

God's Way Out

“For Us, And For Our Little Ones”

Ezra 8:21.

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THERE are scores of happy experiences in the life of every man, woman, boy, and girl. But there are also scores of perplexities, problems, and difficulties, from which we are eager to find a way out.

And God knows the way out. He can solve every one of your problems-financial problems, health problems, social and business problems. He can solve the family perplexities. He knows the way out of national difficulties, the way out of the world’s great turmoil.

God knows the gloomy path of bereavement and of separation from loved ones. He knows the way out of these clouds and darkness into the sunlit gardens of joy and happiness. The Bible stories show the way. Read in this book how God delights to make the Way Out clear and plain to those who trust Him. Your heart will thrill with new hope as you recognize here your own difficulties and God’s solution.

Sometimes the details of stories have been illuminated by the lantern of visualization or imagination. But the oil has’ been drawn from reliable sources and has been well refined. May the light of this volume cast the rich golden glow of hope and confidence on the path of every reader.

“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 1:79.

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1. God's Way of Joy and Happiness

If you would have your heart thrill with a new hope, read in this chapter of God's great plan for His children as shown at the world's beginning.

A HUSH falls over the group of waiting people at Southampton dock as the giant Queen Mary comes slowly and silently into her berth. For ships that sail the ocean have a strange fascination for the hearts of men and women. "Here she comes! What a majestic sight!" says a watching woman in a low voice.

"Yes, how smoothly she glides in!" responds the man with her, almost awe-struck as he glances up at the huge bulk of the vessel, and thinks of her 81,000 tons.

"You would never think she would roll and pitch out in the Atlantic, would you?" he asks. "It would look like a mighty tidal wave and an earthquake if she did that in here." "But the waves don't slow her down, do they?" she says.

"No, very little. She goes over thirty miles an hour, storm or shine. Over three thousand miles in just over four days. No wonder the company is proud of her captain-and her designer." The woman's voice is a little husky now. "Just look at the people on the decks now. They're waving handkerchiefs and shouting, all excited, to their friends down here on the dockside." And she furtively dabs her eyes, while he sets his teeth just a little tighter.

For somehow, at this time one instinctively feels that, not just three thousand passengers, but three thousands hearts and three thousand life-dramas are here. People loving, hoping, rejoicing, listening, shouting-waving wildly. One feels that an ocean liner like this is a miniature of our planet as it sails through space-a miniature of our old Mother Earth. The vessel which God designed for the home of mankind.

It is an interesting comparison. Here is the Queen Mary, in her time record-breaker of the Atlantic; on the other hand is "Mother Earth," the mighty and majestic vessel that carries us all.

This floating globe, the Earth, with its living freight of over two thousand million hearts, this giant sphere of six thousand quadrillion tons, goes travelling through space at 66,000 miles an hour.

Yes, sixty-six thousand miles an hour! And without a rumble or a quiver! That is two thousand times as fast as the Queen Mary. Mother Earth makes her great voyage around the sun-a voyage nearly six hundred million miles in length-and covers the whole of the course in one year. What an ocean-greyhound of space! What a dramatic voyage!

But our world is just one of a glorious company which the Lord God caused to travel around the sun. It is one of a fleet of nine worlds and a thousand or more smaller craft-little globes.

Nine great revolving worlds-and possibly all of them bearing hearts that feel and love-all having as interesting an individuality as the boys and girls of a family. For the Creator of all worlds is a lover of individuality, and can easily adapt His creatures to the widely different conditions on the other worlds.

Mercury, the Sparkling World, He made to hover near the Sun. We see it only at dawn or in the evening. Venus, the radiant Veiled Planet, He made to be twin of our Earth in size. If you wish to see what our Earth on her voyage looks like from a distance, gaze at fair Venus in the evening sky. Watch Venus as she sails by the beacons of star land and the light-ships of outer space.

Mars, the Ruddy World, He made to glow with orange light. He formed Mars with mysterious white-caps, strange gray spaces and changing lines, and with two small moons. Jupiter He made as the Giant World, ten times the diameter of our Earth. Cloudy bands cross Jupiter's face and eleven moons circle around the planet.

Saturn is "The World of the Beautiful Ring." What a crown of praise it is to its Creator! It is 70,000 miles across, a huge world with an immense ring, or disk, floating around it, and with ten moons wheeling near by. Neptune and Uranus-the Creator made these almost twin worlds, about four times the diameter of our own.

Pluto-the Far-Away World-was only discovered a few years ago. It is the outermost known world of the Sun's family. And our Earth-our home-with its oceans and continents, lakes and seas, mountains and forests and plains, with our one friendly moon circling near by-the Creator of all good made this Earth as our home and the home of our kindred.

