

The Berean

*A Christadelphian Magazine devoted to the exposition
and defense of the Faith once for all delivered
to the Saints; and opposed to the dogmas
of the Papal and Protestant Churches!*

**And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars;
and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and
the waves roaring; ...And when these things begin to come to pass,
then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth
nigh— Luke 21:25, 28 .**

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**...they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched
the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”**

CHRIST IS COMING SOON AND WILL REIGN ON EARTH

A Review of Iran in Prophecy

Iran, the modern name of the ancient nation of Persia, appears to play an important role at the time of the end. It is among the nations listed with the Gogian confederacy described in **Ezekiel 38**.

Ezek. 38:2-5 “Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him, And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I *am* against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of *armour*, even a great company *with* bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords: Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya with them; all of them with shield and helmet:”

In this chapter, the southern Arab nations, represented as Sheba and Dedan, take up a position hostile to the northern Muslim states of Persia, and Cush or Iraq (improperly rendered as Ethiopia) in the KJV.)

There is a natural hostility between these nations rooted in religious differences. The northern states—likely including Syria as well, since Syria historically functioned as the “King of the North” with Antioch as the capital of the Seleucid kingdom—are largely Shi’ite Muslim (or influenced by Shi’a traditions in the case of Syria). They are natural adversaries of the Sunni Muslim states of the south. These differences can be as stark as the historic divisions between Protestant and Catholic nations in Christendom.

Shi’ites believe that the legitimate leader of Islam must be a descendant of Muhammad. Sunnis accept leaders who are not descendants of Muhammad and interpret the prophecies of the Koran differently.

This hostility has been demonstrated repeatedly in recent conflicts. The scale of missile and drone attacks directed toward Gulf states has surprised many outside observers, though apparently not the Gulf nations themselves. Reports suggest that while these states publicly discouraged intervention by the United States or Israel, privately they were urging such intervention to reduce Iran’s growing power. They feared that Iran intended ultimately to dominate the Sunni states, threaten resistance with nuclear force, and impose a Shi’a theocracy across the Muslim world.

Current geopolitical efforts appear aimed at bringing Iran into greater harmony with Western powers. Such a development seems somewhat out of sequence with the prophecy cited above. Yet another question arises: how could Israel ever reach the condition described in prophecy—dwelling in unwalled villages—if the continual hostility generated by Iran and its proxies (Hezbollah, the Houthis, and Hamas) were not first greatly restrained?

The prophecy concerning Israel is clear: Gog advances against Israel when the land appears secure.

Eze 38:11-12 “And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates, To take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thine hand upon the desolate places *that are now* inhabited, and upon the people *that are* gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land.”

Thus it may be that Syria and Iran (possibly even Iraq) will eventually adopt a less hostile posture toward Israel, though the period of apparent peace may be brief.

An interesting development appears in Daniel 11, which may indicate that Persia, though initially aligned with the northern power, could later take a different position. Consider:

Dan. 11:43 “But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps.”

This verse describes the northern power’s success after overcoming the forces of Tarshish and its Arab allies. In the earlier stage of the campaign, Tarshish is driven from Israel into the regions of Moab, Ammon, and Edom—modern Jordan.

Dan 11:41 “He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many *countries* shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, *even* Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon.”

During this time of conflict, the terrible destruction described in Zechariah 13 unfolds:

Zec. 13:8-9 And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, **two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein.** And I will bring the third part through the fire,

and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God.

In order to save Israel, circumstances will arise that convince Gog he can finally destroy the southern king, much as Antiochus Epiphanes believed he could finish off the Ptolemaic kingdom. Gog therefore advances toward Egypt, Moab, Ammon, and Edom. Egypt becomes the ransom (Isa. 43:3) for the lives of the third left alive in Israel.

Dan 11:42 He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries: and the land of Egypt shall not escape.

Yet in verse 43, after Gog's successful descent into Egypt, the nations listed among his followers are Libya and Cush (Iraq)—but Persia is not mentioned. In Ezekiel 38, Persia appears among Gog's allies, but here it is absent. Why?

One possibility is typological. Cyrus the Great was called the Lord's "anointed" in Isaiah 45, making him a type of Christ. Perhaps Persia must cease its hostility toward Israel at the moment when the antitypical Cyrus prepares to intervene.

Isa. 45:1-3 "Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, 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 thee, 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 thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call *thee* by thy name, *am* the God of Israel.

Another name for ancient Persia appears in prophecy as Elam.

Jer 49:35-39 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will break the bow of Elam, the chief of their might. And upon Elam will I bring the four winds from the four quarters of heaven, and will scatter them toward all those winds; and there shall be no nation whither the outcasts of Elam shall not come. For I will cause Elam to be dismayed before their enemies, and before them that seek their life: and I will bring evil upon them, *even* my fierce anger, saith the LORD; and I will send the sword after them, till I have consumed them: And I will set my throne in Elam, and will destroy from thence the king and the princes, saith the LORD. But it shall come to pass in the latter days, **that I will bring again the captivity of Elam, saith the LORD.**

This prophecy suggests that Iran may suffer great destruction—yet later be restored.

It may be that the present weakening of Iran is part of a process preparing the Middle East for a temporary peace, allowing Israel to dwell in apparent security before the final invasion.

Nevertheless, when Gog ultimately assembles his confederacy, Persia still appears among the nations aligned with him, though perhaps weakened. At some point, however, the antitypical Cyrus—the rainbowed angel of divine deliverance—must stand up against the northern invader. When that occurs, the captivity of Elam may be restored, and Persia may once again take a role favorable toward Israel.

Iran's present stubborn pursuit of regional dominance may therefore be fulfilling Jeremiah's prophecy. By refusing to abandon its long-standing ambitions, Iran may be bringing upon itself the very judgments described in the prophecy.

Taken together, the prophecies of Ezekiel, Daniel, and Jeremiah suggest that Persia will play a complex role in the final events surrounding Israel. Though currently hostile to Israel, Persia may undergo a period of weakening and partial restraint before again appearing among the nations allied with Gog. Yet the prophetic pattern of Cyrus suggests that even Persia's role ultimately serves the divine purpose of Israel's deliverance.

A striking coincidence is that recent hostilities involving Iran have occurred near the time of the festival of **Purim**—the very time when, through **Esther**, Israel was permitted to defend itself against an enemy within the Persian Empire

Esther 9:15-26 For the Jews that *were* in Shushan...slew three hundred men at Shushan;... But the other Jews that *were* in the king's provinces...slew of their foes seventy and five thousand, ... Wherefore they called these days Purim after the name of Pur."

"Like an Owl of the Desert" **BY BROTHER ROBERT ROBERTS**

It belongs to us, brethren and sisters, peculiarly on the present occasion, to contemplate "The sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow." Of course, we can only do so in a cursory and superficial

manner, for the phrase when thoroughly followed out in all its significance covers the whole ground of what God has been pleased to reveal to us, both in its practical bearing upon us in the matter of duty, and in its future relation to us as a matter of hope. Still, a little edification is better than none, and we cannot look upon the sufferings of Christ, or the glory which is to follow, without being edified.

Christ was a sufferer in a sense which perhaps few people realize. The majority of persons are apt to look at the cross, and the cross only, and so imagine that the sufferings of Christ relate only to the physical pain he experienced in being put to so cruel a death, or at most to the anguish of feeling to which he was subjected in being mocked by a crowd of soldiery.

To those, however, who study Christ's life attentively, and particularly in the light of what the spirit of Christ has testified in the Psalms as to the sufferings of Christ, it becomes manifest that those sufferings were much more widely spread over his life than is popularly imagined; that *they consisted largely of the mental suffering caused by the present evil state of things among men*: that, in fact, he was a "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." His sorrows and his grief were of a sort that many, and we might add, that nearly all, are unsusceptible of. Christ had a high conception—far higher than ever we can hope to reach—of *what men ought to be*, and of the position that God *ought* to occupy among men, and therefore he felt a pain that none could experience who were not of the same state of mind, in mingling with men who were, on the whole, as regards God, like the brutes. We find that we come into fellowship with the sufferings of Christ *in proportion as we grow up to him, and become like him*, drinking in his spirit, sharing his tastes, and laying hold of his hopes. We come to find that it is no empty metaphor which likens the people of God to "strangers and pilgrims, having here no continuing city."

