And your darkness shall be as the noonday. And Jehovah shall lead you continually, And satisfy your soul in the severest drought; And He shall renew your strength: And you shall be like a well-watered garden, and like a flowing spring, Whose waters shall never fail. And they that spring forth from you shall build the ancient ruins; The foundations of old time shall they raise up: And you shall be called the repairer of the broken mound; The restorer of paths to be frequented by inhabitants. If you restrain your foot from the Sabbath; From doing your pleasure on my holy day: And shall call the Sabbath, a delight; And the holy feast of Jehovah, honorable: And shall honor it, by refraining from your purpose; From pursuing your pleasure, and from speaking vain words: Then shall you delight yourself

in Jehovah; And I will make you ride on the high places of the earth; And I will feed you on the inheritance of Jacob your father: For the mouth of Jehovah has spoken it." (Isaiah 58:1-14,Lowth)

The student surely cannot help noticing that although the entire book of Isaiah is one message, relating to one time, each one of these later chapters is complete in itself. It is as though the prophet himself had made the division, each chapter being the sermon for a certain day. The lesson for this day is one of the richest in the collection, and one day's study will no more than give us an introduction to it.

It will be noticed that in this lesson certain ones are addressed, and are exhorted to give a very definite message to the professed people of God. But a little way back the Lord has declared that His watchmen,--the regular ministers who are set to guard and feed the flock, "are shepherds that cannot understand. ... [They] are blind, they are all without knowledge; they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; dreaming, lying down, loving to slumber." (Isaiah 56:11,10,RV)

Therefore He issues a call to whomsoever will hear it, to lift up his voice like a trumpet, to awaken the people from their dangerous slumber. This shows that in the last days God will have men to proclaim His warning message, who are not reckoned among "the clergy," but whose qualification is that they love the Lord, and know His voice, and follow Him.

Tell the Whole Truth

"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins." (Isaiah 58:1)

The Lord says, "spare not." That is, keep nothing back; withhold not. The word is the same as that used in Genesis 39:9, where Joseph says of Potiphar, "neither has he kept back anything from me." (Genesis 39:9)

Paul obeyed the injunction, for he said to the elders of Ephesus, "I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you. ... For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." (Acts 20:20,27)

It is true that Jesus said to His disciples, before His crucifixion, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now." (John 16:12)

But whoever would make this an excuse for withholding from the people any truth that God has revealed unto him, ignores the words of Jesus immediately following, namely, "Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all the truth: for He shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak; and He will show you things to come." (John 16:13)

God gives His servants light, in order that they may pass it on to others, and whoever keeps any of it back from the people, is unfaithful to his trust.

One must certainly use judgment as to when and how the truth is presented to different persons, but it must not be his own worldly-wise judgment, but that of the Spirit of God.

One who is guided by the Spirit of God will discern when a person whom he may meet is in a state of mind to listen to certain phases of truth, or whether or not it is wise to speak to him at all just then; but whoever keeps back truth that has been committed to him, quoting in his own behalf the words of Christ, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now," (John 16:12) takes himself out of the ranks of those who are sent, and places himself on a level with the Lord himself. The Lord has no favorites among men; none whom He takes off in a corner, so to speak, and whispers to them something that He does not wish the others to hear; but what He says to His most intimate disciples, He says to all.

Has the Lord revealed himself to you in a marked manner? Then that is evidence that there is some other soul who is waiting for you to bring the message to him. Do not keep it back, but watch for the fitting opportunity to declare it.

A Warning Against Formality

"Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and You see not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and You take no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, and exact all your labors. Behold, you fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: you shall not fast as you do this day, to make your voice to

be heard on high. Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? will you call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to deal your bread to the hungry, and that you bring the poor that are cast out to your house? when you see the naked, that you cover him; and that you hide not yourself from your own flesh?" (Isaiah 58:3-7)

The message of this chapter relates chiefly to fasting, a thing which is very much misunderstood and perverted. The universal tendency is to make a mere matter of form, an outward show. So it was with the Pharisees of old, against whose example God warns us. "When you fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance; for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. But you, when you fast, anoint your head, and wash your face; That you appear not unto men to fast, but unto your Father which is in secret: and your Father, which sees in secret, shall reward you openly." (Matthew 6:16-18)

In the chapter before us, we find that the people are most active in what they are pleased to term their "religious duties." They go to meeting frequently, they love to listen to preaching, they fast and afflict their souls, and act, to all outward appearances, like a people that do righteousness; but God who looks on the heart and life, knows better. He judges men, not according to their profession, nor to their diligence in going to meeting, nor the length and frequency of their prayers, but "according to their works." (Revelation 20:13)

Those who "profess that they know God; but in works they deny Him," (Titus 1:16) are counted as the worst sinners. "He that says he abides in Him, ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked." (1 John 2:6)

How did He walk? "[He] went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him." (Acts 10:38)

The ones to whom this chapter is specially addressed, make their religion consist in fasting on certain days, and in having special seasons of "self-denial," thus confessing that the rest of the time they live to please themselves. The less Christian vitality there is

in a people, the more scrupulous will they be in the observance of set forms, and of special religious days. But that will not satisfy the Lord. Read the very beginning of this prophecy. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? says the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When you come to appear before me, who has required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when you spread forth your hands, I will hide my eyes from you: yea, when you make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood." (Isaiah 1:11-15)

What Fasting Is

The mere act of fasting is in itself a very simple thing. It consists in abstaining entirely from food. Its object is to emphasise to the one fasting, the fact that he lives not "by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God," (Matthew 4:4) and that it is God alone who supports him, and keeps him in life. It is to remind him that nothing that he has belongs to himself, but that, since it comes from the "God and Father of all," (Ephesians 4:6) that which comes to him belongs to his brother man as well as to him, and that it is given into his hands only to use as the Lord's steward. Therefore the fast in which the Lord delights, is one where the bread is dealt to the hungry, and the poor are taken in and cared for.

What True Fasting Accomplishes for One

While it is impossible for a man to fast all the time, and the Lord would not have it done, because "[He] giveth us richly all things to enjoy," (1 Timothy 6:17) and tells us to eat that which is good, having made our food one of the chief means of revealing himself and His Gospel to us, the effects of our fast are to be continual, and not to cease with the day.

For one to afflict his soul for a day, does not please the Lord; indeed, doing penance is not what the Lord ever requires. But an acceptable fast to the Lord is one which reaches out beyond the day of abstinence from food, and affects the whole life.

To make fasting, or any other religious act, a matter of strife and contention, is most displeasing to the Lord. Instead of contending over forms, the true people of God will be revealing the righteousness of God in their lives. Strife and debate never yet converted a single soul; that is done only by the life of Christ; and since He is in the heavens, hidden from the sight of mortals, it must be manifested in mortal flesh.

So the acceptable fast unto the Lord is that which looses the bands of wickedness, and lets those who are oppressed by the devil go free. That means, of course, first of all, that one's own bands are unloosed, and he knows "the freedom wherewith Christ makes men free." (Galatians 5:1)

Fasting, therefore, is for the purpose of bringing the individual into closer relationship with Christ, and giving him a better understanding of His life; and this knowledge and companionship are to be lasting. Their fruits are to be seen in all the days that follow the special season of fasting. Men are to know that a fast has been held, not by any formal announcement of it, but by the results of it.

A fast which leaves the faster still in the yoke of bondage, has been to no purpose. In the very time of fasting, one is not to be of a sad countenance, as though he were undergoing torture, for the anointing of the head with oil signifies a cup running over with the goodness of the Lord. "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies: You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over." (Psalm 23:5)

As the body may feel the pangs of hunger, the person is to rejoice in that he is a partaker of Christ's sufferings, because he understands the keeping power of the Lord. He sees that great as is the life and power that are conveyed to us in the visible gifts of God, there is an infinitude of life for us, outside of that which is contained in what our senses can appreciate.

This knowledge, which is emphasized by fasting, makes the day of fasting a day of delight.

Deliverance from the Powers of Darkness

Wonderful promises are made to those who keep this acceptable fast, using their knowledge of the freedom which God gives, to rescue others from the snare of the devil. They shall walk in the light of the countenance of the Lord all the day, and in His righteousness shall they be exalted. Compare: "Then shall your light break forth as the morning, and your health shall spring forth speedily: and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your reward." (Isaiah 58:8) "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)

They will be in such complete accord with the Lord, that even the darkness will be light to them. Compare: "Then shall your light break forth as the morning, and your health shall spring forth speedily: and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your reward. Then shall you call, and the Lord shall answer; you shall cry, and He shall say, Here I am. If you take away from the midst of you the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity; And if you draw out your soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall your light rise in obscurity, and your darkness be as the noonday." (Isaiah 58:8-10) "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 139:12)

What a marvelous privilege! The soul will be completely delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of the Son of God's love. "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." (Colossians 1:12-13)

Health to the True Worshiper

"And your health shall spring forth speedily." (Isaiah 58:8) "Godliness ... has promise of the life that now is, as well as that which is to come." (1 Timothy 4:8)

How can anybody who believes the Bible, read such passages as this, and still think that it is necessarily the lot of God's people to suffer from disease? Nothing can be

more plain than that the Lord promises health to all those who serve Him intelligently and in truth. "And you shall serve the Lord your God, and He shall bless your bread, and your water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of you." (Exodus 23:25)

This is not an arbitrary thing, but the result of a definite cause. Notice that there is here a close connection between health and food.

The rule among men is to consider only their appetite, and to eat whatever pleases it. Most people eat for the mere enjoyment of eating, and not in order that they may have the most perfect life; and thus they defeat themselves; for although they have a momentary enjoyment while the delicate morsels are going down their throats, the suffering which they undergo in consequence of disregarding the laws of life are almost continual; while those who eat only to have life wherewith to glorify God, not only get pleasure in the act of eating, but are continually filled with the joy of the life of the eternal God.

Givers of Life

Christ said, "He that believes on me, as the Scripture has said, Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." (John 7:38)

The life which the believers receive from the Lord, flows out in a stream of blessing to others. Occasional fasting reminds us that we live only by the power of God, and that when we do eat it should be only for the purpose of receiving that life in its fullness and purity. It also reminds us that it is God who supplies the food, and that He can keep us alive just as well when the earth does not bring forth anything as when it yields abundantly. "The Lord shall guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought," (Isaiah 58:11) or, as one translation has it, "in times of famine." He who has divided his last crust with the hungry, and still has found that the handful of meal did not fail, will not fear when famine comes over all the land, for he knows whom he trusts. His bones will be as fat in times of scarcity as in times of plenty, for the God who turns the flinty rock into streams of water, can give him abundant drink from the very sands of the desert.

The knowledge of all this is indicated in the true fast, which means the distribution of bread to the needy; and such knowledge--the knowledge that he is in touch with the

great Creator--cannot fail to make one joyful. Instead of famishing, he himself will be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters never fail. That is, although he be poor, he will always be able to distribute something to the needy, because he has the unfailing storehouse of the God of the universe to draw from. "As poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." (2 Corinthians 6:10)

Enveloped in God's Righteousness

"Your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your rearward." (Isaiah 58:8,RV)

This shows that the righteousness will not be from ourselves, but from the Lord. The righteousness which proceeds from a man himself, goes with him, but here we have the picture of a man surrounded by the life of the Lord. His righteousness, "the righteousness of God which is by the faith of Jesus Christ," (Romans 3:22) goes before him, and the glory of the Lord is his protection in the rear. He is surrounded by a rampart of righteousness, and the glory of it, through which darkness and sin cannot break.

Sabbath-Keeping

"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)

The last message of the Gospel is to "Fear God, and give glory to Him, ... and worship Him as the Creator of the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." (Revelation 14:7)

To give God glory, is to keep His commandments. Compare:

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14)

"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)

So here in giving glory to God as the Creator of the heavens and earth and sea, we have unmistakable reference to the Sabbath, which is the memorial of that work. "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 last proclamation of the Gospel makes the Sabbath of the Lord very prominent, because the Sabbath of the Lord means perfect rest and trust in the Lord, and that must be the condition of those who are prepared for His coming.

Keeping the Sabbath of the fourth commandment, does not mean salvation by works, but salvation by resting in the Lord. It is not a grievous thing, but a delight. He who finds the Sabbath a hardship has never kept it, and does not know what it is, for it is a delight. It is "the holy of the Lord, and honorable." (Isaiah 58:13)

Therefore let all beware how they despise it.

God's Holy Day

There should be no misunderstanding here as to what day is meant. The Lord says, "my holy day." (Isaiah 58:13)

There is therefore a certain day which He claims as His own above all other days. What day is that? "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God." (Exodus 20:10)

That is, the seventh day of the week, the day that is commonly known as Saturday, and which follows the sixth day, Friday, which the Mohammedans regard as the prayer day, and which is followed by the first day of the week, known as Sunday, which the Papacy has succeeded in palming off on many Christians instead of the Lord's day.

Jesus declared himself to be the Lord of the Sabbath day, speaking of the day which the Jews professed to observe, and which they falsely accused Him of breaking. (Mark 2:28)

So the Lord's day is the seventh day of the week, the day which in the time of Christ, and even now, the Jews kept outwardly, but with no knowledge of the spirituality of it. All who honor the Lord must also honor His day, which He says is honorable.

The Delight Which Sabbath-Keeping Gives

But as with fasting, the results of the Sabbath do not end with the one day of the week which is set apart as the sign of resting in the Lord. The observance of the seventh day, on which God rested from all His work, means constant rest in Him.

It is not merely on that day that we are not to do our own pleasure, nor to speak vain words, but every day. At no time have we any right to find our own selfish pleasure, and to speak vanity. We are to be so intimate with the Lord, and so closely conformed to His life, that our religion will not consist in the observance of certain forms and ceremonies at certain times, but in a continual godly life.

True Sabbath-keeping means godliness all the week. To limit the prohibition from seeking our own pleasure and doing our own ways and speaking vain words to the day of the Sabbath, is to miss the meaning of this entire chapter, which teaches continual and not occasional service. "Then shall you delight yourself in the Lord." (Isaiah 58:14)

The blessing of rest, which the Sabbath brings, will extend throughout the week, and the soul will revel in the deliciousness of it. The true Sabbath-keeper will be a king, set over the highest places of the earth, and his whole life will be one bright glad day.

O, accept this glorious message, and delight yourself in the Lord himself.--Present Truth, May 3, 1900--Isaiah 58:1-15.