Strangely checkered has been the story of our planet and its people. It is a record of different hearts-generous and jealous, loving and hating, kind and cruel, loyal and treacherous, modest and vain, mild and arrogant.

Whether gentle or violent, trembling or turbulent, weak or strong, good or bad, all of them are objects of earnest solicitude on the part of the heavenly Father. What is His way out for them from the unlovely experiences of the present time into the eagerly desired ideal world?

When the Foundations of Our Home Were Laid What a marvelous theme for a moving picture would be the first thrilling week of Earth's romantic story-its first seven days! For "in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day." [1] That is the divine account of the creation of our world. There, too, is the reason we have a week of seven days. It has come down to us right from the week of creation.

And-strange fact-men all over the world, good and bad, atheists, infidels, Jews, Christians, pagans-are even now, by their observance of the seven-day week, testifying that the great Creator fashioned this world in that selfsame period of time-a week. There is no other feasible explanation for the custom of dividing time into seven-day periods. Think of it!

Twenty or thirty years ago many of our fathers, in the first flush of interest in some new scientific theories, began to feel it difficult to believe that such a mighty and wonderful planet could have been created in six literal days. But now, as knowledge has increased, those doubts are scarcely worthy of consideration. Our world is seen by the astronomer to be but as a speck of dust in comparison with the immeasurable universe. It is as nothing for the Eternal God, the Creator of the orderly, marvelous universe, to make a new world in six days-or in six hours, should He so choose.

Yes, what an amazing spectacle was the first week of Earth's history! There were thrilling, miraculous movements of masses of earth and oceans of water. The light of God appeared in heaven. The life-giving atmosphere bathed the new-formed globe as it revolved in its magnificence in its appointed setting. On the first day-Sunday, as we now call it-light appeared. On Monday, the firmament surrounded the earth. On the third day, mighty continents rose from the ocean. Continents with wide plains and lofty hills. What great ebbing tides and roaring floods there were as the waters flowed down to the lower levels! What valleys and river beds they carved out on their way! How our geologists would have loved to watch it!

And as the waters receded, God's voice spoke the word of command-and the land brought forth its grass, its herbs, and its trees. Just as if it were a speeded-up film, graceful ferns slowly uncurl and reach upward. The flowers open. The trees appear.

It is a divine marvel of creation. A multitude of spots of green appear on the dark earth. Thousands of rootlets are pushing downward into the rich soil. Thousands of pairs of seed-leaves are pushing up from the ground. Other pairs of leaves unfold from between them. Behold, the plants are a foot high! They are little chestnut saplings.

Watch them! You can actually see them growing. They are now three feet high, ten feet, twenty feet. Hundreds of leaf buds, then flowers, burst out on them. Behold, here is a whole grove of chestnut trees!

And looking around on this third day of creation you see this amazing growth everywhere. Everywhere there is rising the glory of flowers and plants and trees. Here is food in abundance for the creatures soon to come. All nature is awaking to joyous life.

Not only wisdom-divine ingenuity-but a lover's extravagant affection and care were shown in these gifts of the great Designer. The beauty He placed in the roses, the lilies, the violets, and other flowers has gladdened the heart of man and woman since the world began. What an infinite variety of form these flowers have! Stars, circles, cups, chalices, and vases are all seen in these blooms. Every color and tint is found in their petals.

Then you mark the bewitching enchantment of perfume of a thousand delightful varieties, enrapturing the heart and captivating the mind, and the heart is forced to say, "Not only to give life, but to give happiness to His creatures was God's power manifest." The Sun Appears-and the Moon The events of the first Wednesday, the fourth day, can never be fully understood by mortal man. Here is portrayed the creation of the glorious sun and the shining moon. Can it be possible? Insects playing with grains of sand might more easily understand the building of the Queen Mary, or a modern broadcasting station.

But the account of it is as clear as the day. Attested by the most truthful One who ever lived, an eyewitness-Christ Jesus the Lord! The end of the day and the beginning of the next was marked by the setting sun for the first time. The new May" began not at midnight, but as the sun sank below the horizon.

The Living Creatures Are Coming Thursday-the surface of the water is troubled by new life beneath. Shoals of fish are moving below. See, they leap high in the air! And there, they splash joyfully back into the water!

The silence is broken again, and new forms break fluttering into the air. They move erratically at first; but their wings soon find freedom, and we exclaim: "The birds! the birds! Here are the birds-beautiful creatures! All with the gift of flight!" From a dazed revelation of creation in the morning, they are now awake and alive to the joys of their new existence. Here are the birds of paradise, the eagles, the gulls, the thrushes, the swallows, the tiny wrens-even the butterflies and the bees. They all have this wondrous power of flight.

More and more the modern airplane is patterning after these flying creatures, and one cannot help but feel that a study of the great Creator's work is the quickest path to a more complete knowledge of flight.