We come to feel that David did not speak extravagantly when he said, "My flesh longeth as in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is" .. "I am like a pelican of the wilderness .. like an owl of the desert." If you examine the Psalms where these expressions of misery occur, you will find that they *all have relation to the moral and mental attitude of the men around him*.

David suffered from the godlessness of those who became his enemies, and from the proud indifference or brutish inertia of men whose portion is in this life, and who have not set God before them. In this, David was a preliminary exhibition of Christ, for the spirit of Christ was in him and

made use of him to paint, in advance the portrait of Jesus' inner personal experiences.

Now anyone who lays hold of the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ, *with the result which those things were given to produce*, will feel fellowship with his sufferings on these points. He will feel alone; he will feel that the present is an evil world in a high sense; he will feel a pilgrim in the midst of it. It is well to see this; for in proportion as we see it, we are able to reconcile ourselves to our portion and to go through our course with much less chafe.

Even if the world were all we could wish, we are now in ourselves only flesh and blood, and that is a weak thing both physically and spiritually. We do not require to live in the first century to fellowship the sufferings of Christ. We may have thought so in the first days of our spiritual childhood. We all, no doubt, had the idea that we required to be put in prison, and to have the officer of the law come into our houses and take our things, or that we should be led forth to the stake or have our heads cut off, before we should suffer with Christ.

We come to see the fallacy of that idea as we grow older. In one respect we are called upon to endure a more difficult martyrdom than the faggot or the block. Many have undergone *that* kind of martyrdom whom Christ will not acknowledge in the day of his coming. In the early centuries, many rushed into that kind of martyrdom upon the same principle as that which leads Roman Catholic votaries to submit to painful penances.

Dreadful things have been suffered in the way of penances. The Emperor Charles V, who was one of the mightiest potentates in Europe for nearly half a century, after his abdication, lacerated his flesh with thorns and instruments of torture, ordered his coffin and lay in it, conducted his own burial service, and went through many physical sufferings, with the idea that by going through all these sufferings he would appease God for all his misdeeds, and earn a place in the world to come.

But Charles V was an unjustified sinner. We know that God is not pleased with will worship, that is, with anything man can devise for His satisfaction. He is pleased only with our compliance with *what HE appoints*; and all His appointments aim at the very contrary result secured by penances. For, if you examine such matters to the root, you will find that they have their root in self-satisfaction and the desire to pay God off.

Wicked people feel that God has a claim on them, so to speak, and they want to pay Him off, and be independent; whereas, the true worship which God exacts excludes that feeling entirely, and brings us to the recognition of the fact that we cannot pay God off. All we can do is to *obey Him in thanksgiving for His goodness* in forgiving us on recognition of our position.

The poor creatures who allow themselves to be crushed under the car of Juggernaut have just as much ground for hoping they will be saved as the Emperor Charles V and the multitudes who, under the influence of a similarly perverted idea, in the second, third and fourth centuries, rushed to the faggot under the delusion that they were making sure of a heaven before uncertain.

The age of *true* martyrdom has not passed away. We are invited to offer ourselves as "*living sacrifices*" to God, and that is a far more difficult kind of sacrifice to offer than that which is at an end almost as soon as the pain is felt. Death by the sword or at the stake is sharp, short, and decisive, but a living sacrifice is a living martyrdom. It is a living mortification—a tedious and protracted suffering; it is a waiting for God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation; it is an obeying of commandments which are irksome to the natural man; it is submitting to a trial which is not joyous, but grievous.

How is that? Because God forbids those who are invited to be heirs of His kingdom to be friends with the world, or to seek for pleasure in the present time. Those who are at liberty to be friends with the world, and to seek for pleasure in the present time, have a great deal to entertain them; and those who accept the calling to which God has called all who have ears to hear, experience the deprivation; *though I admit that after a while, the deprivation is felt in a different direction.*

What I mean by that is this; they do not feel the deprivation of present gratifications such as they are called upon to leave, for they learn to hate these, seeing that they are built on the wrong foundation. The world disregards God; they follow pleasure for its own behoof, and *a saint learns to have no pleasure in anything from which God is absent*, so that if he could, he would not take part.

But he feels the deprivation in another way. He learns not only to hate *those* things, but to love *another* set of things, and the things he loves are not present to him except by faith. If they were present to us now, there would be thousands who would make the exchange. Indeed, it is possible that three-fourths of the human race would make the exchange at once, if as soon as a man believed and obeyed the Gospel he became immortal, and the subject of glory and honor.

But then, they would do it for the sake of getting something better than they had, and God is not pleased to bestow the highest good on that principle. He offers the highest good *on condition of pleasing Him*, and not pleasing ourselves. This uninviting religion of faith gives us that opportunity. God is not pleased with anything short of it—

"Without faith it is impossible to please Him" (Heb. 11:6).

But He *has* given us an opportunity of pleasing Him. What a great honor if we could only realize it! What a great dignity for mortal men to have placed in their hands the power of giving satisfaction to the Creator of heaven and earth! He has given us that opportunity in Christ; but in giving us that opportunity He requires that the good things spoken of in the Gospel be postponed, and the deprivation, therefore, relates to our being cut off, for the time being, from the things that are to come.

Nevertheless, *we see them*. Abraham saw them: he lived a long time ago, but he saw them and was glad. Jesus said—

"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad" (John 8:56).

Abraham is the father of the faithful; that is, he is the *leading specimen of the kind of people with whom God is well pleased*. We also look forward; we see, we are glad; but our joy is only in hope, mixed with weakness and fear. We are told to: "Work out our salvation with **fear and trembling**" (Phil. 2:12) Why with fear? The question is answered (Heb. 4:1)—

"Let us therefore fear, **lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.**"

That is an apostolic reply to the question. With all our joy in looking forward to the rest before us, our rejoicing is moderated by the apprehension that possibly we may fail to enter in. Christ said, when Peter

asked him upon the point, that many should seek to enter in but should not be able. Why not able? Because they are not in earnest about it; *they do not give enough ENERGY to it—*

"We ought to give the more **earnest heed**," (says Paul) "**to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip**" (Heb. 2:1).

Many fail to attend to the things in this *earnest* way; they lay hold of the kingdom of God, but, at the same time keep hold of twenty other things. They devote their best faculties and their principal time to the promotion of objects unconnected with Christ entirely, and not even necessary for their livelihood.

A man, of course, must labor for his daily bread, and, in fact, that may be made a service of God; for it is one of the teachings of Paul that whatever a man doeth, he is to do it heartily as to God, and not to men. He says that to servants; so *we have it in our hands to turn everything to spiritual account if we are wise.*

I am referring, however, to people who are under no obligation to attend to things they have in hands, but who *choose* them as a matter of special taste, as a matter of honor, or as a matter of "respectability." These things engross all their energies, run away with their time, and steal their hearts, so that God's things have little hold on them, and, therefore, they fail.

Our rejoicing therefore is mixed with fear, and ought to be so. No one should slacken his hand until his course is run. Never put off the day of wisdom. If we reject wisdom for our own convenience, wisdom will reject us. It is one of the world's delusions we have to be on our guard against—

"While the lamp holds out to burn, The vilest sinner may return."

That is what is said by the false prophets of modern religion. The *Spirit of God* says (Gal. 6:7)—

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

It will be too late for a man to hurry up and be spiritually-minded when he finds himself in the grasp of death.