A Terrible Indictment Against the Church

"Behold, the hand of Jehovah is not contracted, so that He cannot save; Neither is His ear grown dull, so that He cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation Between you and your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, that He does not hear. For your hands are polluted with blood, And your fingers with iniquity; Your lips speak falsehood, And your tongue mutters wickedness. No one prefers his suit in justice, And no one pleads in truth: Trusting in vanity, and speaking lies; Conceiving mischief, and bringing forth iniquity. They hatch the eggs of the basilisk, And weave the web of the spider: He that eats of their eggs dies; And when it is crushed, a viper breaks forth. Of their webs no garment shall be made; Neither shall they cover themselves with their works: Their works are works of iniquity, And the deed of violence is in their hands. Their feet run swiftly to evil, And they hasten to shed innocent blood: Their devices are devices of iniquity; Destructions and calamity in their paths. The way of peace they know not; Neither is their any judgment in their tracks: They have made to themselves crooked paths; Whoever goes in them, knows not peace. Therefore is judgment far distant from us; Neither does justice overtake us: We look for light, but behold darkness; For brightness, but we walk in obscurity. We grope for the wall, like the blind; And we wander, as those that are deprived of sight: We stumble at midday, as in the twilight; In the midst of delicacies, as among the dead. We groan all of us, like the bears; And like the doves, we make a continued moan. We look for judgment, and there is none; For salvation, and it is far distant from us. For our transgressions are multiplied before You; And our sins bring an accusation against us: For our transgressions cleave fast unto us; And our iniquities we acknowledge. By rebelling, and lying, against Jehovah; And by turning backward from following our God: By speaking injury, and conceiving revolt; And by mediating from the heart lying words, And judgment is turned away backwards; And justice stands aloof: For truth has stumbled in the open street; And rectitude has not been able to enter. And truth is utterly lost; And he that shuns evil, exposes himself to be plundered: And Jehovah saw it, And it displeased Him, that there was no judgment. And He saw, that there was no man; And He wondered that there was no one to interpose: Then His own arm brought salvation for Him; And His righteousness, it supported Him. And He put on righteousness, as a breastplate; And the helmet of salvation was on His head: And He put on the garments of vengeance for His clothing; And He clad himself with zeal, as with a mantle. He is

mighty to recompense; He that is mighty to recompense will requite: Wrath to His adversaries, recompense to His enemies; To the distant coasts a recompense will He requite. And they from the west shall revere the name of Jehovah; And they from the rising of the sun His glory; When He shall come, like a river straightened in his course, Which a strong wind drives along. And the Redeemer shall come to Sion; And shall turn away the iniquity from Jacob, says Jehovah. And this is the covenant, which I make with them, says Jehovah: My Spirit, which is upon you, And my words, which I have put in your mouth; They shall not depart from your mouth, Nor from the mouth of your seed, Nor from the mouth of your seed's seed, says Jehovah; From this time forth for ever." (Isaiah 59:1-21,Lowth)

In the 58th chapter we have the direct word of the Lord to whomsoever will hear, telling them to show His people their transgressions; in this chapter we have evidently the inspired word of the prophet, complying with that injunction.

The prophet now, in the name of the Lord, sets before the people who are encased in their self-righteousness the exact state of their case, and it is by no means a pleasant picture to contemplate. A more terrible indictment it would be hard to find, and the awfulness is increased by the knowledge of the fact that it states nothing but the truth. Let no one say, "It does not mean me; I am sure that I am not guilty of any of the things here set forth."

The prophet Isaiah classes himself in with the rest and acknowledges himself a sinner. The prophet Daniel, of whom we read nothing but good in the Bible, confessed himself to be guilty of all the sins that had led to the captivity of Israel. See his prayer in Daniel 9:3-20. The best men in the world are they who confess themselves to be the greatest sinners and who trust in the mercy of God.

God's Readiness to Hear

"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear." (Isaiah 59:1-2)

Note carefully the difference in Lowth's rendering of the second verse, from the ordinary version. Our version incorrectly says, that the Lord "will not hear;" whereas the text simply states the reason why the Lord does not hear.

"But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, that He does not hear." (Isaiah 59:2,Lowth)

His ear is not dull, but the sharpest ear cannot hear under certain conditions; and the conditions here are that no sound comes to the ears of the Lord. There is no real prayer for pardon, and therefore nothing for the Lord to hear. The reason why the Lord does not hear is stated in the third verse: "For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue has muttered perverseness." (Isaiah 59:3)

It is but a repetition of what is stated in:

"And when you spread forth your hands, I will hide my eyes from you: yea, when you make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood." (Isaiah 1:15)

The hands are polluted with blood and the fingers with iniquity, and the lips speak falsehood. All that the Lord has to give is life,--life that includes everything. Christ came to this world for no other purpose than to give life.

"The thief comes not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." (John 10:10)

There is no other thing for which we need to pray to the Lord, except for life. But when one professedly prays to the Lord for life, and at the same time destroys life, he shows that there is no sincerity in his prayer; his words are no words at all. The difficulty is not with the Lord's ear, but with the words of the one praying. The actions destroy the words.

The Lord will hear every sincere prayer. He hears every cry, every sigh for deliverance. "For He has looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from Heaven did the Lord behold the earth; To hear the sighing of the prisoner; to loose the children of death." (Psalm 102:19-20,RV,margin) "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." (Psalm 12:5)

There is no inarticulate sigh for deliverance, that is too faint for the Lord to hear, for He is listening to hear, and He understands the language of the mute earth; but the loudest prayers, couched in the most polished language, when they proceed from an insincere heart, are in His ears nothing but a confused noise.

All Are Guilty

The hasty reader of this chapter will think that it is addressed to the most degraded people on the earth; but the fact is that it is addressed to the professed Christian church. It is not alone Great Babylon, in which are found "slaves and souls of men," (Revelation 18:13) that is addressed here, but the church which is represented by one of the stars in the right hand of Christ, and which says, "I am rich, and increased with goods, [knowing not that it is] wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." (Revelation 3:17)

The indictment is against the self-righteous, whose ways are outwardly so correct that they think that they have no lack. The proof of this is found in a comparison of this chapter with the first three chapters of Romans. The 1st chapter of the book sets forth the sins of the heathen, who in their blindness bow down to wood and stone. The 2nd chapter begins with a home thrust, "You are inexcusable, O man, whosoever you are that judges: for wherein you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you that judge do the same things." (Romans 2:1)

We pass on through the 2nd chapter and into the 3rd, through a comparison of the heathen with the professed followers of the Lord, until we come to the conversation, which contains a quotation from the chapter of Isaiah which we are studying: "What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise; for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; 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. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways:

And the way of peace they have not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes."
(Romans 3:9-18; Isaiah 59:3-8)

The same fountain cannot send forth at the same time both sweet water and bitter; therefore when we read that their mouth is full of bitterness, we know that no real prayer comes forth for the Lord to hear.

Self-Righteous Ignorance

But someone will say, "I know that I do not do any of the things here charged."

A more exact statement would be, "I do not know that I do any of these things."

That is why the Lord says, "show my people their transgressions." (Isaiah 58:1)

If they knew them, there would be no need to show them. But the case is so urgent that the command is, "Cry aloud." (Isaiah 58:1)

The one danger of all mankind is self-righteousness. The one need of all men is to recognize the righteousness of God in Christ as the only real righteousness, and the only thing in which there is everlasting life.

The danger of professed Christians, even of those who have known the saving power of the Lord, is of forgetting their absolute dependence upon God, and in thinking that they have attained something by their own goodness, or that they can go on by the power which they acknowledge they received from the Lord, but which they think that they have so made their own that they can dispense with any further gift from Him.

Men never put the case to themselves in that way; if they did they would not be deceived; but that is in effect the way in which the professed followers of the Lord fall into grievous sin.

Only One Gospel for All

This chapter, taken in connection with its use in the New Testament, shows us that there is only one Gospel--only one line of preaching--for all men, no matter what their

profession, or if they make none. The very same Gospel that saves the man of the world, is that which must be preached continually to the church of Christ, in order not only to reclaim wanderers, but to retain the faithful ones.

The first thing to be preached to the sinner who needs salvation from his sins, is Christ the Saviour, and he can never get beyond that need. "He shall save His people from their sins;" (Matthew 1:21) and that which saves them from the guilt of their sins, is that which keeps them from falling into them again. Throughout the endless ages of eternity, it will be the cross of Christ, and nothing else, that will keep the redeemed saints in glory. Therefore, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Galatians 6:14)

Let no one who calls himself a Christian complain of any minister of the Gospel, that: "He preaches to us just as though we were sinners."

If he does not do that, he is not a faithful minister of Christ. The Christian who is alive and growing in grace and in the knowledge of Christ, (2 Peter 3:18) will never make such a complaint. Whoever makes it, and we have often heard it, shows that he is unconsciously in the greatest possible danger.

Vain Confidence: Self-Deception

The people here referred to are those who are "trusting in vanity," (Isaiah 59:4) instead of in God. They are the self-righteous ones of Romans 2 and 3, who are equally sinful with the heathen. "How?" says one; "I have never murdered anybody, and I never swore in my life, and I never worshiped an idol."

To be sure, the self-righteous man never thinks that he has committed the gross sins of the common sinner. If he did, he would not be self-righteous. That is just why the loud cry has to be given, to arouse him from his stupefied condition.

Let us examine the case for a minute, and we need not single out any individual, but take the first man we come to. That is, each one may put the questions to himself: "Have you always honored the life that God has given you, and used it to the very best advantage? Have you never wasted it in any way whatever?"

We are obliged to plead guilty. Then we are guilty of murder; we have taken life that did not belong to us; we have shed innocent blood. There is no middle ground; he who does not actively love the Lord, hates Him; so he who receives the life of the Lord,--the blood of Christ,--and does not use it to His glory, but wastes it, is guilty of the blood of the Lord; and what worse case of murder could there possibly be?

Do we need after this to go into particulars with the other commandments? We need not ask, "Have you never used the name of the Lord unnecessarily?" but only, "Have you as a professed Christian never done or thought a thing that was in the least degree contrary to the perfection of the life of Christ?"

Everybody knows that he has done many things that were dishonoring to the Lord. Then he has taken the name of the Lord in vain. And just as surely as we have ever consulted our own pleasure or ease before the glory of God, have we had other gods before Him.

And so we might go on through the whole of the commandments, and prove all the world, both sinner and professed saint, guilty before God,--guilty of the grossest crimes.

Christ the Only Hope

"Who then can be saved?" (Matthew 19:25)

The answer is straight and plain: Nobody can be saved, if he trusts in his own righteousness, but trusting in the righteousness of Christ, there is salvation for all. "And He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore His arm brought salvation unto Him; and His righteousness, it sustained Him. ... For He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation upon His head; and He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke." (Isaiah 59:1,17)

No man can weave a garment that is anything more than a filthy rag; it cannot cover him. "Of their webs no garment shall be made; neither shall they cover themselves with their works." (Isaiah 59:6,Lowth)

God has wrought works, and made a garment that is amply sufficient to cover the whole human race; but of this garment we shall speak more particularly when we come to the 61st chapter.

Plundering the Righteous: A Severe Test

"He that departs from evil makes himself a prey [or, "exposes himself to be plundered"]." (Isaiah 59:15)

Space will not permit anything more than a very direct comment upon this. Competition is very keen in this world, especially in these days. It is the case, which everyone will recognize, that the man who is conscientious is cut off from many ways of "making money," that are successfully adopted by the unscrupulous.

But this is not all: the strictly honest man in business stands a great chance of having his business taken from him by his unscrupulous neighbors in the same line. There are, in some places, at least, certain lines of business, legitimate enough in themselves, in which corrupt dealing is so prevalent, that the man who does not put his conscience in his pocket, and "do as the rest do," cannot "succeed."

Neither is this all. The prophecy that we are studying applies to the last days, and inasmuch as the coming of the Lord is near, the injunction is to cry aloud, and not spare to show God's people their sins, but to declare His whole truth. Accordingly the Sabbath truth, which has been so long forgotten, is presented in chapters 56 and 58. To what does the business man expose himself if he begins to keep God's holy day instead of Satan's counterfeit? We hear the answer continually: "If I should keep the Sabbath, I should lose my place," or, "I should have to give up my business."

Even with regard to the Sunday, we have it constantly reiterated that a law is necessary, to compel all to keep the day, in order that those who wish to keep it may not lose their situations or their business. How much more, then, must it be the case that he who keeps the Sabbath of the Lord, contrary to human law and custom, exposes himself to be plundered? We have no picture of ease and prosperity in this world, as this world counts prosperity, to hold before the one to whom we declare the whole counsel of God.

The time will yet come when a decree will go forth, that whoever will keep the Sabbath of the Lord instead of the Sunday of the apostate church, shall be killed; (Revelation 13:16-17) and that will be the test: whether men can trust God's promise of life, in the face of man's threat of death.

The Power That Delivers

"And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, says the Lord.

God is the Saviour of His people. Though He bears long with the ways of men, His long-suffering is salvation. He does not forget. The Deliverer shall turn away ungodliness from Israel. But the salvation of the righteous means the destruction of the ungodly. "According to their deeds, accordingly He will repay, fury to His adversaries, recompence to His enemies; to the islands He will repay recompence." (Isaiah 59:18) "He that believes, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16)

This is the Gospel message, and one part is just as true as the other. Yea, "He that believes not is condemned already." (John 3:18)

The cross of Christ, in which alone there is salvation, and which is the revelation of God's love to man, has in it the destruction of sinners; for it was only because Christ was made to be sin for us, (2 Corinthians 5:21) and was reckoned among the transgressors, (Luke 22:37) that He hung on the cross. Therefore all who do not die in Christ on the cross, accepting Him as their Saviour, must be slain by that cross in their own person, without any hope of salvation. "When He shall come, like a river straightened in his course, which a strong wind drives along." (Isaiah 59:19,Lowth)

The salvation of God is like a mighty river, rushing along between narrow banks, and driven by a strong wind. So powerful is the Lord to carry away the ungodly: but His power to destroy the sinners at the last day, is but His power to destroy sin in us at this present time.

So we see that it makes no difference with the facts, whether we read verse 19 as in Lowth and in the Revision, or, as in the common version, "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." (Isaiah 59:19)

The truth set forth is that the Lord will sweep away sin and sinners as with a flood, and that flood is the stream of life from the throne of God. It is, indeed, the Spirit of God, which the new covenant, made with "the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah" (Jeremiah 31:31; Hebrews 8:8) at the coming of the Lord, insures to every believer as his possession throughout the generations of eternity.

In the midst of wrath God remembers mercy, (Habakkuk 3:2; In wrath remember mercy) because the wrath which destroys the wicked is but the rejected mercy of the Lord, which endures for ever.--Present Truth, May 10, 1900--Isaiah 59:1-21.