"The sweep-back of the wings gives greater stability," says an airplane enthusiast. And I think of the swallow's wings.

"It isn't so much the upward slant of the planes that lifts the machine. It's the vacuum formed behind the hump." And I think of the wings of the albatross and the sea-gull which follow the ships.

"It's the streamline shape that gives the least resistance." And again I think of the shape of the birds and the shape of their graceful wings. And a voice says, "Yea, and God knew all these things six thousand years ago." The sixth day, Friday, was the last of God's divine working days in the creation of our world. Cattle appeared, browsing peacefully on the new grass. Other animals of great variety came into being. Then our first parents were created. Adam, the man, and Eve, his companion, for whom the world had been prepared.

Did Man Appear By Chance?

No! it was no accident that man appeared on the earth. It was specially for him that the world had been designed. God declared that it would have been made in vain if it had not been inhabited. [2] So God created Adam, the first man, who was to be king of the new world and the forefather of all its inhabitants.

What a royal ancestry man had! He was formed in the image of God. Science declares: "There can be no life without preexisting life." God declares: "I am that pre-existing Life." While the animals of Earth were called into existence by the command-by the word of God-the Creator specially shaped and fashioned man out of the dust of the ground. Formed him with loving care as a sculptor fashions his masterpiece.

Then the Creator bent low over the form He had sculptured. "The lips of the Creator drew close to those of man. Who shall say they did not touch with the kiss of love? Has not that sign been the sacred symbol of love ever since?

"See, now God breathes into man the breath of life; and man becomes a living soul.

"That which had been dust, moved. The breast heaved, the heart began to beat. Warmth and color came to the cheeks. The eyes opened and man gazed into the face-full of love and glad welcome-the face of his Creator.

"And who shall say that no fond embrace was given? For not merely life, but a life full of love and joy, was the Creator's design for the one He had formed." [3] Adam seems to have been of giant stature and of great physical strength. [4] Made only a little lower than the angels, he was of keen intellect and quick understanding. From the Scriptures it seems that he was clothed with a soft light or radiance, [5] like that of the angels, and needed no artificial clothing. This robe of light, illuminating everything he approached, may have revealed to him the secrets of nature, of leaf and blossom and tree, which by us are but dimly discerned.

Then God provided a companion who should bring great happiness to the heart of Adam. A companion who should be so like himself as to join in all his feelings and interests, yet with the charm of many attractive dissimilarities.

For the law of heaven is not exact similarity. Heaven does not cast its creatures in one mould. No, the members of God's great family of heaven and earth were all made with some special gift and with some charm of individuality so that all would be helpful to one another, be dependent on one another, and be blessed by one another's talents. [6] No one is fully complete in himself.

Thus God made the Man so there would always be a void without Woman. Adam realized this void in a special way after the animals of earth had passed before him, for in none of them could he find the companion he needed. So as he slept, God took from his side a mysterious bone, and by divine transmutation formed from this living substance a lovely woman. Like Adam, she was clothed with a beautiful garment of soft light-her bridal dress.

Fairest of Earth-how Adam's heart thrills with joy as he opens his eyes and gazes upon her, and notes the quick eager response of happiness on her face. As he rose, and when they stood in the shade of the great trees, their figures shone out like celestial beings.

This was earth's first marriage. What happiness filled their hearts as they saw one another! "How good God was to give me you," rose the thought of grateful joy in both their hearts. And then, as our poet Tennyson so wonderfully expresses it:- "Love took up the glass of time and turned it in his glowing hands; Every moment, lightly shaken, ran itself in golden sands:

Love took up the harp of life, and smote on all its chords with might:

Smote the chord of self, which, trembling, passed in music out of sight." [7] What happiness there was in the clasp of the hand and the touch of loving lips! Thank God that a little of Eden has survived the rough winds of time and still exists in the love of man and maid.

How Adam rejoiced in his new God-given companion with her quicker intuition, her swifter appreciation of the beauty of the flowers, their delicate perfumes, and of every other loveliness displayed in nature! In Eve (as he called her), with her physical beauty, her gentleness, tenderness, and swifter sympathy, he found just the delightful companion his nature craved for.

Eve-hers were the nimble feet, the deft hands, beautiful hair, sweet breath, the grace and beauty of young womanhood. How Adam appreciated the music in her heart which brought song to her lips!

Man-his were sinewy arms, lithe limbs, the giant strength and honor of noble manhood. With laughter and love in his speech, great plans in his mind, joy and peace in his heart, and constant helpfulness for her.

With the companionship of each other their hearts were filled with the sheer delight of living.

The New Home - The Bridal Gift "Where shall we make our home?" then came the thought to Eve, as it comes to every bride-to-be. "Where shall be our home?" Was there a smile on the face of the Creator as He listened? The Father of love had not forgotten to provide a home for His children. To complete their happiness He had prepared a lovely home for them in a spacious garden in the most beautiful part of the country of Eden.