What a refreshing thing it is to see men and women under the power of the fear of God! We need not fear men; we need not fear what brother this or brother that may say, because in a short time, in the order of nature, all men will be in their graves, and there will be no reality in relation to us then except God, His mind, His purpose, and His judgment.

Therefore, we need not vex ourselves or encumber our spiritual operations with anxieties about the opinions of our fellows; *let us be right with Christ*. To be right with him requires that we be in earnest, and *all the time* in earnest. Recollect his somewhat abrupt declaration to a young man who came to him,

"I will follow thee, but suffer me first to go and bury my father."

—and to whom Jesus said—

"Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God."

What is the application of that saying, unless it be to suggest that the young man in question—by proposing to do something else besides seeking the Kingdom of God—was a man turning his hand from the plow? Christ's stern declaration is that such a man is "not fit for the Kingdom of God." That implies that there are some who are "not fit," and it also shows who are they that are "fit." Those who are fit are those who lay hold with full purpose of heart and accept Christ's calling in its entirety.

That calling is a thing that is very exacting indeed; it claims absolute ascendancy with those of whom it lays hold. It is a very different thing from the religion preached from the pulpit of the churches and chapels. The clergy give the people to understand (though they do not say so in express words) that they need not be very much taken up with religion, that a sprinkling of it will be sufficient; whereas *the truth of Christ demands to be the object of life, the principle of action, the subject of supreme affection—the engrossing thing*.

How unreasonable this seems when we allow ourselves to realize all the surrounding facts of the case, and the end of every human being! Walk through a cemetery, for instance, and read the tombstones. There you have a sleeping congregation of people, who have done with life. There are all sorts—from the gray-haired captain who acquired military or naval honors in various parts of the world, and

in the language of parliamentary compliment, "deserved well of his country," to the unknown pauper who drivelled out his inglorious days in the workhouse.

There are merchants under these sods, who, in their day, had risen to the top of the social scale by their industry and by talents which were highly applauded as their own, and who died in the lap of luxury. And there are beautiful daughters of rich men, who pined away in the surfeit of luxury, when, perhaps, a fair battle with the rough responsibilities of life might have saved from an early grave. And there are also strong young men and beautiful children, with whom parents had to part, and whom, too, notwithstanding breaking hearts, they have had to follow into the grave. There they lie a common mass of corruption, "unknowing and unknown," forgotten in the land of the living.

Now, let us imagine that we are included in that congregation as we certainly shall be if the Lord arrest not the course of nature by his coming, and let us imagine the time for resurrection come. On the one side of the resurrection-line there is the past—the human past, with its dropped burden of human anxieties and human business; the *other* side, *what is there?*

GOD'S BUSINESS; God's business on a large scale. Christ is at the head of it. He puts aside the kings first and all their governments, and his great business is to exalt the Name of God in the earth, and to bring the nations into subjection and harmony with him.

Now, whom of all that congregation of the dead, whose mortal days and mortal concerns are all gone, *whom of them would you select to be companions of Christ in this mighty work upon earth*, which has as its object the exaltation of the honor of God's Name for ever and ever, in the countless population with which the earth is yet to be peopled?

Would you think it a large price to ask of any of that dead, rotting congregation, for the privilege of immortal partnership in this work, that they should have devoted their mortal affections, their mortal energies, their mortal day, their mortal opportunities, to holding up the Name of Christ in the day of his disgrace? I am sure that no one realizing the matter would falter in the decision. Everyone would say, it was most reasonable that people who *lived for themselves* should reap what they had sown.

The great majority of the dead lived for mortal life; and they cannot complain that they get and perish for what they worked. All they worked for was to have good things to put into their mouths, fine clothes to put on their backs, and the satisfaction of "respectability" in their day and generation. They got what they worked for; they had their reward; therefore, what would you bring them forward into the Kingdom for?

The Kingdom of God is for those only who seek it first, and work for it in a practical, enthusiastic way, and are considered fools for their pains. Let us then, brethren, never listen for a moment to those who would hinder in the good fight by recommending what is called "temperance" and "moderation" in the things of Christ. Their exhortations are altogether uncalled for. The tendencies of the sluggish beast of the natural man are sufficiently powerful in that direction to render it quite needless for anyone to exhort us in that line.

We need exhorting the other way. We want continually to be pulled up in the direction of the path the Captain of our Salvation himself has trodden before us, and in which he is, so to speak, leading us on. We know what sort of path that was.

We know he was no "mild" and "moderate" man in the things of God. We know he had no schemes in hand but the one scheme of God's purpose. We know that he was never found trimming his sails to worldly breezes, or emulating or inculcating worldly principles. He devoted himself solely to the work which the Father gave him, and *his relation to the world was one of continued antagonism.*

Our work, and our attitude, if we are his brethren, will be the same. The work may be different now in its external form, but it is the same work for all that, based upon the same testimonies and the same principle, and aiming at the same end—the purifying of a peculiar people for the Kingdom of God.

Let us not fear to give ourselves to it with all our hearts. We shall not regret it when that day comes to us, or when we shall gasp out the vital energy which keeps us going for the time being. We shall look back with satisfaction on our little course if we are able to say, *"Well, I know my efforts were weak, and I know my shortcomings were many, but I have sought to serve Christ to the extent of my mortal possibilities as circumstances allowed, and although it has been a toilsome career,*

hard work, and unsatisfactory in some respect, I am glad to look back upon it, and would do as I have done if I have to live it over again."

On the other hand, the men or the women who have merely mild notions of Christ, and who have been devoting themselves to personal aims connected with this mortal life, as the object of their exertions, when they get through their comfortable drive and come to die, will be far other than satisfied with the account they will have to look upon; they will be filled with consternation when they come to present it.

It is a glorious day that is coming, but glorious only in a certain line of things. The greatness and the glory of the day of Christ are all on a certain foundation. The glory, and the foundation of the glory, are both visible in the Psalm (99) that has been read. Let us glance at them for a moment.

"The Lord reigneth." What is the leading feature of the system of government and of human life when the Lord reigneth? "The Lord is great in Zion; He is high above all the people. Let them praise Thy great and terrible Name! for it is holy. "Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at His footstool; for He is holy."

The recognition of God's greatness is the foundation of the glory of the glorious "good times coming." It is testified that—

1. All nations shall come and worship before God;
2. The knowledge of the glory of God shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea;
3. God's will shall be done upon earth as it is done in heaven.
4. There will be glory to God in the highest at the time that there is peace on earth.

Now, in contrast to this, just look at the world at present. What does it know or care for the greatness and the glory of God? What conception has it of His holiness? Speak to it of such matters, and your speech is to them the speech of a madman. This helps us to realize *how thoroughly evil the world is*. Some people have a difficulty in realizing the truth on this point. They certainly think the world was bad at the time of the Roman emperors, and at the time that Christ appeared; but they have an idea that now we are advancing by slow degrees towards an age of "progress" and "enlightenment," and that in fact the world as a whole is

already tolerably righteous.

The prevalence of this idea is only proof of the ignorance that exists as to the nature of true enlightenment and true civilization. "*The world lieth in wickedness*" now as much as it did in the days of John. The wickedness has only changed in form a little. Wickedness in our day is refined; it is cultivated; it is methodical; it has got on a beautiful skin outside, but according to the Divine standard, it is, perhaps, more reprobate than the untutored barbarism of early days. It is more proud and more blind to its weakness and dependence. The barbarism had some notion of a God, and entertained some idea that they must give some service to that God; but *this miserable world of modern civilization is like to burst with exaggerated notions of its own importance.*

It is ripe for destruction. It is respectable enough according to current notions of respectability; but, in the eyes of God, it is sunk in corruption as much as it was before the flood, when mankind had corrupted His way upon the earth. Mankind have now utterly corrupted His way, and are walking after a thousand imaginations of their evil hearts, fearing not the Possessor of heaven and earth, regarding not His law, nor caring to know the state of the poor. Christ is, with them, a byword.