The Restoration of Zion

"Arise, shine; for your light is come, And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth, And gross darkness the peoples: But the Lord shall arise upon you, And His glory shall be seen upon you. And nations shall come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising. Lift up your eyes round about, and see: They all gather themselves together, they come to you; Your sons shall come from far, And your daughters shall be carried in the arms. Then you shall see and be lightened, And your heart shall tremble and be enlarged; Because the abundance of the sea shall be turned unto you, And the wealth of the nations shall come unto you. The multitude of camels shall cover you, The dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; They all shall come from Sheba; They shall bring gold and frankincense, And shall proclaim the praises of the Lord. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto you, The rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto you; They shall come up with acceptance on my altar, And I will glorify the house of my glory. Who are these that fly as a cloud, And as the doves to their windows? Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, To bring your sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, For the name of the Lord your God, and for the Holy One of Israel, For He has glorified you. And strangers shall build up your walls, And their kings shall minister unto you; For in my wrath I smote you, But in my favor have I had mercy on you. Your gates also shall be open continually; They shall not be shut day nor night; That men may bring unto you the wealth of the nations, And their kings led with them. For that nation and kingdom that will not serve you shall perish; Yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted. The glory of Lebanon shall come unto you, The fir tree, the pine, and the box tree together; And I will make the place of my feet glorious. And the sons of them that afflicted you shall come bending unto you; And all them that despised you shall bow themselves down at the soles of your feet; And they shall call you, The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas you have been forsaken and hated, So that no man passed through you, I will make you an eternal excellency, A joy of many generations. You shall also suck the milk of the nations, And shall suck the breast of kings; And you shall know that I the Lord am your Saviour, And your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, And for wood brass, and for stones iron; I will also make your officers peace, And all your exactors righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in your land, Desolation nor destruction within your

borders; But you shall call your walls Salvation, And your gates Praise. 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. Your sun shall no more go down, Neither shall your moon withdraw itself; For the Lord shall be your everlasting light, And the days of your mourning shall be ended. 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. The little one shall become a thousand, And the small one a great nation; I the Lord will hasten it in its time." (Isaiah 60:1-22,RV)

In reading this chapter, a few things, to which attention has already been called many times, should be borne in mind.

1. Whenever reference is unmistakably made to the city of Jerusalem, as in parts of this chapter, it must be remembered that the city is nothing without the inhabitants. When the city is spoken of as rejoicing, we know that it is the people in the city that rejoice. A city is built up only by the accession of inhabitants.
2. These prophecies were given many years before the Babylonian captivity. At the close of that captivity full liberty was given for every Jew to return to his own land, and no means was withheld, that was necessary to enable them to return; therefore every part of the prophecy that can be thought of as referring merely to temporal things, was fulfilled long ago. That is, it has been fulfilled as far as mere temporal inheritance could do it.
3. It is most obvious that there are things promised not only in this chapter but also in other places, which have never yet been fulfilled. Moreover, it is plain that these things can be fulfilled only by an everlasting inheritance. This is a prophecy that refers to the last days, and its fulfillment will be accomplished only by the coming of the Lord, and the restoration of all things.

God Fulfills All His Promises

4. Above all, must one common error be avoided. It is very common to hear expositors say of certain things that have not been fulfilled, that God made them

on certain conditions, and that, the conditions not having been met, the fulfillment of the promises could not be expected. Such exposition is a libel upon God. Never in the world has God made a promise that He will not fulfil in good time. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise." (2 Peter 3:9) "If we are faithless, He abides faithful; for He cannot deny himself." (2 Timothy 2:13)

Even though every man should be unfaithful, and should reject the promise, His promise would hold good, for He would of the very stones make faithful children, who would accept the offers of mercy. "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)

God is not dependent upon any man for the fulfillment of His promises; and no person either in this world or in the world to come will ever be able to taunt God with having in any instance failed to keep His word, nor will there ever be the slightest opportunity for doubt to creep into a loyal heart, in view of an unfulfilled promise. Whatever God has promised, "He is able also to perform:" (Romans 4:21) and whatever God is able to do, He will do for the salvation of men.

The Word that Gives Life and Strength

"Arise!" (Isaiah 60:1)

That is, "Stand up!" Compare this with the words in connection with the miracles recorded in: "And He came and touched the bier: and they that bore him stood still. And He said, Young man, I say unto you, Arise." (Luke 7:14) "And He put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise." (Luke 8:54)

To the young man who was being carried to burial, and to the little girl just dead, Christ said, "Arise," and they both stood up, alive. Peter said to the lame man at the gate of the temple, who had never walked, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk," (Acts 3:6) and immediately he walked and leaped. In like manner Paul said to the other man, "who never had walked:" ... Stand upright on your feet. And he leaped and walked." (Acts 14:8,10)

This is the word which is addressed to us in this lesson. The very first word is the word that raises the dead, and makes the helpless walk. Whoever has faith to be healed, whoever hears this word in faith, will find in the study of this chapter a life that he never before has known. "Awake, you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine upon you." (Ephesians 5:14)

Let There Be Light

"Shine!" (Isaiah 60:1)

Yes, "Arise, and shine." Why? "For your Light is come." (Isaiah 60:1)

Because Christ shall shine upon you. Nay, more; the light has come, "and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you." (Isaiah 60:1)

Here again we have the word of creation. Although the word used in this instance is not the same as that used in the 1st chapter of Genesis, that makes no difference; the fact is that here we have the same command as in: "God said, Let there be light; and there was light." (Genesis 1:3)

In the beginning, when there was nothing about this earth but darkness, without a single ray of light, God said, "Be light," and instantly light was. The very darkness sent forth light. "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 4:6)

He is the Light, (John 1:9) and "The light shines in the darkness; and the darkness overcame it not." (John 1:5,RV,margin)

Therefore He can turn our darkness into light. Have we not had the promise? "Then shall your light break forth as the morning; ... then shall your light rise in obscurity, and your darkness be as the noonday." (Isaiah 58:8,10)

It is the God who creates, who is speaking to us here. If we remember Him as the Creator of the heavens and the earth, we shall know the power by which the worlds were made, and by which the dead are raised. This is true Sabbath-keeping.

Lights in the World

"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 60:2)

When Moses came down from the mountain, after having been in close communion with the Lord, talking with Him face to face, his face shone. It was not merely that it was bright, but it gave off rays of light; light beamed forth from it for the benefit of others, if they were willing to receive it. That was but an illustration of what God wishes all His people to be: Light-bearers. "You are the light of the world." (Matthew 5:14)

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

So we are exhorted to "Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That you may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom you shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the Word of life." (Philippians 2:14-16)

The life is the light of men, and it is a most wonderful thought that this glorious light of God is to be made manifest in mortal flesh, (2 Corinthians 4:11) so that those who sit enshrouded in the gross darkness of this world are to receive "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God," (2 Corinthians 4:6) by seeing it in His humble followers. Surely it is high time to heed the command, "Arise, shine!" (Isaiah 60:1)

Real Life: The Light of Life the Light of the World

That this is not imaginary light, that shines from the faithful followers of Christ, is evident from what appears later on in the chapter, as well as from other scriptures. Of the city, when it shall be filled with its children, we read that it "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)

Compare with: "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. Your sun shall no more go down; neither shall your moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning shall be ended." (Isaiah 60:19-20)

The light which shines from God is actual light, far above the shining of the sun, for it is from Him that the sun gets all the light that it has; therefore when His people are as subject to His will as the sun is, they will also shine with real light. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." (Matthew 13:43) "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." (Daniel 12:3) "Now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be." (1 John 3:2)

That is, the light that will shine forth from the bodies of the saints, is not yet made manifest, therefore the world knows them not, even as it knew not Christ; nevertheless the life which is manifested in those who are wholly the Lord's is the very same light that shines from the face of the Lord, the same that illuminates the earth. "And the Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. Lift up your eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to you: your sons shall come from far, and your daughters shall be nursed at your side. Then you shall see, and flow together, and your heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto you, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto you. The multitude of camels shall cover you, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall show forth the praises of the Lord. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto you, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto you: they shall come up with acceptance on my altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory. Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows? Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring your sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord your God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because He has glorified you." (Isaiah 60:3-9)

Not all will veil their faces from it; no shining is in vain, no matter how obscure the place in which the life is manifested; for the Gentiles, the heathen, the nations of the

earth, will come to the light when it is allowed to shine forth unhindered, and even kings will come to enquire about it.

It is true that the coming of the wise men from the east at the birth of Christ was in fulfillment of this prophecy; but we must not imagine that this occurrence exhausted it. That was only a sample of what shall be done when Christ is fully formed in all His people. There are many kings and rulers in so-called heathen lands, who have great power and influence, and many of these will yet be seen enquiring the way of life.

The Building Up of Zion

"Strangers shall build up your walls." (Isaiah 60:10)

This is but another statement of the fact that the kingdom of Israel is to be built up by the coming in of the people of all the different nations of earth. The calling of the Gentiles is the means by which the ruins of the house of David are to be built up. "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, who does all these things." (Acts 15:16-17; Amos 9:11-12)

Those who were once "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world, ... are brought nigh by the blood of Christ," (Ephesians 2:12-13) so that they are "no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together grows into a holy temple in the Lord." (Ephesians 2:19-21)

These, coming to Christ the Living Stone, are made into living stones, and "are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable unto God by Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 2:5)

So it is written, "Him that overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out." (Revelation 3:12)

Thus will the walls of Jerusalem, the holy city, be built up. The grand work is even now going forward; who will form a part of the grand structure?

Glorifying His House

"I will make the place of my feet glorious." (Isaiah 60:13)

Read again the scripture that has so frequently been referred to in these lessons, namely, Zechariah 14:3-8, which tells us that at the time of the last great battle the Lord shall go forth to fight against the nations that are opposed to Jerusalem (verse 3), and that His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, and it shall become a great plain (verse 4), in which the city with its living waters shall stand (verse 8). Read also verses 6-9 in connection with the chapter we are studying. "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: But it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light. And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and His name one." (Zechariah 14:6-9)

This, together with Revelation 21, will serve to fix the application of the chapter. Verse 8 is specially comforting when read in connection with the Scriptures which show that God's people are "builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." (Ephesians 2:22)

In Isaiah 57:15 we read that God dwells with the lowly, and at the same time, "in the high and holy place." (Isaiah 57:15)

His presence in dust animates it; when He dwells with the lowly one, He sets him on high; and when He is allowed to dwell in the meanest and most debased soul, He glorifies it. "I will glorify the house of my glory." (Isaiah 60:7)

Our part is but to be willing and submissive; God's part is to give grace and glory, (Psalm 84:11) and strength according to the riches of His glory. (Ephesians 3:16) "The Lord God is a sun and shield." (Psalm 84:11)

This we see from: "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. Your sun shall no more go down; neither shall your moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning shall be ended." (Isaiah 60:19-20)

The sun of the city of God will never go down, night nor day, because the Lord will be its everlasting light. The sun will shine as it does now, only with greatly increased light, (Isaiah 30:26) but in the city of God it will not be needed, since the greater light of God himself will shine there day and night. (Revelation 21:23)

A Righteous Nation

"Your people also shall all be 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)

Thus we see that the consummation of the shining of God's people is the "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness." (2 Peter 3:13)

That is the consummation, but the beginning must be now, in the midst of the darkness of this present evil world. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day." (Proverbs 4:18)

- The powers of the world to come must be manifested in this present world;
- The light of the new earth must be seen on the old earth;
- The salvation and praise that will be the protection of the holy city when the assault is made upon it by the hosts of evil must now be manifested; and
- The righteousness that will dwell in the new earth must exist here and now in all its fullness.

This will be the case by power of Him who can make a little one a strong nation, and who in His faithfulness will do it. "A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his time." (Isaiah 60:22) "And the very

God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calls you, who also will do it." (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24)--Present Truth, May 17, 1900--Original title: The Restoration of Zion / Glory of the New Creation--Isaiah 60:1-22.

The Clothing Which God Gives

"The Spirit of Jehovah is upon me, Because Jehovah has anointed me. To publish glad tidings to the meek has He sent me; To bind up the broken-hearted: To proclaim to the captives freedom; And to the bounden, perfect liberty: To proclaim the year of acceptance with Jehovah; And the day of vengeance of our God. To comfort all those that mourn; To impart [gladness] to the mourners of Sion: To give them a beautiful crown, instead of ashes; The oil of gladness instead of sorrow; The clothing of praise, instead of the spirit of heaviness. That they may be called trees approved; The plantation of Jehovah for His glory. And they that spring from you shall build up the ruins of old times; They shall restore the ancient desolations: They shall repair the cities laid waste; The desolations of continued ages. And strangers shall stand up and feed your flocks; And the sons of the alien shall be your husbandmen and vinedressers. But you shall be called the priests of Jehovah; The ministers of our God, shall be your title. The riches of the nations shall you eat; And in the glory shall you make your boast. Instead of your shame, you shall receive a double inheritance; And of your ignominy, you shall rejoice in their portion: For in their land, a double share shall you inherit; And everlasting gladness shall you possess. For I am Jehovah, who love judgment; Who hate rapine and iniquity: And I will give them the reward of their work with faithfulness; And an everlasting covenant will I make with them: And their seed shall be illustrious among the nations; And their offspring, in the midst of the peoples. And they that see them shall acknowledge them, That they are a seed which Jehovah has blessed. I will greatly rejoice in Jehovah; My soul shall exult in my God. For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation; He has covered me with the mantle of righteousness: As the bridegroom decks himself with a priestly crown; And as the bride adorns herself with her costly jewels. Surely, as the earth pushes forth her tender shoots; And as a garden makes her seed to germinate: So shall the Lord Jehovah cause righteousness to spring forth; And praise, in the presence of all the nations." (Isaiah 61:1-11, Lowth)

This is one of the shortest chapters in Isaiah, yet it is one of the fullest in Gospel instruction and comfort. We need not spend any time in noting when it applies, for all that has been said of preceding chapters, and of the entire book, applies here as well; moreover, the fact that Jesus in the synagogue in Nazareth, after reading a portion of this chapter, said, "This day is the scripture fulfilled in your ears," (Luke 4:21) shows

that it reached as far as the time of His first advent; and if it was applicable then, how much more now. God has not withdrawn His Spirit of Comfort from the Son, and therefore He is still clothed with the Spirit, "to comfort all that mourn." (Isaiah 61:2)

While there are many things in the chapter that might well claim all our attention, let us spend the most of our time and space in considering the covering which God provides for all people who will receive it.

A Change of Raiment

In two verses of this chapter is this clothing spoken of, namely, the 3rd and the 10th. The anointed of the Lord is commissioned to proclaim that God has provided "the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;" (Isaiah 61:3) and the prophet breaks forth: 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)

Suppose we put a few other texts by the side of these, and then see what they teach us. "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity and in whose spirit there is no guile." (Psalm 32:1-20 "What says the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that works is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that works not, but believes on Him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describes the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputes righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." (Romans 4:2-8) "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified [made righteous] freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." (Romans 3:20-24) "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." (Zechariah 3:1-5) "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." (Isaiah 64:6)

What have we in these texts? Simply this: that all men are by nature sinful; their nature is sin; they are not only covered with sin, but are filled with it. "Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works." (Isaiah 59:4)

Their best works are full of imperfection, and provide no covering. "Every man at his best state is altogether vanity." (Psalm 39:5)

But God's works endure for ever, since they are all done in righteousness, and He has wrought a covering for all men, even the garment of His own righteous life,--the garment of salvation,--for we are "saved by His life." (Romans 5:10) "[God] covers himself with light, as with a garment." (Psalm 104:2)

In the statement that "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," (Romans 3:23) we learn that the glory of God--the light that surrounds Him--is His own perfect life. Righteousness is glory, even though it is not now so recognized among men; for in the world to come, when everything will appear just as it really is, "The righteous will shine forth as the sun." (Matthew 13:43)

Therefore we know that man's original clothing was the light of the glory of God, and that this was lost and it became necessary to provide manufactured clothing for him only when he sinned. Our clothes are but the mark of the curse; and the fact that we must wear manufactured clothing is a constant sign that our bodies are still unredeemed from the curse. The more gay and pronounced is one's clothing, the more is the shame of the curse emphasized.

Our present clothing of the body is nothing to be proud of, but rather something to cause shame. Thank God that it is not to last for ever.

The Clothing of the Life: Clothing that Grows

We have already seen, from the text quoted, that the exchanging of the filthy garment for the clean raiment is the taking away of all iniquity. "The fine linen, clean and white ... is the righteousness of saints." (Revelation 19:8)

But this righteousness of God through the faith of Jesus Christ, is put into, as well as upon, all them that believe. (Romans 3:22) And this brings us to the heart of the matter-the way the clothing of the saints is prepared. The covering is the glory-the righteousness--of God, and the glory of God is seen upon His people simply because it is put into them. Remember that God is clothed "with light, as with a garment," (Psalm 104:2) because He himself is light. His clothing is His life, and that proceeds from within, from the heart. We are clothed with the garment of salvation only when the salvation of God is within us, that is, when we are saved from the sins of our inmost being. Then we have an armor that none of Satan's weapons can pierce. When "truth [is] in the inward parts," (Psalm 51:6) "[it is a] shield and buckler." (Psalm 91:4)

The lions did not hurt Daniel, because innocency was found in him; (Daniel 6:22) it was impossible that Christ should be held by the grave, (Acts 2:24) because "[He] knew no sin;" (2 Corinthians 5:21) and it was this righteousness in the heart, filling His entire being, that made Him master of the winds and the waves, as well as of wild beasts and men.

Now we can see the intimate connection of verses 10 and 11, and the force of the word "for," with which the 11th verse begins: "My soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garment of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness. ... For as the earth brings forth her bud, and as the garden causeth 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 61:10-11)

God's people are clothed with righteousness and salvation just as the earth is clothed with verdure. "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; ... For the earth brings forth fruit of herself," (Mark 4:26,28) that is, automatically. We have all seen automatons, self-acting machines, and have wondered at the perfection of their movement, but have known that the power to move did not

originate in them. So the earth brings forth fruit spontaneously, moved by the indwelling word which was planted in the beginning, when God said, "Let the earth bring forth." (Genesis 1:11)

So the incorruptible seed, the engrafted Word, abiding in the souls of men, regenerates, produces a new life, which is a covering of glory.

The Garment of Praise

This clothing of salvation and righteousness is at the same time "the garment of praise." (Isaiah 61:3)

Compare verse 3 with: "The garment of salvation." (Isaiah 61:10)

There can be no righteousness, no salvation, where there is not praise. "The kingdom of God is ... righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." (Romans 14:17)

The anointing with the Holy Ghost is the anointing with "the oil of gladness." (Psalm 45:7)

The walls of Zion are Salvation, and her gates are Praise. (Isaiah 60:18) "God compasses His people about with songs of deliverance." (Psalm 32:7)

Indeed, it is by praise and thanksgiving that we appropriate the salvation that God gives. "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." (Philippians 4:6)

God says: "Whoso offers the sacrifice of thanksgiving glorifies me, and prepares a way that I may show him the salvation of God." (Psalm 50:23,RV,margin)

The walls of Jericho fell only when Israel shouted victory, (Joshua 6:16,20) and it was when Israel, going out to meet the enemy that vastly outnumbered them, began to sing and to "praise the beauty of holiness, ... [That] the Lord set ambushments" (2 Chronicles 20:21-22) against their enemies and utterly destroyed them. It is with singing that "The ransomed of the Lord ... return, and come to Zion." (Isaiah 35:10)

They come "with ... everlasting joy upon their heads;" (Isaiah 35:10) and this joy is the gladness that springs up in the heart at the knowledge of God's wondrous salvation.

How Real Clothing Grows

It is perfectly in keeping with the thought of the chapter, that God's people should be clothed with the garments of praise and salvation, and covered with the robe of righteousness just as the earth brings forth her bud, since they are "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified." (Isaiah 61:3)

The spring has just come, and the illustration is fresh before our eyes, as we see the bare and seemingly dead trees, and the naked earth suddenly clothed with beautiful garments. Whence came this robe of living green? It came from within. The life power within manifested itself outwardly. "The life was manifested, and we have seen it," (1 John 1:2) even in animate nature. The tree is clothed with the life that is in it; the life of the good seed--the Word of God--planted in the earth, clothes it with garments of glory and beauty. Even so is Jerusalem to put on her beautiful garments. "Awake, awake; put on your strength, O Zion; put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into you the uncircumcised and the unclean." (Isaiah 52:1)

Speaking of the lilies, Christ said: "Even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you?" (Matthew 6:29-30)

Christ says to us, "Why do you worry about something wherewith to clothe the body, when your Heavenly Father, who knows all your needs, not only provides this everyday clothing, that soon wears out, but supplies us with clothing far superior to that of Solomon."

Notice: Christ says that God will much more clothe us than the grass of the field; but the clothing of the grass of the field far excels all the glory of Solomon's dress; therefore we learn that God will clothe us even as He does the lily,--with garments that grow from the inner life,--but with a far more glorious dress. "The righteous shall shine forth as the sun," (Matthew 13:43) "[Even] as the stars for ever and ever." (Daniel 12:3)

The only question is, "Would we rather be clothed with God's righteousness than to walk naked?" Because you say, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: 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 do not appear; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see." (Revelation 3:17-18)

Yet a few words more must be devoted to this wonderful chapter. Note that it is the poor to whom this glad tidings is announced. How fitting that the poor should be clothed! They are set free from prison, and given new clothing, and sent on their way rejoicing. "He has sent me ... to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." (Isaiah 61:1)

Literally, "He has sent me to cry to the captives, 'Liberty!' and to the bound, 'Deliverance!'"

The Hebrew word rendered "liberty" means, "a swift flight, a wheeling," as of a bird that flies in circles, wheeling in flight through the air, and hence is the term for the swallow. There can be no more perfect picture of absolute freedom than a swallow flying through the air, and this is just the freedom that Christ proclaims to all men. Everyone who will, may be as free as a bird; free from sin and everything that is a hindrance to perfect service to God, and this freedom is ours to enjoy now. "Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler; the snare is broken, and we are escaped." (Psalm 124:7)

A Proclamation of Universal Liberty

Remember that this liberty is for all. The Lord sends His servant "to comfort all that mourn." (Isaiah 61:2)

The proclamation of liberty is to all that are bound. Christ has entered into the strong man's prison house and has bound the tyrant that had usurped authority over men, and has taken from him "all his armor wherein he trusted." (Luke 11:22) "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)

Every prison door is open; every chain is broken; the captive has only to arise, and loose himself from the bands of his neck. "Shake yourself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem: loose yourself from the bands of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion." (Isaiah 52:2)

In Christ every soul has been given power to break loose from every sin, every evil habit, every inherited or acquired evil, no matter what its nature. He has given us His own freedom, and when that is said, nothing more can be added. It is yours to claim by faith.

If you do not know the way out of the prison, even though the doors be open,--if you cannot find the door,--enquire of Christ, and He will reveal the way to you. He is the Way. (John 14:6) Accept Him in His fullness; study the perfection of the manifestation of His life; yield to it; and then "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free." (Galatians 5:1)

Who May Proclaim This Message?

One thing more,--the greatest of all,--and that is, "Who is anointed to proclaim this message of freedom?"

"Christ," you say. True; but it was a carpenter's son, himself a journeyman carpenter, who read the message to a company of His neighbors and acquaintances, and said: "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." (Luke 4:21)

He was sent by the Lord God with the message of freedom and comfort, and: "He whom God has sent speaks the words of God;" (John 3:34) and vice versa, everyone who has received the word of God is sent. God has "reconciled us to himself through Christ," (2 Corinthians 5:18,Douay-Rheims) and has "placed in us the word of reconciliation," (2 Corinthians 5:20,Douay-Rheims) so that we are ambassadors on behalf of Christ, as though God were beseeching by us instead of by Christ; so that we pray in Christ's stead, "be reconciled to God." (2 Corinthians 5:20,Douay-Rheims)

The anointing is by the Spirit of God, and everyone who turns at the reproofs of God, which are the way of life, (Proverbs 6:23) has the Spirit poured out upon him, and the words of God made known to him, (Proverbs 1:23) and is therefore sent with the message.

Remember also that these words were spoken to the Jews by the man Isaiah, nearly eight hundred years before Jesus read them in the synagogue at Nazareth; and they were spoken with burning lips, from a full heart. Isaiah was no actor, but felt every word that he uttered. He was not speaking something that meant nothing to him, and could not mean anything to anybody for hundreds of years. The soul liberty was for the people "in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah;" (Isaiah 1:1) and Isaiah, whose soul had been made joyful in God by the clothing of righteousness that he had received (Isaiah 61:10)--the purging of his sin, and the taking away of his iniquity,(Isaiah 6:7)--was commissioned to proclaim it. So is everyone who is willing to accept the anointing; for does not the message say to those who will hear, "You shall be named the Priests of the Lord: men shall call you the Ministers of our God?" (Isaiah 61:6)

Oh, it is glorious to be free, but that alone is small compared with the freedom to set others at liberty.--Present Truth, May 24, 1900--Isaiah 61:1-11.

God's Watchfulness and Solitude for His People

"For Sion's sake I will not keep silence; And for the sake of Jerusalem I will not rest: Until her righteousness break forth as a strong light; And her salvation, like a blazing torch. And the nations shall see your righteousness; And all the kings, your glory: And you shall be called by a new name, Which the mouth of Jehovah shall fix upon you. And you shall be a beautiful crown in the hand of Jehovah; And a royal diadem in the grasp of your God. No more shall it be said unto you, You forsaken! Neither to your land shall it be said any more, You desolate! But you shall be called, The object of my delight; And your land, The wedded matron: For Jehovah shall delight in you; And your land shall be joined in marriage. For as a young man weds a virgin, So shall your Restorer wed you: And as the bridegroom rejoices in his bride, So shall your God rejoice in you. Upon your walls, O Jerusalem, Have I set watchmen all the day; And all the night long they shall not keep silence. O you, that proclaim the name of Jehovah! Keep not silence yourselves, nor let Him rest in silence; Until He establish, and until He render, Jerusalem a praise in the earth. Jehovah has sworn by His right hand, and by His powerful arm: I will no more give your corn for food to your enemies; Nor shall the sons of the stranger drink your must, for which you have labored: But they, that reap the harvest, shall eat it and praise Jehovah; And they, that gather the vintage, shall drink it in my sacred courts. Pass, pass through the gates; prepare the way for the people! Cast up, cast up the causeway; clear it from the stones! Lift up on high a standard to the nations! Behold, Jehovah has thus proclaimed to the end of the earth: Say to the daughter of Sion, Lo your Saviour comes! Lo, His reward is with Him, and the recompense of His work before Him. And they shall be called, The holy people, the redeemed of Jehovah; And you shall be called, The much desired, The city unforsaken.

God's Relentless Effort

It is plainly to be seen that it is God who is speaking in this chapter.

"For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burns." (Isaiah 62:1)

It is He who says that He will not hold His peace, nor keep silence until the righteousness of His people--all Jerusalem--breaks forth as a strong light. When we consider this, what comfort we find in the words. God has charged himself with our case. He is interested in our behalf.

Now since God so earnestly desires our righteousness, and has said that He will not relax His efforts to that end, what is there on earth that can keep us from being righteous, if we are but willing? God is almighty, and "What He has promised, He is able also to perform." (Romans 4:21)

Let no one say that it is impossible to live without sin. "With God all things are possible." (Matthew 19:26)

Saved for Service

God saves us for service. He is not content with merely making us righteous, and so saving us, but He will have the righteousness shine forth for the enlightenment of others, and salvation go forth from His people, even as it does from himself. What will take place when all the people see the righteousness and the salvation which He brings to us? "Many shall see it and fear, and turn to the Lord." (Psalm 40:3) "And the Gentiles shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory: and you shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name." (Isaiah 62:2)

Compare this verse with: "To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knows saving he that receives it." (Revelation 2:17)

What intimate relationship and loving companionship this reveals! Two friends, who are much more than mere friends, often know each other by a name that is not known to others. It would be a breach of confidence, almost a sacrilege, if they used the name before others. It is a sign of their mutual love and confidence.

So God takes His people into intimate relationship with himself, and He so takes them not merely as a whole, but individually. He has a special name for each one, which is known only to Him and that one. His love is infinite, and therefore there is enough for each one. There will be no jealousy because another receives the same attention that we

do. How precious are His thoughts toward us! "The Lord takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the meek with salvation." (Psalm 149:4)

God's People Are His Crown

"You shall also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God." (Isaiah 62:3)

He will even make of them a crown of glory, and a royal diadem. Think of the exalted position to which God has determined to elevate His people: He will make them His crown of glory; they will be an adornment even to Him. What an incentive to walk worthy of the calling of God.

No Longer Forsaken

"You shall no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall your land any more be termed Desolate: but you shall be called Hephzibah ["My delight is in her"], and your land Beulah [Married]: for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married." (Isaiah 62:4)

How many people there are who are called Forsaken.

"Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God." (Psalm 3:2)

The devil has told many people that they have committed the unpardonable sin, and that God has forsaken them; and he has, sad to say, agents on earth, who repeat the words. But, "The Lord will not cast off for ever." (Lamentations 3:31) "He that comes to me, I will in no wise cast out." (John 6:37) "I will never leave you nor forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5)

Whoever is oppressed by the thought that God has forsaken him, may know that He has not; because the fact that he feels sad over the supposed casting off, is proof that he does not wish to be separate from God; and it is only man that can effect any such separation.