We are close to the time when it is revealed that the angel—the symbolic angel with the sickle (Rev. 14:15-20)—will gather the harvest of the earth and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God, that it may be trodden by him to whom alone is allotted this great mission, even the Man of Sorrows who, in his day, bore testimony to the wickedness of the world; who upheld the faith and the honor of God, and who is to have the great honor of executing judgment when the time arrives.

To that work and that great honor we are called if we are of his spirit, if we are his brethren, *if we have a family likeness to him.* The family likeness in this case, is a thing of principle and not of flesh and blood, and the principle shines through the gorgeous picture of the kingdom presented in this Psalm. It is the greatness of God and holiness unto Him.

"*Be ye holy,*" Christ said to his disciples, and, therefore, to us. We may imagine him standing here this morning and saying, "*Be ye holy;*" and his apostles coming after him and saying the same thing: "*Be ye holy in all manner of conversation.*" This is a practical exhortation. There are things which we ought to dismiss

as inconvenient and unbecoming in sons of God, and Paul mentions among them covetousness, jesting, and foolish talking.

There are things which waste and burn up the mind. There are indulgences in common follies which dry up the spiritual sap and engender aversion to spiritual things. Let us avoid them. Remember we are going on to the state symbolized by the four heraldic Living Creatures of the Israelitish commonwealth, full of eyes, and which rest not day and night, saying—

"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power, for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created" (Rev. 4:8-11).

We are to be incorporated in those four Living Ones if we are acceptable to Christ at his coming; and that acceptability will only exist then if we are now constituents of the peculiar people. Christ is working *now*; purifying the people unto himself, and he has been working at this work ever since he went away, through the instrumentality employed.

It is hard work in our generation. The world is in such a wretched plight with regard to the Truth, that we cannot begin where the apostles began. The apostles began straight off, whereas we have to convince men of the elementary principles. We have to begin at the very foundation, and show that man is mortal; that Christ is coming, and that the Kingdom of God is to be established on earth. Consequently, *there is the tremendous danger that people getting to know these elementary things may think they are all right, whereas the fact of the matter is that the foundation is only laid for the work of fashioning them into the likeness of the people prepared for the Lord.*

Well, if the difficulties are great, no doubt Christ's sympathies are great; if our situation is peculiarly discouraging, no doubt our welcome before him, if we overcome, will be correspondingly cordial. He may say:

"Many believed on me who saw the signs and wonders of the apostolic age, but ye saw them not, and yet believed; blessed are ye; enter now into the glory revealed."

In prospect of that, and with the desire for such a reception, let us continue patient in this well-doing; breaking bread from Sunday to Sunday, daily reading the word and persevering under all circumstances, however discouraging, in the patient observance of all the things that Christ has commanded.

The Tabernacle in the Wilderness

PART TEN

"The dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbade the madness of the prophet"

—2 Pet. 2:16.

Whilst thus engaged in meditation Balaam's eyes were opened, and he found himself confronted by his former Angelic Visitor, whose invisible presence was unsuspected during the secret audience with the princes, but is now made manifest, to the confusion of the magician, who was thus again prevented from entering upon his mysterious method of imposture to know what the Lord would say unto him.

We are not permitted to know all the details involved in this visit; but we can realize the effect it would have upon Balaam, who, like others under similar conditions, would prostrate himself in fear before him, and on being bidden to rise would tremblingly listen to the words addressed to him. Whatever else the angel may have said to Balaam, how pleasantly would the words spoken by the angel fall upon his ears, and how eagerly would he grasp them,

"If the men come to call thee, rise up, and **go with them**, but yet the word I shall say to thee, that shalt thou do." This trying ordeal over, Balaam realized that it was no dream or delusion which withheld him from pursuing his evil designs against Israel on the former occasion; but now that the barrier of restraint is so far removed, he rejoices in the possibility of being able to successfully proceed upon the errand upon which his heart was set, now that he has received the Divine sanction and permission to go with the princes, though subject, absolutely, to the angelic use of his tongue, whatever might be the desires of his heart in the matter. Balaam appears, however, to have overlooked the *contingency* of the permission to go with the princes, the neglect of which furnished an opportunity for the display of the Divine anger and displeasure.

So eager was this vile man to enter upon this treacherous business that he did not wait for the men to call upon him, but rose up, and went to call them. He was now filled with hope that the former prohibition to curse might be divinely revoked, and permission given to him to execute in reality that which he fully knew was otherwise impossible, and only a mere pretence, so far as he was concerned.

And thus panoplied he proceeded with the saddling of his ass, "and went with the princes of Moab." His experience had not as yet taught him that he was still in the presence and power of his Divine visitor; neither did he suspect the breach of the conditions of the journey had still to be reckoned with.

His progress is, therefore, miraculously impeded at a convenient point on the way; for "God's anger was kindled because he went" without observing the conditions of His permission. "Now, as he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants with him, the angel of the Lord stood in the way for an adversary (Heb.: a satan) against him.

"And the ass saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand; and the ass turned aside out of the way, and went into the field; and Balaam smote the ass to turn her into the way.

"But ("Then, margin of R.V.) the angel of the Lord stood in the path of the vineyards, a wall being on this side, and a wall on that side. And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she thrust herself to the wall: and he smote her again.

"And the angel of the Lord went further, and stood in a narrow place, where was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left. And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she fell down under Balaam: and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff.

"And the Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee that thou hast smitten me these three times?

"And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now I would kill

thee. And the ass said unto Balaam, Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? Was I ever wont to do so? And he said, Nay.

"Then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and he bowed his head, and fell on his face.

"And the angel of the Lord said unto him, Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times? Behold, I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me; and the ass saw me, and turned from me these three times: unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive.

"And Balaam said unto the angel of the Lord, I have sinned; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me: now, therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back.

"And the angel of the Lord said unto Balaam, Go with the men; but only the word which I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak" (Num. 22:21-35).

What an instructive object-lesson is now before us! The Lord had opened the eyes of Balaam, and on two occasions permitted him to see His messenger, and receive from his lips knowledge of His purpose to bless His people Israel, and instructions as to how he should act in the matter of the Moabites and Midianites, against whom God had neither quarrel nor intention to dispossess them; yet "the madness of the prophet" after worldly gain led him to seek, by deception, to outwit, or frustrate, the Divine restraint under which he had been placed, by cunningly concealing from Balak the all-important element of his instructions, and yet again openly violating the command under which he had received permission to go with Balak's princes.

The position of Balaam, by reason of these Divine interviews and instructions, was now in fact that of a prophet of God, from whom obedience to the Divine commands was required; hence the adoption of the mode of instruction in the matter to which he was subjected—a mode which we might say is almost without parallel in the history of God's dealings with man.

True, the reasoning serpent of Eden was an extraordinary phenomenon, replete with spiritual instruction; but in the case before us we have a Divinely-devised parabolic enactment which brings home to every heart the human and Divine sides, exhibiting the wickedness and waywardness of the one, and its deserts; and uplifting the graciousness and mercy of the other.

By this parabolic transaction even this hardened sinner is made conscious of his sinfulness in a manner which he could never forget. The moral of it all is clear; that if Balaam could be righteously angry with his beast, and would have slain it for its disobedience, *how much more did Balaam deserve to be slain* in his wicked pursuit after the rewards which he hoped to receive at the hands of Balak under and by means of the conditional permission he had received to go with the princes; and while yet being in the service of God!

In this instructive way is the anger of God at disobedience made manifest, yet, at the same time, tempered with mercy and kindness; and thus was Balaam—

". . rebuked for his iniquity; the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbade the madness of the prophet."

The objections that have been raised by some writers as to the *literality* of the angelic appearance to Balaam, and the extraordinary phenomenon of an ass speaking "with man's voice," are not worthy of more than a passing reference to the fact of their existence, as we feel sure that the fallacy of any theory which would reduce so important a reality to a mere vision will be abundantly apparent from the narrative itself.