Thank God, the time is soon coming when there will be no possibility for anyone to call another Forsaken, for it will be apparent to all that God is in the midst of His people. But if we are ever to rejoice in God's salvation, we should do it now. God has not forsaken Zion. "But Zion said, The Lord has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget you. Behold, I have graven you upon the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me." (Isaiah 49:14-16)

Therefore, "Cry out and shout, you inhabitant of Zion; for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of you." (Isaiah 12:6)

The Work of the Watchmen

"I have set watchmen upon your walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: you that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, And give Him no rest, till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." (Isaiah 62:6-7)

Watchmen have been set on the walls of Zion by God himself. This is proof that He has not forsaken His people. It is the devil who would make people believe that God has forsaken them, because he knows that when they feel that they are out of God's care they fall an easy prey to him. But God says of His vineyard, His people, "Lest any hurt it I will keep it night and day." (Isaiah 27:3)

So the watchmen whom He appoints, and whose duty it is to sound the alarm of danger, and also to announce glad tidings of good things, are not to hold their peace day nor night. They are the ones who are to "make mention of the Lord," (Isaiah 62:6) that is, remind people of Him. To them He says: "Keep not silence yourselves, nor let Him rest in silence. Take no rest," "And give Him no rest, ... until He makes Jerusalem a praise in the whole earth," (Isaiah 62:7) until His people are saved, and made to dwell in the New Jerusalem, the capital of the new earth. How different God is from the unjust judge. "And He spoke a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of my adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within

himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; Yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:1-8)

The unjust judge did not wish to be disturbed; he did not wish to have anybody--poor people, at least--come to him with a plea for help. But God, on the contrary, begs us to come to Him, and make known our troubles and needs. "Come any time, come day or night; yea, come both day and night, and do not let there be a minute's intermission, but keep making requests, even demands, of me," is what God says. What a loving Father! Why will anybody be so distrustful as to go in want?--Present Truth, May 31, 1900--Isaiah 62:1-12.

The Mighty Saviour

"Chorus: Who is this, that comes from Edom? With garments deeply dyed from Botsra? This, that is magnificent in His apparel; Marching on in the greatness of His strength? messiah: I, who publish righteousness, and am mighty to save. Chorus: Wherefore is your apparel red? And your garments, as of one that treads the wine-vat? Messiah: I have trodden the vat alone: And of the peoples there was not a man with me. And I trod them in my anger; And I trampled them in my indignation: And their life-blood was sprinkled upon my garments; And I have stained all my apparel. For the day of vengeance was in my heart; And the year of my redeemed was come. And I looked, and there was no one to help; And I was astonished, that there was no one to uphold: Therefore my own arm wrought salvation for me, And my indignation itself sustained me. And I trod down the peoples in my anger; And I crushed them in my indignation; And I spilled their life-blood on the ground. The mercies of Jehovah will I record, the praise of Jehovah; According to all that Jehovah has bestowed upon us: And the greatness of His goodness to the house of Israel; Which He has bestowed upon them, through His tenderness and great kindness. For He said: Surely they are my people, children that will not prove false; And He became their Saviour in all their distress. It was not an envoy, nor an angel of His presence, that saved them; Through His love, and His indulgence, He himself redeemed them; And He took them up, and He bore them, all the days of old. But they rebelled, and grieved His Holy Spirit; So that He became their enemy; and He fought against them. And He remembered the days of old, Moses His servant; How He brought them up from the sea, with the Shepherd of His flock: How He placed in his breast His Holy Spirit: Making His glorious arm to attend Moses on his right hand in his march; Cleaving the waters before them, to make himself a name everlasting; Leading them through the abyss, like a courser in the plain, without obstacle. As the herd descends to the valley, the Spirit of Jehovah conducted them: So did You lead your people, to make yourself a name illustrious. Look down from heaven, and see, from your holy and glorious dwelling: Where is your zeal, and your mighty power; The yearning of your bowels, and your tender affections? are they restrained from us? Verily, You are our Father; for Abraham knows us not, And Israel does not acknowledge us. You, O Jehovah, are our Father: O deliver us for the sake of your name! Wherefore, O Jehovah, do You suffer us to err from your ways? To harden our hearts from the fear of You? Return for the sake of your servants; For the sake of the

tribes of your inheritance. It is little, that they have taken possession of your holy mountain; That our enemies have trodden down your sanctuary: We have long been as those, whom You have not ruled; Who have not been called by your name." (Isaiah 63:1-19,Lowth)

The Angel of His Presence

The student certainly cannot fail to be struck with the life and energy of Lowth's translation of this chapter. It will be noticed that the responsive portion is made very clear by the way in which it is presented to the eye. A chorus of voices is represented as asking the questions, and that Christ is the One who answers them there cannot be the slightest doubt. "It was not an envoy, nor an angel of His presence, that saved them; through His love, and His indulgence, He himself redeemed them; and He took them up, and He bore them, all the days of old." (Isaiah 63:9,Lowth) "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,KJV)

Verse 9 is translated so entirely different from the ordinary rendering, which is so well known, and which has given so much comfort to so many, that a few words of explanation are demanded. The difference is due simply to the fact that in this instance Lowth has followed the Septuagint, and not the Hebrew. Which is more in harmony with the original text, cannot be decided; but the close student will see that the verse as here translated is no less comforting than in our ordinary English versions, and that the two amount to the same thing in the end.

The idea is that it was not to an angel standing in God's presence, no matter how near, that the salvation of Israel was committed, but that God himself took up their case, and bore them. He himself was their Saviour. This is of course Gospel truth, in perfect harmony with what is expressed in the words of Paul, spoken to the elders of Ephesus, concerning "the church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood." (Acts 20:28)

In support of the thought conveyed by the rendering of the Septuagint, it may be noted that after God had said to Moses, "Behold, I send an Angel before you, to keep you in the way, to bring you into the place which I have prepared," (Exodus 23:20)

Moses said, "See, You say unto me, Bring up this people; and You have not let me know whom You will send with me," (Exodus 33:12) and God replied, "My presence [literally, "My face"] shall go with you, and I will give you rest." (Exodus 33:14)

The student will find profit and comfort in both translations, and need not trouble his mind as to which is nearest the original.

Treading the Winepress

It seems strange that there ever should have been any mistaken idea as to the time of the application of this chapter; and there could not have been if people had merely held to the text. But a well known song has either impressed a false idea upon the minds of people, or else has given voice to a common idea, to such an extent that attention must be called to it. In the song, "Mighty to Save," the idea is conveyed that this passage describes the crucifixion on Calvary, and in response to the question, "Why is your apparel red?" the writer makes the Lord reply,

With mercy fraught, mine own arm brought
Salvation in my name.
I the bloody fight have won,
Conquer'd the grave,
Now the year of joy has come,
Mighty to save.
--Robert W. Todd, Hymn: Mighty to Save.

Now it is true that "His mercy endures for ever," (Psalm 136) but the text says, "my own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me. And I trod down the peoples in my anger, and made them drunk in my fury, and I poured out their lifeblood on the ground. " (Isaiah 63:5-6,RV)

How a man could read enough of this chapter to be able to write the song referred to, and yet pass by, or deliberately pervert the words just quoted, so as to write it as he did, is a mystery.

If the student will compare the 34th chapter of Isaiah and Revelation 19:11-21, especially verses 13 and 15, with the verses in our lesson, there cannot be the slightest

doubt as to what is referred to: "And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and His name is called The Word of God. ... And out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron: and He treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." (Revelation 19:13,15)

It is nothing less than the Judgment of the last day--the time when the sinners who have persistently and willfully rejected the Lord meet their doom. The land of Idumea, Edom, is set as the representation of the whole earth. "The indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and His fury upon all their armies: ... For the Lord has a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea. ... It is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion." (Isaiah 34:2,6,8)

Compare with: "Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? ... For the day of vengeance is in my heart, and the year of my redeemed is come." (Isaiah 63:1,4)

The Power of God Unto Salvation

But notwithstanding the fact that this chapter unmistakably represents Christ as returning from the destruction of the wicked, we must not lose sight of the cross. It appears here, although this chapter by no means refers to Calvary. The cross of Christ is not a thing of a day: it covers all time from Paradise lost till Paradise restored, and then its effects continue through eternity. The second coming of Christ, to Judgment, is but the consummation of the crucifixion. He comes to save His people, and it is only by the cross that anybody can be saved.

In the 3rd chapter of Habakkuk we have the picture of Christ's triumph over His enemies, when He marches through the land in indignation, and threshes the heathen in anger, (Habakkuk 3:12) and it is said, "You went forth for the salvation of your people." (Habakkuk 3:13)

But for the second coming of Christ, the cross would have been endured on Calvary in vain; it would be incomplete. Every person may now--"today"--have a complete, full, and perfect salvation; yet salvation is not complete, not merely as regards the whole body of God's people, but as concerns individuals, until Christ comes. For in

the first place, it is only by His coming that the saints of all ages can be with Him. "Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there you may be also." (John 14:1-3) "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that you sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

And in the second place the last days are to be so full of peril for God's people, that only His sudden appearance will put a stop to the purpose of a wicked world to put them all to death.

The power of Christ's second coming is the power of the cross. In Habakkuk 3:4, margin, we read that in His coming to execute vengeance, "He had bright beams coming out of His side; and there was the hiding of His power." (Habakkuk 3:4,RV,margin)

That side was pierced by the Roman spear, and from it flowed the blood and water of life; but that is His glory, and the power by which He saves His redeemed from all their foes. "Christ died for the ungodly," (Romans 5:6) because He suffered all that the stubbornly impenitent will at last suffer. He was made to be sin for us, and in the cross of Christ we see the fate of the sinner. The destruction of the wicked as well as the salvation of the righteous, is in the cross, for both are parts of one thing. All the power and glory and awful majesty of the second coming of Christ are in the cross just now, to save whoever will come to it.

Read all the references to the last Judgment, that you can find, think of the trump of God and the voice of the archangel, which shakes not only the earth so that the graves open, and the dead hear and come forth, but shakes heaven also, and then instead of

trembling in terror at the thought of the future, rejoice in the knowledge that all this inconceivable power is at your disposal in the cross of Christ for present salvation.

Those who have knowledge of, and look for, the second coming of the Lord, should be, and must be, the people who, above all other professed Christians on earth, magnify and rejoice in the power of the cross. It must be their constant theme, its grandeur and glory, its infinite and all-comprehensive greatness becoming more and more apparent as they near its consummation, until it alone fills their vision and their being.

It is impossible to go through the chapter, but whoever has read the first verses with the right sense will be able to read the rest more understandingly when he comes to them.

Note that the arm of the Lord, which works so mightily in the destruction of the wicked, is that with which He gathers the lambs, and carries them. "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 40:11)

God himself carries His people; even though they be grey-haired with age they are to Him still infants to be borne in His bosom. "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." (Psalm 2:12)--Present Truth, June 7, 1900--Isaiah 63:1-19.

The Revelation of God

"O! that You would rend the heavens, That You would descend; That the mountains might flow down at your presence! As the fire kindles the dry fuel; As the fire causes the waters to boil; To make known your name to your enemies; That the nations might tremble at your presence. When You did wonderful things, which we expected not; You did descend; At your presence the mountains flowed down. For never have men heard, nor perceived by the ear, Nor has eye seen, a God beside You, Who does such things for those that trust in Him. You meet with joy those who work righteousness; Who in your ways remember You. Lo! You are angry; for we have sinned: Because of our deeds; for we have been rebellious. And we are all of us as a polluted thing; And like a rejected garment are all our righteous deeds; And we are withered way, like a leaf, all of us; And our sins, like the wind, have borne us away. There is no one that invokes your name; That rouses him up to lay hold on You: Therefore You have hidden your face from us; And have delivered us up into the hand of our iniquities. But You, O Jehovah, You are our Father; We are the clay, and You have formed us; We are all of us the work of your hands. Be not wroth, O Jehovah, to the uttermost; Nor for ever remember iniquity. Behold, look upon us, we beseech You; We are all your people. Your holy cities are become a wilderness; Sion is become a wilderness, Jerusalem is desolate. Our glorious and holy temple, Wherein our fathers praised You, Is utterly burnt up with fire; And all the objects of our desire are become a devastation. Will You contain yourself at these things, O Jehovah? Will You keep silence, and still grievously afflict us?" (Isaiah 64:1-12, Lowth)

Divine Eyesight Needed

The key-note of this lesson will be found in the fourth verse, a verse often quoted in the form in which it appears in 1 Corinthians 2:9, and almost as often misunderstood. "For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither has the eye seen, O God, beside You, what He has prepared for him that waits for Him." (Isaiah 64:4) "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." (1 Corinthians 2:9)

The common idea of the text robs it of all present, practical application, and consequently the reader finds no present help and comfort in it. He simply looks forward to the future, as to a time when God will reveal in the New Jerusalem things which nobody has ever had any conception of.

It is true enough that God has prepared wondrous things for His people, to be revealed at the coming of Christ, which will infinitely surpass anything that human minds can think, or human tongues speak; but that is not at all what is referred to here.

Let us read 1 Corinthians 2:9-10, as given in a most excellent translation. After having said, "We speak the wisdom of God," (1 Corinthians 2:7) and then throwing in the observation that none of the princes of this world know it, the apostle repeats the thoughts in other words, saying, "We speak, as it is written, what no eye has seen, and no ear has heard, and what has not been conceived in any man's heart,--that which God has prepared for them that love Him. But God has revealed it to us by His Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God." (1 Corinthians 2:9-10)

What is it, then, that the messengers of God make known? It is God, as revealed in Christ the Wisdom of God. The Spirit searches the depths of God, in order to reveal Him to us in His uttermost perfection.

What about the things that God has prepared for them that love Him? What are they? They are "the things of God," ... "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." (1 Corinthians 2:11,10-11)

A Revelation of God's Character

And the Spirit searches these deep things, to reveal them unto us. These things--God's works--His own character--He has prepared for those who love Him. Since the foundation of the world no people have ever seen any god besides Jehovah who "works for him that waits for Him." (Isaiah 64:4,RV)

He gives to us himself, and in Him all things consist. But He is now; He is from everlasting to everlasting, always the same. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and for ever." (Hebrews 13:8,RV)

His name is I AM. (Exodus 3:14) And He has given himself for us. (Galatians 1:4, 2:20; Ephesians 5:2,25; 1 Timothy 2:6; Titus 2:14) Therefore all the things that God has prepared for us in himself, "above all that we ask or think," (Ephesians 3:20) are ours now. The gods of the nations are nothing; they are only the imaginations of men's hearts; and being nothing it is but natural that they should demand human works and human sacrifices. So all idol worship consists in what men can do.

But God is everything, and therefore it is but natural that He should give, instead of receiving. No one can give Him anything, (1 Chronicles 29:14) but He gives everything, and He gives it now. And why not? Now is the time when we need it most, and it is but in keeping with God's character, to give just when the gift is needed.

This revelation of God to man is in everything that He has made. "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,RV)

There is no excuse for anybody's ignorance of God, "Because that which may be known of God [namely His everlasting power and Divinity] is manifest in them; for God manifested it unto them." (Romans 1:19,RV)

The true Light--the Word made flesh, the Word of life, "lights every man that comes into the world." (John 1:9)

If any do not know the Lord, it is because their eyes are blinded to the light, so that they cannot see light in His light, (Psalm 36:9) and their ears are deaf to the sounds that mark His presence. (Jeremiah 6:10)

The Work of the Spirit

And that is just the case. God is near in every sunbeam, yet men do not perceive Him. His light is not light to them, because they take it as a matter of course. God has been doing wonderful things all our lives, and from the foundation of the world, yet He does them so constantly that men have become dead to all sense that anything at all is being done, and even men called wise discuss with childish gravity the question of whether or not miracles are wrought now. "Oh that You would rend the heavens, that

You would come down, that the mountains might flow down at your presence, As when the melting fire burns, the fire causes the waters to boil, to make your name known to your adversaries, that the nations may tremble at your presence! When You did terrible things which we looked not for, You came down, the mountains flowed down at your presence." (Isaiah 64:1-3)

So the prophet, moved by the Spirit, wishes that the power of God might be manifested in a way to startle people out of their drowsy lack of perception, so that they could not help seeing. Let the heavens be rent, and the mountains be melted; let terrible things take place, "that the nations may tremble at your presence." (Isaiah 64:2)

Yet even after the fullest possible revelation of God has been made, no human tongue can express, and no human ear can hear, and no human heart can conceive of or understand the things of God, wrought out in his own life for those who wait for Him. "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." (1 Corinthians 12:3)

No flesh and blood, not even that of Jesus of Nazareth, but the Spirit of God alone, can make known the truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. "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) "Wherefore henceforth we know no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth we know Him no more." (2 Corinthians 5:16)

Men may read the words of God, and see nothing in them: other men will read the same words, and by the Spirit will see infinity in them. Moreover, the thoughts of the Lord are great thoughts, "very deep," (Psalm 92:5) and no words that human tongues or pens can frame can express their fullness and depth. Yet God's Word reveals God in His fullness. Therefore in every word of God, in every manifestation of His presence, the spiritual man, who "discerns all things," (1 Corinthians 2:15,RV,margin) will discern far more than can possibly be seen by any natural eye, or understood by any ear. But know this, and do not forget it, that this deep meaning lies in the words themselves, and not outside of them. The Spirit is not opposed to the Word, because the Word is the instrument which the Spirit uses. The Holy Spirit is the anointing which makes people know, (1 John 2:20) the eye salve that gives sight to the blind. (Revelation 3:18)

The one who has that Spirit dwelling in him, an abiding Presence, is a seer. He can see what others cannot see, and is often laughed at as a dreamer. But that is of no consequence. Some wonderful things have been made known in dreams. The important thing is to have that Spirit of truth, through the love of the truth, which brings God with all His power and gifts into the heart. The heart is thus cleansed from sin, and its possessor sees and knows God. Therefore give heed to the words, "Receive the Holy Ghost." (John 20:22)

Sin, a Consuming Power

The prophet, speaking in behalf of all men, said to the Lord, "You have ... delivered us up into the hand of our iniquities." (Isaiah 64:7,Lowth)

The Revision has it, "You have consumed us by means of our iniquities," (Isaiah 64:7,RV) which amounts to the same thing. "His own iniquities shall take the wicked, and he shall be held with the cords of his sin." (Proverbs 5:22,RV)

Whoever sins is simply laying up for himself "wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render unto every man according to his deeds. The stubbornly impenitent, who at last are" (Romans 2:5-6) "burned up," (2 Peter 3:10) so that they become "as though they had not been," (Obadiah 16) are consumed by their own sins. (Numbers 16:26) Sin is a canker; it is like rust, which eats up iron as surely as fire burns wood. Thus sin eats out the life of men, so that they are nothing but emptiness. The nothingness to which the sinner goes at the last, is only the open manifestation of what he was all the time of his life of sin.

Christ, the righteousness of God, whose life cleanses us from all sin, brings into our hearts "all the fullness of God." (Ephesians 3:19)

Heart Condition Affects Environment

"Be not wroth very sore, O Lord, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, see, we beseech You, we are all your people. Your holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised You, is burned up with fire: and all our pleasant things are laid waste. Will You

refrain yourself for these things, O Lord? will You hold your peace, and afflict us very sore?" (Isaiah 64:9-12)

In verses 9-12 there is a truth that is very likely to be overlooked. There we read that the "holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation." (Isaiah 64:10)

But it was many years after the death of Isaiah before Jerusalem was besieged and taken, the temple destroyed, and the land made desolate by the carrying away of the people. Shall we say that the prophet spoke by anticipation? If so, then the same might be said of any other portion of Scripture, which speaks of things as already accomplished.

Moreover, in that case, the prophecy would have been utterly meaningless to those to whom it was first spoken or written. No; in these verses we see that whatever is at any time said of the city of Jerusalem, and Zion, applies primarily to the people, since it is always the character of the people that determines the character of the city or country.

When the Holy Spirit is not allowed to dwell in the hearts of the people, chaos fills them, even such as the whole earth presented before the Spirit of God hovered over it. (Genesis 1:2) And since men are earth's rulers, the land goes to ruin with the people.

Moreover human beings are God's temples, and therefore Zion may truthfully be said to be a wilderness when the hearts of men are a wilderness of sin. The earth is under the curse solely on man's account, and it will be made new again only by the same power that makes men new, and by the working of that power in them.--Present Truth, June 14, 1900--Isaiah 64:1-12.

The Glorious Inheritance

"I am made known to those that ask not for me; I am found of those, that sought me not: I have said: Behold me, here I am, To the nations which never invoked my name: I have stretched out my hands all the day to a rebellious people, Who walk in an evil way, after their own devices. A people, who provoke me to my face continually; Sacrificing in the gardens, and burning incense on the tiles: Who dwell in the sepulchers, and lodge in the caverns; Who eat the flesh of the swine; And the broth of abominable meats is in their vessels: Who say: Keep to yourself; come not near unto me, for I am holier than you. These kindle a smoke in my nostrils, a fire burning all the day long. Behold, this is recorded in writing before me: I will not keep silence, but will certainly requite; I will requite into their bosom their iniquities; And the iniquities of their fathers together, says Jehovah: Who burnt incense on the mountains, and dishonored me upon the hills: Yea, I will pour into their bosom the full measure of their former deeds. Thus says Jehovah: As when one finds a good grape in the cluster; And says, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it: So will I do for the sake of my servants; I will not destroy the whole. So will I bring forth from Jacob a seed; And from Judah an inheritor of my mountain: And my chosen shall inherit the land; And my servants shall dwell there. And Sharon shall be a fold for the flock, And the valley of Achor a resting for the herd; For my people, who have sought after me. But you, who have deserted Jehovah; And have forgotten my holy mountain: Who set in order a table for Gad; And fill out a libation to Meni: You will I number out to the sword; And all of you shall bow down to the slaughter. Because I called, and you answered not; I spoke, and you would not hear: But you did that, which is evil in my sight; And that, in which I delighted not, you chose. Wherefore thus says the Lord Jehovah: Behold, my servants shall eat, but you shall be famished; Behold, my servants shall drink, but you shall be thirsty; Behold, my servants shall rejoice, but you shall be confounded: Behold, my servants shall sing aloud, for gladness of heart; But you shall cry aloud, for grief of heart; And in the anguish of a broken spirit shall you howl. And you shall leave your name for a curse to my chosen: And the Lord Jehovah shall slay you; And His servants shall He call by another name. Whoso blesses himself up the earth, Shall bless himself in the God of truth; And whoso swears upon the earth, Shall swear by the God of truth. Because the former provocations are forgotten, And because they are hidden from my eyes. For behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth: And the former ones shall not be

remembered, Neither shall they be brought to mind any more. But you shall rejoice and exult in the age to come, which I create: For lo! I create Jerusalem a subject of joy, and her people of gladness; And I will exult in Jerusalem, and rejoice in my people. And there shall not be heard any more therein, The voice of weeping, and the voice of a distressful cry: No more shall there be an infant short-lived; Nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days: For he, that dies at a hundred years, shall die a boy; And the sinner that dies at a hundred years, shall be deemed accursed. And they shall build houses, and shall inhabit them; And they shall plant vineyards, and shall eat the fruit thereof. They shall not build, and another inhabit; They shall not plant, and another eat: For as the days of a tree shall be the days of my people; And they shall wear out the works of their own hands. My chosen shall not labor in vain; Neither shall they generate a short-lived race: For they shall be a seed blessed of Jehovah, They, and their offspring with them. And it shall be, that before they call I will answer; They shall be yet speaking, and I shall have heard. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together; And the lion shall eat straw like the ox: But as for the serpent, dust shall be his food. They shall not hurt, neither shall they destroy, In all my holy mountain, says Jehovah." (Isaiah 65:1-25,Lowth)

This chapter is naturally divided into two portions, the first sixteen verses showing who are the true Israel, and that no particular race or nation constitute God's people, but that they are gathered out one by one from "all nations, and kindreds and people, and tongues;" (Revelation 7:9) while verses 17-25 tell of the new earth, in which "the righteous nation that keeps the truth--will dwell throughout eternity." (Isaiah 26:2)

Sincere Gentiles Accepted -- Insincere Jews Rejected

In order to understand the first two verses, we have only to read: "But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses says, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Isaiah is very bold, and says, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he says, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." (Romans 10:19-21)

From those verses, taken in connection with what precedes, namely, that the sound of the Gospel has gone to the ends of the earth, we learn that the Gentiles are referred to

by the words, "I am inquired of by them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not." (Isaiah 65:1)

And the "rebellious people, [to whom God has] stretched out His hands all the day," (Isaiah 65:2) is Israel after the flesh. With the inspired comment to guide us, we can have no difficulty in reading the chapter, for in verses 3-7 we have a picture of the Jewish people, who prided themselves upon being God's people, no matter what abominations they committed. "A people that provokes me to anger continually to my face; that sacrifices in gardens, and burns incense upon altars of brick; Which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments, which eat swine's flesh, and broth of abominable things is in their vessels; Which say, Stand by yourself, come not near to me; for I am holier than you. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burns all the day. Behold, it is written before me: I will not keep silence, but will recompense, even recompense into their bosom, Your iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together, says the Lord, which have burned incense upon the mountains, and blasphemed me upon the hills: therefore will I measure their former work into their bosom." (Isaiah 65:3-7)

The fact that their ancestors had been the objects of special blessings, in the deliverance from Egypt, and subsequently, and that they had the law, was their boast, although they did not keep the law. "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 has the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law. 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 dishonour God?" (Romans 2:17-23)

They thought themselves too holy to associate with the uncircumcised heathen; but God has shown that a circumcised heathen is no better than an uncircumcised one, and that it is faith and obedience that distinguishes the true Israelite from the heathen.

Moment by moment the Christian lives. If we gain a victory today, that is no proof that we shall gain another tomorrow. It is a proof of the power and goodness of God,

who ever lives to bless; but if we reap the benefit of His mercy in the future, it can only be by continual yielding and consecration. Our breath moment by moment is an evidence that God is with us; but the breath that we breathed yesterday will not profit us today; we need a fresh supply. Much less can we be benefited by that which somebody else has breathed.

So for a person to base his confidence on the fact that he belongs to a denomination that at some time in the past had marked evidences of the presence and power of God, is to build his hope for bread today on money that was spent last year. It is a grand thing to have entrusted to us the ark in which are the oracles of God; but we may have this and still be accursed captives of sin. Far better is it to have our own hearts as temples of the Holy Spirit of truth.

The Eating of Swine's Flesh

Everybody who knows anything about the Bible knows that it forbids the use of swine's flesh; but nothing in the Bible shows so clearly how God regards the filthy beast, and those who take it into the most intimate relation to themselves, than the passing reference in verses 4 and 5. There the eating of swine's flesh is classed by the Lord with the most abominable idolatry. "Which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments, which eat swine's flesh, and broth of abominable things is in their vessels; Which say, Stand by yourself, come not near to me; for I am holier than you. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burns all the day." (Isaiah 65:4-5)

The hog is one of the most filthy and disgusting of animals, gross in its habits, and the imparter of grossness to all who have anything whatever to do with it; yet there is no other animal in the world that is in such demand as food for men. In this we see how God's order has been perverted.

Satan has done his best to reverse every design of God, and among the majority of mankind he has succeeded for even thousands of professed Christians, to say nothing of non-professors, seem to be bent on making their religious practices as far different as possible from what God ordained.

When Satan induced men to worship devils instead of God, while still professing to serve God, he led them to sacrifice swine upon their altars, in contradistinction to the clean and innocent animals that were sacrificed in the worship of God.

It is eminently fitting that the hog should be used by those whose lives are devoted to the service of Satan; but that men and women who profess to worship the God of heaven, and to be guided and controlled by the pure life of Jesus Christ, should take the filthy animal into their bodies is a part of the mystery of iniquity.

Everybody is shocked at the impiety of Antiochus Epiphanes, who defiled the temple of God in Jerusalem by offering hogs upon its altar, yet that temple at best was only a figure. Think then how much greater sacrilege it is to offer up the swine in our own bodies, which are the real temples of Jehovah. "But you are they that forsake the Lord, that forget my holy mountain, that prepare a table for that troop [Gad], and that furnish the drink offering unto that number [Meni]." (Isaiah 65:11)

Concerning the heathen gods mentioned in this verse, one ancient writer has made the following sensible comment, which may save a great deal of useless speculation:

Why should we be solicitous about it? It appears sufficiently, from the circumstance, that they were false gods, either stars or some other natural object, or a mere fiction. The Holy Scriptures did not deign to explain more clearly what these objects of idolatrous worship were, but chose rather that the memory of the knowledge of them should be utterly abolished. And God be praised that they are so totally abolished that we are now quite at a loss to know what and what sort of things they were.--Commentary on the Holy Bible from Henry and Scott. Also found in Adam Clarke's Commentary. Comments on Isaiah 65:11, a quote from Lowth quoting from Schmidius.

Lessons from the Grape

"Thus says the Lord, 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) "As when one finds a good grape in the cluster" (Isaiah 65:8,Lowth)

Just why Lowth has "a good grape" instead of "new wine," in this verse, it is impossible to tell, for the ordinary Hebrew text most certainly has it as in our common version. The lesson, however, is not materially affected by the difference.

As Lowth has it, it shows how God does not take people in bulk, but as individuals. Just as we will pick out a single good grape from a cluster of unripe or decayed fruit, so God selects His people out from the world, or even from among churches and societies that have the name of belonging to Him, until Israel is composed of those in every nation and class in society, who are without guile.