The *literality* of the facts narrated is sufficiently evidenced by the explicitness of the language employed in the description of them, to wit, the changes in the angel's position, and the cause of the ass' refusal to proceed at three different points on the way before Balaam was made aware of the cause. The narrator tells us of what Balaam actually saw and what he did not see. It would indeed be a very difficult matter to understand how Balaam, in a vision, could dream he did not see the angel.

As we have already seen, the perverseness of Balaam's way brought the angel of the Lord into the position of an adversary (Satan) to him; and that on his being severely rebuked he confessed his sin of ignorance,

and offered to return if his proceeding with the men was displeasing to the angel. This, however, was not the cause for which he suffered rebuke at the angel's hand, and he was permitted to go,

"Only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak. So Balaam went with the princes of Balak."

On being apprised of the approach of Balaam, Balak went forth to meet him; and after rebuking him for delaying to come at the king's request, and being anxious to procure the services of this pseudo-prophet, Balak appealed to his power to promote him to honor, and conducted his illustrious guest to Kirjath-huzoth, which signifies "a city of streets," a place on the furthest borders of his kingdom, and possibly of sacred or oracular reputation, where it appears that he feasted both his prophet, and princes, as well as his gods. Balaam however, was concerned about the restraint under which he had been angelically placed, but to which he made the barest reference to Balak in the words,

"Have I now any power at all to say anything? The word that God putteth into my mouth, that shall I speak."

—words which were calculated to increase rather than diminish Balak's confidence in his ability to accomplish the object for which he had sent for him. And thus he subtly withheld from his patron the knowledge of the facts which prompted him to utter those disconnected and consequently equivocal words.

In this connection we may also remark, that even Balaam himself had not the remotest idea of the object for which he had been Divinely laid hold of. This, however, will become apparent as we listen to the things he was impelled to utter.

Balaam's heart was desirous to be a trumpet of cursing to Israel, that he might secure the promised wealth and promotion to honor; but, as we shall see, he is made the vehicle of benedictions infinitely greater than he was capable of conceiving, and a reluctant contributor to the cause which he wickedly set himself, if possible, to arrest and destroy. There is no mouth into which God cannot put words; and how oft doth He choose the weak and unwise to confound the learned and mighty!

On the next day Balak conducted Balaam to the high places of Baal that rose above the encampment of Israel, whence he might obtain a view of

the utmost part of the people which he desired him to curse. Balak by this time was, doubtless, accustomed to the strange spectacle of the Israelitish encampment, with the Tabernacle in its midst, upon which rested the pillar of Jehovah's glory; but what an awe-inspiring sight must this have appeared to Balaam when he beheld it for the first time. He might have heard of it previously; but hearing and seeing are different things: we venture to think that he would be awestricken as he beheld the signal of the Divine presence.

Notwithstanding this, the miserable prophet requests that seven altars should be erected, and seven oxen and seven rams prepared for sacrifice to Baal, and on each altar they offered together a bullock and a ram; and while Balak and his princes stood by his burnt offering Balaam went forth to a high place—"Peradventure the Lord will come to meet me; and whatsoever He showeth me I will tell thee" (Num. 23:3).

Seven altars were but the invention of idolatry; and the sacrifices offered by idolators are but fading reminiscences of the true worship established in Eden. Continuing at Num. 23:4-5—

"And God (Elohim) met Balaam . . . and the Lord put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, Return unto Balak, and thus thou shalt speak."

Balaam's experience had taught him that he was under the special surveillance of the angel of God wherever he might be, and in all that he might do in this matter; and that he might not move his tongue in the direction he desired without endangering his life.

The narrative suggests to us the reason why Balaam retired into secrecy from the king, but he was not honest enough to put the king into possession of the reason for this secrecy. Neither was Balaam wrong in anticipating the Divine presence; and, after the interview, he returned to the expectant king as he stood by his burnt sacrifice, he and all the princes of Moab—

"And he took up his parable, and said, Balak, the king of Moab, hath brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the east, saying, Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel.

"How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy whom the Lord hath not defied? For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, THE

PEOPLE SHALL DWELL ALONE, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.

"Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" (Num. 23:7-10).

Under the same Divine impulse how sensibly did Balaam's ass speak! And under the same preternatural influence how eloquently does the owner of the ass give utterance to the Divine mind as to "the purpose of God according to election," as expressed in His choice of Israel. *Balaam could no more—of himself—have spoken these words than could his ass apart from the same power have spoken "with man's voice."*

In the selection of such an instrument as Balaam for the communication of His mind, what marvelous evidence God has afforded of the fact that He spake, even by Balaam. What could be more convincing to the sceptical mind than these utterances of a man notoriously the mouthpiece of witchcraft, ignorant of both God and His purpose, and seeking if perchance he might, for the sake of reward, be able to curse the very people whom he is made to bless to his own utter confusion! A man without either power to express, or having the slightest sympathy with, his utterances!

Let us take first the announcement which fell from his lips—

"The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations" (v. 9).

How impossible it was for Balaam even to imagine such a thing! Moses, speaking by the same spirit, concerning the same people, refers to this fact in the words of blessing addressed by him to Israel just before his death, saying (Deut. 33:28-29)—

"Israel then shall dwell in safety alone; the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew.

"Happy are thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the Shield of thy help, and Who is the Sword of thy excellency; and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places."

While, however, the words above cited from Deuteronomy may have

had a *preliminary* fulfilment in the facts connected with their entrance into the land under Joshua, they can only receive their *complete* fulfilment in Israel's second exodus (Isa. 11) under their God-appointed King and Lawgiver, Jesus.

Israel's past history, connected with its deliverance from Egypt, is but a typical representation of their coming greater deliverance from the lands of their enemies, whither they have been driven, not for destruction, but for correction—Rom. 11:2:

"God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew."

This utterance of the Spirit through Balaam was a most distinct and emphatic announcement of the Divine severance of Israel from all other peoples, that they should be *His*—a holy and special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth, that He might keep the oath, *He had sworn unto their fathers* (Lev. 20:26; Amos 3:2; Deut. 7:6-8; 9:5).

By this prophetic utterance we are led to a consideration of God's purpose with Israel, and the relation of that purpose to the oath which He swore unto their fathers—

- (1) To make of Abraham a great nation;
- (2) In him to bless all the families of the earth;
- (3) To give to him and his seed (Christ—Gal. 3:16) all the land wherein he sojourned for ever (Gen. 12:2-3; 22:18; 13:14-17; 15:7, 8, 18; 17:8).

This covenant with Abraham was renewed to Isaac (Gen. 26:3-4); and to Jacob (Gen. 28:3-4; Heb. 11:8-9). These "good things" thus covenanted to the fathers of Israel have had no fulfilment as yet, as they belong to the *New Covenant*, and not to the *Old*, which has passed away (see Gal. 3:16-19; Heb. 11:8, 19, 13, 39, 40; Mic. 7:20; Luke 13:28; Acts 26:6; 28:20, 23, 31).

But even the past history of Israel affords a most striking illustration and confirmation of this Divine oracle of Balaam, as the reader will know. And if this is so, what shall we say to their condition now! Insulated from all other peoples, for 2000 years without a country—a family without a home, scattered among all peoples, having none assurance of life, with trembling of heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind, without ease, or rest for the sole of their feet, amid multitudes of people but not of them.

All these evil things having come upon Israel as a punishment for their sins, there yet remains to be fulfilled that New Covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah, when God will put His law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be His people (see Jer. 31:31-37, 10-14).

Balaam then refers to God's covenant with the fathers concerning the promised great nation as expressed in the words,

"I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered" (Gen. 13:16).

"Look now toward heaven and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them . . . so shall thy seed be" (Gen. 15:5).

Well, therefore, might Balaam exclaim—

"Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel?" (Num. 23:10).