This is evidently the lesson to be drawn from verse 8; but there is an incidental lesson in it as rendered in our version, that may be noted. The "new wine is found in the cluster," and not in the fermenting vat. And "a blessing is in it." When we eat the fruits of the earth in the natural state in which God himself prepares them for us, or as near it as possible, and recognize God in the gift, we get the blessing of His own life.

God's life is most holy and precious, and we should be most careful not to pervert it or misuse it. The stream of life from the throne of God is perfectly pure, but it may become contaminated by the abuse of men; therefore we should be solicitous to go to the fountain head, and take the unperverted life directly from God himself.

The Long-Suffering of God

The great lesson from the first section of the chapter is the wondrous love and patience and forbearance of God. He loves those who love Him not. He calls for those who have not inquired for Him, and seeks out those who have never given Him a thought. And more than this, He is not easily offended when slighted and deliberately rejected.

He not only seeks out those who are ignorant of Him, but He bears long with the waywardness of those who have known His goodness and have not appreciated it. To Israel He says, "All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." (Romans 10:21; Isaiah 65:2)

Wonderful love! Oh that it may always be ours. It may be; for the Holy Spirit so freely given to us, if received, sheds abroad in our hearts that love that "suffers long,

and is kind, ... seeks not her own, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil." (1 Corinthians 13:4-5)

It is not ours by nature, but grace can give us the Divine nature, of which it is an attribute.

A New Heavens and New Earth

In striking contrast with the sorrow and anguish incident to this present evil world, and the sure destruction that is to be the fate of all who are united to it, is the state of the servants of the Lord. The new heavens and the new earth will obliterate from the mind every thought of the want and the suffering endured in this earth.

And as this thought is impressed on our minds in reading this description of the joy and peace of the world to come, let us not forget that God has already placed the world to come in subjection to man, and that we may now taste its power. Just now, in this time of hardship and tribulation, in the midst of all this world's lack, it is ours by the Spirit to know "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." (Ephesians 1:18)

God has placed eternity in our hearts, so that beginning right now we may be glad and rejoice for ever in that which He creates; for: "If any man be in Christ there is a new creation; the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new. But all things are of God." (2 Corinthians 5:17-18) "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." (Isaiah 65:17-19)

Compare these verses with: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And

He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And He said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful." (Revelation 21:1-5)

There can be no question as to the application. The Lord is not here speaking figuratively of some mere local work to be done in one nation, but is speaking of the real change to come over all the earth, and He uses language as plain and as perfectly adapted to our comprehension as possible. Life in the world to come will be very real.

Strangely enough, the term "real life" conveys to most people a sense of hardness and bitter suffering. How sad it is that so many know of no joy except in imagination, and find no happiness except in dreams. But the real--that which God creates--is infinitely beyond the wildest flights of human imagination. Imagination is not needed by the servants of God, for the real brings to them wonders of joy and happiness and knowledge that have never been conceived of by any human heart.

There will be nothing vague or misty or shadowy in the new earth, but people will associate together just as in this world, only with no trace of sin. It is sin that has made this earth what it is, and all the change that is needed to make it new is to remove sin from it. "They shall build houses, and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat of the fruit of them." (Isaiah 65:21)

There will be possessions in the land, but no buying and selling, for everything will be free as the gift of God. "All mine is yours," (John 17:10) will be the motto of every inhabitant. That which socialists vainly dream of, and infinitely more, is assured to men through the Gospel. "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." (Revelation 21:3-4)

From this we know that verse 20 of our lesson chapter marks the transition stage. "No longer will babies die when only a few days old. No longer will adults die before they have lived a full life. No longer will people be considered old at one hundred! Only the cursed will die that young!" (Isaiah 65:20,NLT)

Remember that the final destruction of the wicked, and the renewal of the earth, does not take place until a thousand years after the appearing of Christ and the first resurrection, (See Revelation 20) during which time the saints have been reigning with Christ in the New Jerusalem in heaven. Consequently the sinner a hundred years old, who dies accursed, is but a boy in comparison with them.

Seventy years is considered full age in this life, yet the sinner who goes to destruction at the age of a hundred years is compared with the saints reigning in glory, as one who is cut off in early boyhood. For from the time of Christ's coming there will not be among the saints such a thing as a short-lived infant, but all will live an endless life; yet the thousands of years upon a man's head will not make him old, nor diminish the freshness of youth. "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." (Isaiah 65:22)

A tree is one of the best representations of continual youthful life, and the tree of life is the model for all trees. Such will be the life of all God's people. They will live for ever, as long as the tree of life, to which they have free access, exists. Their life will be that of God. Do not be misled by the words in Lowth's translation, "they shall wear out the works of their own hands." (Isaiah 65:22,Lowth)

The idea is not that any work of their hands will become so worn as to be thrown aside, like the garments now worn, but that they shall enjoy themselves. They will ever live to enjoy their own work, and will not die and leave it to others. "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 65:23-25)--Present Truth, June 21, 1900--Isaiah 65:1-25.

Articles Containing Isaiah 66

"Thus says Jehovah: The heavens are my throne; and the earth is my footstool: Where is this house, which you build for me? And where is this place of my rest? For all these things my hand has made; And all these things are mine, says Jehovah. But such a one will I regard, even him that is humble, And of a contrite spirit, and that reveres my word. He that slays an ox, kills a man; That sacrifices a lamb, beheads a dog; That makes an oblation, [offers] swine's blood; That burns incense, blesses an idol: Yea, they themselves have chosen their own ways; And in their abominations their soul delights. I will also choose their calamities; And what they dread, I will bring upon them; Because I called, and no one answered: I spoke, and they would not hear: And they have done what is evil in my sight; And that, in which I delighted not, they have chosen. Hear the word of Jehovah, you that revere His word: Say to your brethren, that hate you; And that thrust you out, for my name's sake: Jehovah will be glorified, and He will appear; To your joy [will He appear], and they shall be confounded. A voice of tumult from the city! a voice from the temple! The voice of Jehovah! rendering recompense to His enemies. Before she was in travail, she brought forth; Before her pangs came, she was delivered of a male. Who has heard such a thing? and who has seen the like of these things? Is a country brought forth in one day? Is a nation born in an instant? For no sooner was Sion in travail, than she brought forth her children. Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? says Jehovah: Shall I, who beget, restrain the birth? says your God. Rejoice with Jerusalem, and exult on her account, all you that love her; Be exceedingly joyful with her, all you that mourn over her: That you may suck, and be satisfied, from the breast of her consolations; That you may draw forth the delicious nourishment from her abundant stores. For thus says Jehovah: Behold, I spread over her prosperity, like the great river; And like the overflowing stream the wealth of the nations: And you shall suck at the breast; You shall be carried by the side; And on the knees shall you be dandled. As one, whom his mother comforts, So will I comfort you: And in Jerusalem shall you receive consolation. And you shall see it, and your heart shall rejoice; And your bones shall flourish, like the green herb: And the hand of Jehovah shall be manifested to His servants; And He will be moved with indignation against His enemies. For, behold! Jehovah shall come, as a fire; And His chariot, as a whirlwind: To breathe forth His anger in a burning heat, And His rebuke in flames of fire. For by fire shall Jehovah execute judgment; And by His sword,

upon all flesh: And many shall be the slain of Jehovah. They who sanctify themselves, and purify themselves, In the gardens, after the rites of Achad; In the midst of those who eat swine's flesh, And the abomination, and the field-mouse; Together shall they perish, says Jehovah. For I know their deeds, and their devices: And I come to gather all the nations and tongues together; And they shall come, and shall see my glory. And I will impart to them a sign; And of those that escape I will send to the nations: To Tarshish, Phul, and Lud, who draw the bow; Tubal, and Javan, the far distant coasts: To those, who never heard my name; And who never saw my glory: And they shall declare my glory among the nations. And they shall bring all your brethren, From all the nations, for an oblation to Jehovah; On horses, and in litters, and in coaches; On mules, and on dromedaries; To my holy mountain Jerusalem, says Jehovah: Like as the sons of Israel brought the oblation, In pure vessels, to the house of Jehovah. And of them will I also take, For priests, and for Levites, says Jehovah. For like as the new heavens, And the new earth, which I make, Stand continually before me, says Jehovah; So shall continue your seed, and your name. And it shall be, from new moon to new moon, And from sabbath to sabbath; All flesh shall come to worship before me, says Jehovah. And they shall go forth, and shall see The carcasses of the men who rebelled against me. For their worm shall not die, And their fire shall not be quenched; And they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.

God as a Companion

Taking upon Him the form of a servant, He served. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." (Matthew 20:28) "I am among you as He that serves." (Luke 22:27)

If He had come to earth clothed with the glory of heaven, He could not have come near enough to sinful man to serve them. All would have been afraid of Him. Therefore He took upon Him the form of a servant; but He did not take upon himself that character of a servant, for He had that before. Although He is Lord of heaven and earth, He lives for the service of His creatures. So when He was here, "[He] went about doing good; and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him." (Acts 10:38)

Mark the expression, "for God was with Him." That is given as the reason why Christ went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed. This shows the character of God. God with Him did those works. "Believe you not 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)

He associated with the poor of earth, and ate with publicans and sinners, for "the common people heard Him gladly." (Mark 12:37)

Thus He was illustrating the words of God, "For thus says the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy; 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, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." (Isaiah 57:15)

And again: "Thus says the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that you build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all these things has my hand made." (Isaiah 66:1-2)

What are we to learn from all this? That as Christ and the Father are one, and Christ is but the manifestation of the Father; and as "Jesus Christ [is] the same yesterday, and today, and for ever," (Hebrews 13:8) and God says, "I am the Lord, I change not;" (Malachi 3:6) therefore God will be the companion of men today, just as in Christ He was the companion of poor sinners eighteen hundred years ago, provided they will let Him. Of Enoch it is said that: "[He] walked with God." (Genesis 5:22)

And they were men of the same nature as the men in this age of the world. The promise of Jesus is, "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and make our abode with him." (John 14:23)

To those who are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," (Revelation 3:17)--He 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)

But we must open the door to Him, by acknowledging that we are poor and needy. God dwells with those who are of a contrite and humble spirit, because He himself is of a meek and lowly disposition. He could not dwell with any others, for if He could, they would try to lord it over Him; and although He is lowly in heart, yet He is Lord of all. Men feel themselves above the Lord, and therefore it is that He calls them to come and

learn of Him. "He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to humble yourself to walk with your God?" (Micah 6:8,margin)

Just think of it! Mortal men feel themselves too good to walk with the Creator of heaven and earth! And what a wonder! If they will but let their pride go, they may have Him for a companion, and He himself asks the privilege of being their companion! Could any higher honor be conceived?--Present Truth, June 1, 1893--Isaiah 66:1-2.

The Promises to Israel: Mount Sinai and Mount Zion

"Thus says the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that you build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?" (Isaiah 66:1)

Solomon, at the dedication of his grand temple, said, "But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You; how much less this house that I have built?" (2 Chronicles 6:18)

All of God's really faithful children understood that the earthly tabernacle or temple was not the real dwelling-place of God, but only a figure, a type. So of the furniture which the sanctuary contained.

As God's throne is in His holy temple in heaven, so in the type of that temple on earth there was a representation of His throne. A very feeble representation, it is true, as much inferior to the real as the works of man are inferior to those of God, yet a figure of it, nevertheless. That figure of God's throne was the ark which contained the tables of the law. A few texts of Scripture will show this.

Exodus 25:10-22 contains the complete description of the ark. It was a box made of wood, but completely covered, within and without, with fine gold. Into this ark the Lord directed Moses to put the Testimony which He should give him. This Moses did, for afterward, in recounting to Israel the circumstances of the giving of the law, together with their idolatry, which led to the breaking of the first tables, he said: "At that time the Lord said unto me, Hew two tables of stone like unto the first, and come up unto me into the mount, and make an ark of wood. And I will write on the tables the words that were in the first tables which you broke, and you shall put them in the ark. And I made

an ark of shittim wood, and hewed two tables of stone like unto the first, and went up into the mount, having the two tables in my hand. And He wrote on the tables, according to the first writing, the ten commandments, which the Lord spoke unto you in the mount out of the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly; and the Lord gave them unto me. And I turned myself and came down from the mount, and put the tables in the ark which I had made; and there they be, as the Lord commanded me." (Deuteronomy 10:1-5)

The cover of this ark was called the "mercy seat." (Exodus 25:17) This was of solid, beaten gold, and upon each end of it, a part of the same piece of gold, there was a cherub with wings outstretched. "Toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubim be. After these directions, the Lord said: You shall put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark you shall put the testimony that I shall give you,--which Moses did, as we have read. 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 25:20-22)

God said that He would speak to them from "between the two cherubims. So we read, "The Lord reigns; let the people tremble: He sits between the cherubims; let the earth be moved. The Lord is great in Zion; and He is high above all the people." (Psalm 99:1-2)

The cherubim overshadowed the mercy seat, from which place God spoke to the people. Now mercy means grace, so that in the mercy seat of the earthly tabernacle we have the figure of "the throne of grace" unto which we are exhorted to come boldly, "that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:16)--Present Truth, December 3, 1896--Isaiah 66:1.

Dwelling in the House of the Lord

"Thus says the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that you build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?" (Isaiah 66:1)

God's house, then, is the whole universe. That is a fact, and yet there are myriads of people who do not dwell in God's house; they are in it as defilers of it, not recognizing the sacredness of the place where they are.

God dwells everywhere, and since His presence sanctifies, every place is holy. Now holiness becomes His house, and if everybody would but remember this, and recognize all space as God's dwelling place, all men would be holy. The temple sanctifies the gold, and the altar sanctifies the gift. (Matthew 23:19) Continually to recognize the presence of the Lord, is to make one a constant dweller in His house.

He who thus dwells in the house of the Lord, will behold the beauty of the Lord. (Psalm 27:4) He will discern the Lord's body, (1 Corinthians 11:29) for he will be dwelling in God, (1 John 4:16) and so he will live indeed. (John 6:55) And God will dwell in him, for he will not partake of anything but the perfect life of the Lord.

Thus beholding the beauty and glory of the Lord, he will be changed into the same image, (2 Corinthians 3:18) and overcoming the world, (1 John 5:4) he will be made a pillar in the temple of God, to go no more out. (Revelation 3:12) So shall he dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. (Psalm 23:6)--Present Truth, December 15, 1898--Isaiah 66:1.

Our Father's House

"Thus says the Lord: The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what manner of house will you build unto me? and what place shall be my rest? For all these things has my hand made, and so all these things came to be, says the Lord; but to this man I will look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembles at my Word." (Isaiah 66:1-2,RV) "[David] found favor with God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob. But Solomon built Him a house. Howbeit the Most High dwells not in temples made with hands, as says the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool; what house will you build me? says the Lord: or what is the place of my rest? 50 Has not my hand made all these things?" (Acts 7:46-49)

These words, spoken by Stephen full of the Spirit when he was on trial, charged with speaking blasphemous words against the temple, were considered by the Jewish rulers to be the sum of unpardonable blasphemy; yet in his prayer at the dedication of

the first temple, which was one of the most beautiful buildings ever made by man, Solomon had said, as the Jews had read the words thousands of times: "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)

Where then does God live? Where is His home?

"Am I a God at hand, says the Lord, and not a God far off? Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him? says the Lord. Do not I fill all things? says the Lord." (Jeremiah 23:23-24) "Whither shall I go from your Spirit? or whither 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." (Psalm 139:7-10)

Heaven and earth are both within our Father's house; for it is not possible that His throne and His footstool should be outside of His house; therefore we see that the whole boundless universe is God's dwelling place, and every spot and every portion of space, is holy because of His presence.

In view of this, how much more forcible and comprehensive are the words of Christ: "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there you may be also." (John 14:2-3)

We know of the New Jerusalem which is to be the capital of Christ's dominions, and with the presence of which this little earth is to be honored; but the scriptures already quoted preclude the idea that the New Jerusalem itself can fulfil the words of Christ. God's house is the universe, and the redeemed are to be given the freedom of it, to roam through it at will, as well as to "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goes," (Revelation 14:4) and to be perfectly at home in any of the innumerable shining mansions which awaken our admiration and awe on a cloudless night. Truly it is "a large place" (Psalm 18:19; Psalm 118:5) into which God brings His redeemed captives.

But wonderful as this is, there is something yet more wonderful. It is indicated in the last part of the verses quoted at the beginning. After making what house man can build for the God who has the earth for His footstool,--only a very small part of the furniture of His house,--the Lord says: "But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembles at my word." (Isaiah 66:2) "For thus says the High and Lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit." (Isaiah 57:15)

Marvellous! Incomprehensible! The God whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain makes a humble mortal His dwelling place! "He has made everything beautiful in its time: also He has set the world in their heart, yet so that man cannot find out the work that God has done from the beginning even to the end." (Ecclesiastes 3:11,RV,margin)

If we read John 14:23, knowing that the word "abode," in the last part of the verse, is the same word in the Greek as that rendered "mansions" in the second verse, it will appear more striking than ever before. Thus: "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our mansion in Him." (John 14:23)

What infinite possibilities this opens up before man! We can pass by for the present the glory and beauty with which God will adorn His dwelling place, and think only of the wisdom and understanding that is indicated in the promise, "I will dwell in them. We read that:" (2 Corinthians 6:16) "God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the seashore. 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." (1 Kings 4:29-31)

This was because in his youthful piety he yielded himself wholly to the Lord. What "largeness of heart" there must be when the God who fills the universe makes the human heart His mansion, so that through the Spirit the man is "filled with all the fulness of God." (Ephesians 3:19)

He puts the universe into every true believer's heart. "The Most High dwells not in temples made with hands;" (Acts 7:48) "For you are the temple of the living God; as God has said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them." (2 Corinthians 6:16)

A temple not made with hands, for "The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty has given me life." (Job 33:4)

Coming to Christ, the Living Stone, we are "built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 2:5)

Let no one become critical and give place to unbelieving questions as to how God can be our dwelling-place, and at the same time dwell in us; how He can contain the universe, and yet dwell in all His fulness in each person's heart, bringing eternity and the universe there. Leave the working out of the problem to God, and let us enjoy the blessedness of the fact. "He that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him." (1 John 4:16)

We need not carry this subject further at this time. If we let the truth here set forth fasten itself in our minds, it will furnish rich food for meditation. To recognize God in our own bodies, to know His presence there continually, cannot but work a revolution in our lives. Life becomes a sacred treasure to be preserved with the utmost care, and our own body, as well as every other human body, is regarded as a holy thing, to be treated with the highest reverence.

The fact that we are the proper dwelling-place of God, and that holiness becomes His house, (Psalm 93:5) must give us serious thought as to how we have treated His temple. "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple you are." (1 Corinthians 3:17)

But we have all defiled the temple, for "We are all as an unclean thing, ... and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away." (Isaiah 64:6)

Are we then all doomed to destruction? No; for there is "a fountain opened ... for sin and for uncleanness;" (Zechariah 13:1) and of this cleansing of the sanctuary of God we shall, God willing, speak at another time.--Present Truth, July 5, 1900--Isaiah 66:1-2.

The Tabernacle of Witness

"Thus says the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that you build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all these things has my hand made." (Isaiah 66:1-2) "The Most High dwells not in temples made with hands." (Acts 7:48)

It is evident that the tabernacle built by Moses could not be the real dwelling-place of God, and every Jew ought to have been impressed by that truth every time he looked at it. Solomon knew it well, for at the dedication of the temple that he built, which was far larger and grander than the first tabernacle, he said, "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)

What then is God's dwelling place? He himself indicated it when, after asking, "where is the place that you build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?" (Isaiah 66:1)

He said, "but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at my word." (Isaiah 66:2) "Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple you are." (1 Corinthians 3:16-17)

The human body is the temple of the Holy Ghost. "What? know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which you have of God, and you are not your own?" (1 Corinthians 6:19)

This is the true dwelling place of God.--Advent Review, September 23, 1902--
Isaiah 66:1-2.

Enforcement of the "Christian Sabbath"

The fact that people are sincere and earnest in their purposes, does not prove that they are correct in their motives. Inspiration has declared, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." (Jeremiah 17:9)

And then, to show that this declaration is needed as a revelation to man, the question is asked, "who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9)

Without the aid of God's word and Spirit man can never know himself. It is scarcely less difficult for the heart to know itself than for the eye to see itself.

By many, sincerity is held to be as good as the truth--an acceptable substitute for the truth. But a person may be quite sincere and still quite selfish. Indeed, intensely selfish people are always sincere; but they never understand their motives. There is no evil more prevalent than self-deception. Earnest belief, or strong feeling, is, in the estimation of some, better religion than right doing, or obedience to the commandments of God.

We have no idea that they who projected the Inquisition, or that which grew up into the inquisition, had any intention to war upon human rights. They intended to advance the cause of religion and the honor of God upon the earth. Their error was that they set out to serve God by a way of human devising, contrary to the method marked out in the Scriptures. God sent them forth as ambassadors, they chose rather to be legislators and executioners.

It is a common saying that, "History repeats itself." The Lord, by the prophet Isaiah, gives us a view of the religious world near the end of time. "Hear the word of the Lord, you that tremble at His word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified: but He shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed." (Isaiah 66:5)

Compare with: "For, behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with His chariots like a whirlwind, to render His anger with fury, and His rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by His sword will the Lord plead with all flesh: and the slain of the Lord shall be many." (Isaiah 66:15-16)

This indicates that another persecution shall arise before the Lord shall appear; that it will be against those who tremble at the word of God; that it will be--not against religion, but, professedly in the cause of religion; by those who affect to act for the glory of God; that, though they say, "Let the Lord be glorified," they are moved against

those who tremble at the word of the Lord. Evidently they will hold something else--their traditions--above the word of God.

So it was in the dark ages. Persecutors were zealous for the glory of God, and tenacious of tradition; but careless of the written word. What the Doctors of the church had said was of more worth to them than what Jehovah had said. Their bitterest persecutions, even to the burning of Christians, were "Acts of Faith." Theirs was truly and literally a burning zeal. Who were more faithful to religion than they? We doubt whether the followers of the present age will be able to excel them.

The Apostle Paul, in 2 Timothy 3:1-5, gives a similar view of the religious world of the last days. Though they have "the form of godliness," they will be boastful and proud, false accusers, and despisers of those that are good. We recognize no standard of goodness but that which is erected in God's word. It is obedience to God. Where is obedience to God to be found, if not among those who keep His commandments? "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14)

Here we are informed that we are to keep His commandments because He will bring every work into Judgment. Of course His commandments are the rule of the Judgment, and the measure of acceptance with Him. And it is known to everybody that the religious world are violently opposed to those who keep the commandments of God just as God gave them. If they can have the privilege of amending them, or putting a construction upon them which their words will never justify, then no objection will be raised.

And so the most willful child will obey the order of his parents, if he is permitted to do it in his own way. But what kind of obedience is that? Can it be acceptable to God?

They who accuse their brethren of wrong, because they adhere closely to the commandments of Jehovah, are veritably "false accusers." In their accusations there is neither truth nor justice.

While they profess to seek God's glory, they would do well to examine their motives to see if they are not seeking to have their own way; to see if their pleasure in having the law of the land to sustain them is now somewhat increased by their consciousness that the law of God, strictly construed, is against them.--Signs of the Times, December 8, 1881--Isaiah 66:5, 15, 16.

His Offspring

God never forsakes His offspring. He does not cast off His children when they fall into sin. He fills every relationship in life. He is to us a Father, Mother: "As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you," (Isaiah 66:13)--Brother, Friend,--everything.

But we are always children as far as He is concerned: "little children;" babes, also. We are to grow in grace and increase in knowledge; and yet in growing from infancy to old age, or from first conversion to ripened Christian experience, we do not at all diminish the difference between us and God in knowledge and understanding.

God will always be infinitely above us, so that the wisest man will always be less, as compared with Him, than the little babe is as compared with its parent.--Present Truth, March 29, 1894--Isaiah 66:13.

The New Creation

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." (Genesis 1:1) "In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is." (Exodus 20:11)

At the close of each day's work, "God saw that it was good." (Genesis 1:10,12,18,21,25)

And at the close of the sixth day, when everything was finished, "God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good." (Genesis 1:31)

Man himself was perfect, and all was as good as God himself could make it. "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) "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 20:11)

The Sabbath was the sign of the power of God's word. He had spoken all things into existence; and now He rested in perfect confidence that His word would uphold that which He had created. The Sabbath of the Lord--God's rest--is therefore the mark of a perfect, new creation.

But man, to whom the dominion of the earth had been given, sinned. He sold himself to the enemy of God, and received death as his reward. By his sin the curse came upon the earth, so that God's perfect, new creation was everywhere marred.

But God was not defeated; His purposes cannot be thwarted, for: "[He] works all things after the counsel of His own will." (Ephesians 1:11)

Therefore His love devised means to insure the carrying out of His original plan. "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)

Christ was given to death, that man might receive the eternal life which had been lost through sin. But the cross of Christ is "the power of God." (1 Corinthians 1:18)

The Gospel is "the power of God unto salvation, to everyone that believes." (Romans 1:16)

But ever since the creation of this world the eternal power of God has been manifested in the things that He has 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; so that they are without excuse." (Romans 1:20)

Therefore the cross of Christ--the Gospel--is the same power that is seen in creation. The same power of God, by which man was created in the beginning, is now manifested through the Gospel to re-create him--to bring him back to the perfection

which he had at first. This is shown very clearly in the Scriptures. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Or, as the Revision has it, "there is a new creation." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Of course there cannot be a new creature without there having been a new creation. So again, "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God before prepared that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:10,margin)

This new creation is signaled by rest. Christ says, "Come unto me, all you that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

Whoever comes to Him is re-created,--made new,--and then he finds rest--rest in the Word God. As this new creation is the same as that wrought in the beginning, and by the same means, the word of God, so it has the same mark, namely, the Sabbath of the Lord, the seventh day. Notice these points:

1. In Christ there is a new creation. In Him all things are created in heaven and in earth. (Colossians 1:16)
2. With the new creation in Christ, there comes rest. Even so it was in the beginning.
3. Christ is of God made unto us "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." (1 Corinthians 1:30) He is the truth, and He sanctifies himself, that we may be sanctified through the truth. (John 17:19)
4. The Sabbath of the Lord, the seventh day, on which Christ rested when He had finished the new creation in the beginning, is the sign of sanctification, which comes only through Christ.

We read: "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 now, as at the first, the Sabbath is the sign of the perfect, new creation. God has not changed, His power has not changed, neither has His sign changed.

But this is not the end. In the beginning God had a perfect earth as the abode of perfect men. So again He will have a perfect abode for the men who are made complete in Christ,--a new earth for His new men. He says, "Behold, I create all things new." (Revelation 21:5)

And again, "He that overcomes shall inherit all things." (Revelation 21:7) "We, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness." (2 Peter 3:13)

This will be the same new creation that was in the beginning, at the close of the first six days; for it will be "the times of restitution of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." (Acts 3:21)

And since it is the same new creation, the same thing, namely, the Sabbath, will mark it; for we read God's sure Word to the new men whom He has created in Christ: "For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, says the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, says the Lord." (Isaiah 66:22-23)

If we would be part of God's new creation, we must have it in God's own way, and not refuse to allow God to place His own seal of perfection upon it.--Present Truth, May 16, 1895--Isaiah 66:22-23.

A New Creation

Some people object to the fact that so much is made of the particular day of the Sabbath. They say that the Sabbath is spiritual. So it is, and it should never be considered as anything else. But all must see that we must have a Sabbath day before we can consider its spirituality.

"Spiritual" does not mean unreal or non-existent. What use to talk about the spirituality of a thing that has to us no definite existence? If our friends did not raise the question as to the existence of the Sabbath, there would be no need to talk about it; but

let no one think that in dwelling upon the definiteness of the Sabbath day we are unmindful of its spirituality.

We may abstain from labor on the very day of the Sabbath, and yet not keep the Sabbath holy unto the Lord. But that does not warrant us in ignoring the day of the Sabbath. We may abstain from taking human life, and still not keep the sixth commandment; but that does not warrant us in killing men.

In the beginning God sanctified the Sabbath as a memorial of His creative power. He set it apart for the use of men, in order to remind them of His power to sanctify them. "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, which calls attention to creation, and thus shows God's eternal power, (Romans 1:20) makes known the sanctifying power of God, since sanctification is the exercise of creative power. "Create in me a clean heart." (Psalm 51:10) "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Or, as the Revision has it, "there is a new creation." Christ is Creator, and He created all things. "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." (Colossians 1:16)

The Sabbath comes to us from Eden, when the earth was new, to remind us of the power of God in Christ to make us new creatures, as perfect as man and all things were in the beginning. And this will be its office throughout eternity; for the Lord says of the time when He shall have made all things new, and shall have made men also new, that they may fittingly inherit His new creation: "For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, says the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, says the Lord." (Isaiah 66:22-23)--Present Truth, June 13, 1895--Isaiah 66:22-23.

Editor's Note

Apparently, E. J. Waggoner did not write a final article dealing with the last chapter, Isaiah 66, in his series on The Gospel of Isaiah. In its place, I have supplied a few articles that refer to verses from chapter 66. Only a few verses from this chapter were ever used in Waggoner's writings, and these selections are the best of those. In harmony with most of the previous articles, I will start with a quotation of the whole chapter from Lowth's translation.