In their preservation as a distinct people amid the relentless persecutions to which Israel has been subjected by the Gentiles for ages, we behold the hand of God; and although they have been left "few in number" (Deut. 28:62) as the result of the Divine chastisement, it is written (Isa. 49:20)—

"The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, shall say again in thine ears, The place is too straight for me: give place to me that I may dwell"

As to the expressed desire of Balaam (Num. 23:10)—

"Let me die the death of the righteous; let my last end be like his."—(that is, *Israel's*), who can wonder at this, beholding, as he did, by the Spirit, God's promised goodness to Israel, which, as he saw, was not *then* to be realized, but at Israel's (political) resurrection (Rom. 11:15; Eze. 37:11-14), which will be the time the true Israel of God of all ages shall be raised from the dead to receive the promised inheritance of life everlasting in God's Kingdom and glory. This expression, therefore, forms an important item in understanding the period of Israel's history to which he calls attention.

We can readily imagine the surprise of Balak at this response, which was so entirely opposite to what he had expected, and at which he was highly incensed (v. 11)—

"What hast thou done unto me? I took thee to curse mine enemies, and behold thou hast blessed them altogether!"

What could Balaam answer other than what he said:

"Must I not take heed to speak that which the Lord hath put in my mouth?" (v. 12).

Ah! Balaam, no thanks to thee for the precious truths which fell from thy lips in purity and holiness, unpolluted by the channel through which they came—thou wast altogether *forced* to give utterance to them, and we wait to hear more from thee, as occasion shall serve, after the change of position to which thou art now to be brought. So Balak—

". . . brought him to the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah, and built seven altars, and offered a bullock and a ram on every altar,"

—doubtless thinking a change of view might have a different effect on the prophet's spirit. And while the smoke of the sacrifices was ascending in clouds from the altars of Baal, Balaam again went forth to meet the Lord. At this meeting, like the former, Balaam would again urge as a reason for granting his request, the seven smoking altars, as if this pollution of the Divine original institution would bend God's will. So the Lord—

". . . put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, Go again unto Balak, and say thus. And when he came to him . . . Balak said unto him, What hath the Lord spoken?

"And he took up his parable and said Rise up, Balak, and hear; hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor: God is not man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent. Hath He said, and shall He not do it? Or, hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?

"Behold, I have received commandment to bless, and He hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it.

"He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel: the Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. God brought them out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn.

"Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel; according to this time it shall be said of

Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!

"Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain" (Num. 23:11-24).

Now while these utterances of the Spirit are a direct reply to the importunities of Balak and Balaam, and a foreshadowing of Israel's prowess under Joshua, they have a much wider range than to the time and men then addressed. The declaration:

"God is not man that He should lie,"

—has formed the keystone of faith in all the ages since. It is the seal of the living God upon every promise that He has made, and was intended to be added to them. His promises concerning Israel are therefore unchangeable. Precious truth!

"God is not a man that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent."

Who can doubt God's royal promises after this blessed assurance from the great and beneficent Being Who is essentially goodness, wisdom, and power? He made the same declaration through Samuel the prophet 400 years afterwards, saying,

"The Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for He is not a man, that He should repent" (1 Sam 15:29—see also Psa. 89:35: Mal. 3:6: Tit 1.:2).

Stiffness of neck, and hardness of heart are no bar to the fulfilment of the declared purpose of God with Israel. Their restoration to the Divine favor and blessing in their land is not contingent upon their "conversion" by any human effort in that behalf. God will effect this in His own way at the appointed time, and about which we may learn from the prophets—as an illustration, see Eze. 34:11-16, 23-31; 36:8-15, 22-32; 20:30-38.

(TO BE CONTINUED NEXT MONTH, IF THE LORD WILL)

"Lord, Teach Us to Pray"

By H. A. Sommerville

All who read the Scriptures will readily remember that Jesus was a man of prayer. On the occasion when the above question or request, was made, Jesus had prayed to the Father, and when he ceased the desire was from one of his disciples that he would instruct them in the proper

manner or form of speech they should use in their petitions to God.

Although Jesus had indicated in his wonderful teachings on the mount (Matt. 6:9-13) the form of approach and supplication that would be acceptable, perhaps among the many other important lessons this might be but vaguely remembered.

Also, Jesus would be desirous that they should *exhibit a desire*, hence he prayed for them that they might give evidence that the desire for this spiritual food existed in them before he gave it to them. This is in accord with his teaching in that matchless address (Matt. 5:6)—

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

Doubtless we are all aware that many prayers are daily being offered which are at variance with scriptural teaching. Vain repetitions and empty phrases not only offered wrongly, but not even addressed to God the Father and Creator—

"Who made heaven and earth and the sea and all things that are therein" (Acts 14:15).

They are offered to Jesus whom they address as God, also to the "Virgin Mary" whom they ignorantly suppose is in heaven, and to a host of "saints" who in their imagination are still living, whereas, in truth—

"The dead know not anything" (Eccl. 9:5).

As true followers of the Lord, let us endeavor to present our petitions in a manner that will be acceptable to our Heavenly Father, and address them to Him.

The English words "pray" and "prayer" are translated from various Hebrew and Greek words having such meanings as—
ask, supplicate, to bend or bow down, petition, intercession, pouring out, beseeching, etc.

James tells us (1:17) that—

"Every good and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights."

Hence we should "ask of God," as he advises in v. 5.

It will be profitable to consider some of the notable prayers of the "holy men of old," that we may ascertain the manner of approach and form of

phraseology they chose in their supplications. In Gen. 18:27 we read—

"And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes. Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous; wilt Thou destroy all the city for lack of five?"

Do we always approach God in fear and reverence, with a full consciousness of our insignificance and His exalted majesty? Let us ever guard against the slightest presumption or carelessness or forgetfulness of His greatness and holiness. It is so easy to slip into this habit, especially in giving thanks for our meals. We must always approach in the frame of mind of David as he gazed at the immensity of the night heavens:

"When I consider the heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained—what **is man**, that Thou art mindful of him?" (Psa. 8:3-4).

Again James tells us (5:16) that the—

"Effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

We see this well illustrated in Moses, the "man of God"—

"When Moses prayed to the Lord, the fire was quenched."

The fire had been sent as a punishment upon Israel (Dt. 9:26)—

"I prayed therefore unto the Lord, and said, O Lord God, destroy not Thy people and Thine inheritance which Thou hast redeemed through Thy greatness, which Thou hast brought forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand."

The prayer offered by Solomon on the occasion of the dedication of the Temple at Jerusalem is a beautiful one and worthy of much study. How happy Israel—and Solomon himself—would have been if they had maintained the spirit of this wonderful prayer (1 Kings 8:23-43)—

"Lord God of Israel, there is no god like Thee, in heaven above, or in earth beneath, Who keepest covenant and mercy with Thy servants that walk before Thee with all their heart.

"The heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee.

"What prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all Thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands toward this house:

"Then hear Thou in heaven Thy dwellingplace, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart Thou knowest: for Thou, even Thou only, knowest the hearts of the

children of men.

"Moreover, concerning a stranger, that cometh out of a far country for Thy Name's sake, when he shall come and pray toward this house, hear Thou in heaven Thy dwellingplace, and do according to all the stranger calleth to Thee for; that all people of the earth may know Thy Name, to fear Thee"

And he concludes with the majestic words (2 Chron. 6:41)—

"Now therefore arise, O Lord God, into Thy resting place, Thou, and the ark of Thy strength: let Thy priests be clothed with salvation, and let Thy saints rejoice in goodness."

Deep humility and godly reverence is manifested by the great king of Israel. How well and worthily he began!

We turn now to the righteous Daniel, who is classed with Noah and Job as the three outstandingly righteous men of their times, as indicated by the words of God to Ezekiel (14:14)—

"Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it (the land of Israel), they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God."

The sins of Israel had reached such a point that even the "effectual, fervent prayers" of these righteous men could not have helped them. From Dan. 2:18 we learn how Daniel advised his companions (when the decrees of Nebuchadnezzar went forth) to pray, urging them—

". . . that they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret, that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon."

And as a result, we are told, "The secret was revealed to Daniel." We call attention especially to his reaction. Often we pray earnestly for something in a time of stress and danger, and then as soon as the danger passes we go our way and forget to be thankful. But Daniel exclaimed (vs. 20-23)—

"Blessed be the Name of God for ever and ever. I thank Thee and praise Thee, O Thou God of my fathers, Who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of Thee."

In ch. 9 we find an outstanding and instructive prayer which shows us the deep humility and reverence which should characterize God's servants in approaching the Great Creator in prayer and supplication.

We note first the intensesness of Daniel's desire and entreaty (v. 3)—

"I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes."

Then his address to God, recognizing His greatness, and the certainty of His Word, and the class to whom alone He looks with mercy and favor (v. 4)—

"O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love Him, and to them that keep His commandments."

Then see how in love for his people he classes himself with the wicked Israelites and prays for them. We are reminded of how Jesus was made one with his erring people, that he might mediate for them, and bring God's blessing upon them. See how many times throughout this prayer he says "we," "our," and "us," in speaking of Israel's failures and transgressions—

"We have sinned and committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled . . . Neither have we hearkened . . . O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto Thee, but unto us confusion of faces" (vs. 5-7).

What a model prayer for Israel and all God's servants in all ages! This was at the end of the pronounced 70 years of punishment, at the beginning of which Ezekiel was told that even Daniel's prayers would be of no avail to avert the punishment. But now the long-awaited time of promised regathering was at hand, and Daniel prays earnestly for its fulfillment.

We turn from the prayers of Daniel, the "man greatly beloved," to Jesus himself, the "beloved Son in whom God was well pleased." Prayer was his great strength **and comfort**. **On** occasions he "continued *all night in prayer to God*."

Where do we find any support **for the teaching that we may** pray to any but *God alone*? Truly Jesus did tell his disciples that they should "Ask *in my Name*," and God would hear—

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my Name, He will give it you.

"Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my Name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:23-24).

There is much meaning to "asking in Jesus' Name." *We* must be "in his

Name," and our prayers must be in harmony with the great purpose that is centered "*in his Name.*"

In the model prayer which Jesus gave his disciples in answer to a request from one of them, there are many things we may learn. First, it is worth noting that Jesus *set the example* by praying before them, and then allowed scope for the disciples to ask that they might receive the spiritual instruction. This is in harmony with his teaching—

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

God delights in the prayers of the righteous, even though His purpose is established and He knows all the needs of His people before they ask Him. He delights in their prayers, for it indicates their interest and desire toward Him, and He is pleased to let them be "workers together with Him." Therefore we should never neglect prayer. "Pray without ceasing" is the Spirit's injunction. Our whole life must be a constant prayer.

The prayers of all true saints should be modeled after the pattern of this one known as "The Lord's Prayer."

"*Our Father*"— we realize that God is *our* Father in a special sense, apart from the genealogical descent from Adam who in one sense was the "son of God" (Luke 3:38), for as Paul says of the faithful few who are "in Christ" by baptism (Gal. 3:26): "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."

In Rom. 8:15-16 Paul speaks of our privileged position—

"For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father, the Spirit itself bearing witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."

"*Which art in heaven*" is a phrase which reminds us the Father is a real Being located in a dwelling-place, which, although far removed from the earth, is readily accessible by prayers which ascend like sweet-smelling incense to the throne of grace, through our High Priest and Mediator "who ever-liveth to make intercession," for—

"There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5).

Arising from this thought, Paul continues (v. 8)—

"I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy

hands, without wrath and doubting."
There is much food for thought in the expression "*holy hands.*"

"*Hallowed*"—or, as the Hebrew word implies, *Set apart* "be Thy Name." With what awe and reverence we should always approach and call upon that holy Name! "*Name*" implies many things—identity, authority, power, honor, majesty, purpose, allegiance, protection, security, manifestation—all the scriptural thoughts bound up with the great purpose arise from the contemplation of the Name of God—

"The Name of the God of Jacob defend thee" (Psa. 20:1). "I will write upon him the Name of my God" (Rev. 3:21). "Save me, O God, by Thy Name" (Psa. 54:1).

"*Thy Kingdom come.*" The all-important thing comes first; requests for our own needs are always secondary in importance. Do we realize this in our prayers?

For "*Lead us not into temptation,*" the Diaglott has, "Abandon us not to trial," which would seem to be the intended meaning, in accord with other Scripture, as 1 Cor. 10:13—

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

James (4:3) rebuked some who—

".. ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."

This should be a deterrent to us from asking in a similar selfish, thoughtless manner, for that is not the purpose of prayer—just to petition for a satisfaction of our desires. Few men pray except when they want something, but the children of God know that prayer has a much higher and more beautiful purpose—even *praise and worship and adoration and gratitude for the glory of the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

We know from Paul's request for the brethren's prayers that it is our duty to pray for our brethren; also for the sick and afflicted, for "The prayer of faith shall save the sick." That is, the combined prayers of faithful brethren and sisters will be helpful if offered in reverential faith, and if it is in harmony with God's will and all-seeing love to

grant their request.

The example of Elijah's strong faith in prayer is cited for our profitable contemplation. When trials or temptations assail us, Jesus' words to Peter and the other disciples should warn us to:

"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit (or mind spiritually enlightened) indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. 26:41).

Jesus' gentle words of warning and exhortation to his disciples when he returned to them from his terrible vigil in Gethsemane—"Why *sleep ye, rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation*"—*seem* a fitting watchword for all his saints. Let us keep them ever before our minds.

And may we, dear brethren and sisters, follow the example our Lord and Master so often has given us by precept and **example**, and "*Pray always, lifting up holy hands*" to our Heavenly Father, "without **wrath and doubting.**"

Studies in Biblical Chronology

Part Three

In our previous article, we set out the chronology for the events recorded in the Bible's pages. As we mentioned at the outset, both the chronology and, in many cases, even the events themselves are challenged by the world's historians—and sadly, by many of the world's religionists.

As we stressed in our first article, establishing correct pillars is of utmost importance in developing a sound chronology. If the pillars are wrong, then the whole structure must inevitably be wrong. And this is a major problem for the world's conventional chronologists—and, regrettably, for many Christian chronologists as well.

One of the principal pillars of both conventional and Christian chronology is the invasion of Shishak in the fifth year of Rehoboam, recorded in the Bible:

1 Kings 14:25-26 "And it came to pass in the fifth year of king Rehoboam, *that* Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem: And he took away the treasures of the house of the

LORD, and the treasures of the king's house; he even took away all: and he took away all the shields of gold which Solomon had made.”

But there is a profound controversy over who Shishak actually was. And as we shall see, determining his identity can introduce an error of nearly 300 years into Biblical chronology.

We are told that the fifth year of Rehoboam was 926 BC. Yet, as we have already demonstrated, Biblical chronology places the fifth year of Rehoboam at 975 BC—a full 50 years earlier than conventional reckoning.

Conventional chronologists insist that Shishak must have been Sheshonq I, Pharaoh of Egypt in the 22nd Dynasty, because the names appear similar and the conventional timeline aligns comfortably with the 926 BC date. But that 926 BC date, as we have shown, is achieved only by shortening the reigns of the kings of Judah by fifty years.

With that altered date established, conventional chronologists then work backward to determine the time of the Exodus. Using Sheshonq I as a fixed point, they count backward through the Egyptian dynasties and conclude that Ramesses II must have ruled in the 1200s BC (1279–1213 BC).

Then they read Exodus 12:37:

“And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Sukkoth, about 600,000 on foot and besides men and children.”

From this they reason that if Israel departed from a city called Rameses, then Ramesses II—who built Pi-Rameses and was one of Egypt’s greatest Pharaohs—must have been the Pharaoh of the Exodus.

Thus they conclude that the Exodus must have occurred in the 1200s BC.

But when they examine the archaeology of the 1200s BC, they find no compelling evidence of Israelites in Egypt, no evidence of a mass migration into Canaan in the early 1100s, and no sudden Israelite settlement pattern in that period. Unable to locate what they expect to see, they boldly declare that there is no evidence for the Exodus.

Further, when they consider the reign of Ramesses II, they ask: how could the catastrophic plagues described in Exodus have occurred during his reign and left no record? And how could a Pharaoh devastated by such events become one of the most celebrated rulers in Egyptian history?

On this point, they are correct—such a scenario makes no sense.

And from this manufactured contradiction, they conclude that the Biblical account itself must be a myth.

What they fail to consider is that the contradiction exists only because they have imposed their own dates upon the Bible. They determine when the Exodus must have occurred based on Egyptian chronology, and then judge the Bible by that imposed framework—rather than allowing the Bible to provide its own dates.

The Bible gives a specific date for the Exodus: 1495 BC—two to three centuries earlier than the conventional model allows.

That, in summary, represents the reasoning of the first and largest class of archaeologists—the vast majority of whom do not believe the Bible to be historically reliable, and who openly or implicitly use archaeology as a tool to disprove it.

Christian archaeologists, generally speaking, do believe that the Old Testament events occurred. They often identify legitimate archaeological correlations. But under intense pressure from conventional scholarship—and unwilling to appear outside the academic mainstream—they typically accept conventional dating as fixed and attempt to harmonize Biblical events within that framework.

They correctly observe in 1 Kings 6 that there are 480 years from the fourth year of Solomon to the Exodus. Using the 926 BC date for Sheshonq I, they add forty years to reach 966 BC for the laying of the Temple foundation, then add 480 years and arrive at 1446–1445 BC for the Exodus.

Within conventional Egyptian chronology, that places the Exodus in the 18th Dynasty. So instead of Ramesses II, they select either Thutmose III or Amenhotep II—two extraordinarily powerful and successful Pharaohs—as candidates for the Pharaoh of the Exodus.

But Scripturally, this is impossible.

God did not allow the Pharaoh who defiantly resisted His command to survive and prosper. Scripture records that Pharaoh and his host perished in the Red Sea:

Exo. 14:23-28 And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, *even* **all Pharaoh's horses**, his chariots, and his horsemen. ... And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, **and all the host of Pharaoh** that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them.

Psa 136:12-14 “With a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. To him which divided the Red sea into parts: for his mercy *endureth* for ever: And made Israel to pass through the midst of it: for his mercy *endureth* for ever: **But overthrew Pharaoh** and his host in the Red sea: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.”

The Psalmist had no doubt that Pharaoh died in the Red Sea, along with the hosts of Egypt.

The Christian chronologists strain so much to conform to the world’s chronologists, that they end up denying parts of the Bible in order to

accommodate them. I was reading a booklet called Redating the Kings of Judah. And in it the author observed that:

“There's often a conflict between the chronologies of the Assyrians and the Bible. And unfortunately, the archaeologists will almost every time choose the chronologies of Assyria over the chronologies of the Bible.”

This is a very true statement. Even certain revisionist archaeologists, like David Rohl who we will discuss in the course of these discussions, believes the Assyrian chronologies to be essentially correct, though they are clearly at variance with Bible chronology, and even at variance with David Rohl's own chronology.

Confidence in the Assyrian chronology causes Christian archeologists to misdate things like the dates for the Kings of Judah, violating clear Scriptural dating and Biblical prophecy, and coming up with conclusions inconsistent with Biblical chronology. To match Assyrian chronology, they ignore the Bible prophesy of Ezekiel that there are 430 years from the foundation of the Temple in the fourth of Solomon to the destruction of the Temple in the 11th of Zedekiah. We have pointed out Ezekiel's prophesy of laying on his right side for 40 days, and his left side for 390 days, prophesying that there would be 430 days in this period. And we have shown that simply following the Bible dates for the reign of the kings that we come up with exactly 430 years for Ezekiel's time frame. No, they tell us. That is just a coincidence. We have to overlap the reigns of certain kings—violating Ezekiel's prophecy—and coming up with only 380 total years. —To Be Continued

Hints for Bible Markers

Psalm 25:15 – 21

“Mine eyes are ever toward the LORD; for he shall pluck my feet out of the net. Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me; for I am desolate and afflicted. The troubles of my heart are enlarged: O bring thou me out of my distresses. Look upon mine affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins. Consider mine enemies; for they are many; and they hate me with cruel hatred. O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be

ashamed; for I put my trust in thee. Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee.”

There are many things that can be said of David, he was persecuted by cruel and unjust enemies who sought to destroy him. Also he was a man of faith, who had trust and confidence in God as his shield and defender. One need scarcely point out that he was a type of the man of sorrows and a prophet of the Most High. And it cannot be overlooked, that David, through the Spirit of Christ, was inspired to testify in the Psalms of the Messiah. It must be realized that is easy to see David in the Psalms, for even in the world of the Christians they can occasionally see Christ in the Psalms, as testified by the many pocket Bibles containing the New Testament and Psalms. *“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.”* (1 Peter 1:10-11). The question becomes do we look to see mind of the Master within this book.

The next few verses of this Psalm are bringing us to the mind of Christ as he contemplates his horrific, ignominious, agonizing death at the hands of the Jews and Gentiles and his faith in this Heavenly Father *“for he shall pluck my feet out of the net”* or the grave. *“The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken.”* (Psalms 9:15). *“Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for thou art my strength. Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth.”* (Psalms 31:4-5). *“For without cause have they hid for me their net in a pit, which without cause they have digged for my soul. Let destruction come upon him at unawares; and let his net that he hath hid catch himself: into that very destruction let him fall.”* (Psalms 35:7-8).

Some may wonder about the verse which says, *“and forgive all my sins.”* The word translated sin is חַטָּאת חַטָּאת *chattâ'âh* which means offense or sin and is singular not plural. In the Septuagint the Greek word in this Psalm is ἁμαρτία *hamartia* which also means *sin* (properly abstract) or offence, and is also singular not plural, as the translators have made it. In the days of his flesh the character of Jesus was spotless but being of the seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham, of which no flesh clean *“how can he be clean that is born of a woman?”* (Job 25:4) or immaculate. He was flesh and blood *“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same;”* (Hebrews

2:14) which the apostle Paul calls “*sinful flesh*” and “*sin in the flesh*” (Romans 8:3). This consequence of being born of a woman was the root of struggle with that law of sin which was in his members, and that he overcame, was the sin (singular) which he asked to be forgiven for.

Psalm 25:22

“Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.”

“*Redeem Israel*” points of the future stage of Israel's development. The Kingdom of God, like the son of the living God, has two advents. Once through the power of the Deity, by his servant Moses bringing the people out of Egypt, through the wilderness, into the land that was to be their nation. The second Advent will also be through the power of God, by his beloved son, our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. The key is the meaning of the word “redeem” as it is referenced to the mission of the Son of God. Where it is used in Scripture in relation to the nation of Israel it simply means “bringing back.” One of the definitions Mr. Webster has for redeem is “to liberate or rescue from captivity or bondage.” In other words, to bring back from captivity or bondage.

When Israel is redeemed by Christ it will become a paradise in the midst of the earth as it is the principal object of his care. “*Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.*” (Isaiah 60:21). This is the promise made to Jerusalem when Isaiah speaks of the millennial reign. Indeed, the prophet speaks of a glorious future: “Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise.” (Isaiah 60:18). “*But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them.*” (Isaiah 65:18-21)

To be continued next month, should the Lord will. bro. Beryl Snyder