In this garden, which seems to have stretched for scores of miles in every direction, grew majestic trees of every description and beauty of form. Abundance of fruit hung before them on every hand. Here were valleys glorious with flowers-ablaze with blossoms-and fields of rich grass of living green. The melody of bird songs and the music of breeze or stream delighted their ears on every hand. A broad, peaceful river of crystal water flowed through the glades and woodlands. Every bend brought to them a new picture of beauty until it left the garden and then divided into four streams.

By the river's bank grew a marvelous tree whose fruit should prevent disease or death. It was the tree of life. As long as they had access to this tree they could never die. No pain of head or heart or limb was to find place in that garden of old. No fever would be found there, no decay, no enfeeblement of mind or body, no distressing weariness.

No, eating of that tree they would renew strength and vigor, and all the powers of mind and body would increase daily. Age lived far off; they never dreamed of pain. Eating of that tree of life they would live for ever. Evil had no place in the hearts of the two lovers. Love, joy, and peace, gentleness, goodness, confidence in God, and self control-these virtues ruled with kindly hand and made music in their souls.

The "Birthday" of the World God was present on earth in a special personal way during the creation. And though His work was finished as the sun sank on Friday evening, it is not recorded that He then left the world.

No. On the seventh day He "rested." The hosts of heaven, "the morning stars," sang together in joy, and God Himself rejoiced in His new-born children. Rejoiced as earthly parents rejoice over the birth of their treasured offspring. No wonder angels and man sang for joy: "Glory to God in the Highest. Great and mighty are Thy works, O Lord Most High!" To the newly created pair this must have been a day of loving companionship with God Himself. God Himself was their companion and teacher. They listened to His voice as He walked with them in the cool of the day. Never to be forgotten was the first wonderful rest-day, "the birthday of the world." "Saturday" almost seems a profane name to use for it.

"And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it." Made it holy; set it apart for a holy use; so that when the next Sabbath came the happy pair in the garden would rejoice to lay down their light tasks and have companionship with God in fuller measure than in the working days of the week. And every succeeding Sabbath was to bring a renewal of this blessed experience.

Even if they had never sinned, the Sabbath would have continued to be observed for ever. It had nothing to do with sin or sacrifice or redemption. It was not a type, shadow, or figure. It would have existed throughout eternity as a glad reminder that the great Father whom men worshipped was the living God, the Creator of the world. It exists still. God has commanded its observance that we may ever remember His love and power, and find rest and renewal of body, mind, and spirit as we worship Him. We should observe it and remember the paradise of God.

This beautiful garden of Eden, "Paradise," as it has been called, was to be the center of the new kingdom. In course of time the happy voices of children should be heard in these lovely groves. Here boys and girls should smile in their safe dreaming and awake to the joys of each new day with all the tireless vigor of healthful youth. And parents' hearts should echo their laughter with never a thought of care.

That home in Eden was to be Earth's first "Garden City." It was God's plan that as the human race multiplied they would spread out from this "mother-country" to all parts of the world, making homes all over the earth after the model of Eden.

So would all men in the time to come look back to that free, beautiful Garden City as "the mother of us all." [8] Yes, the spirit of Eden was "God's way of joy and happiness."

REFERENCES:

1. Exodus 20: 11;
2. Isaiah 45: 18;
3. "The World's Quest," page 28;
4. Genesis 6:4;
5. Daniel 12:3; Matthew 13:43; Acts 3: 21;
6. 1 Corinthians 12:1-31;
7. Tennyson's "Locksley Hall";
8. Isaiah 54:1, 2; Galatians 4: 26, 27

2. When They Chose the Other Way

If you have been perplexed to know why so much wickedness exists on the earth now, and if you have wished for a remedy, read in this chapter how evil began, and how God plans to change things.

WHAT a joyous life was that in the Garden of God! Adam and his companion tended the flowers, they trained the young vines; they made their surroundings all that heart could wish.

The future was bright with promise for the new king and queen of Eden. The whole planet offered scope for thoughtful enterprise and happy planning, and they had all the long years of eternity before them for their love and labor.

God had endowed them with His own nature, so that love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, meekness, self-control, and faith were natural to them. Never a sharp-tempered word was spoken. Never a note of anger or suspicion arose.

But they were not automatons or robots. Lucifer, the great adversary of God, the fallen angel who had rebelled against the Creator, could not charge Him with having made man incapable of choosing for himself. They were perfectly free; they could choose evil instead of good-if they so wished.

No, not robots. In the garden was another tree which was the proof that Adam and Eve served God of their own free and happy choice. This tree, called "The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil," was the one and only tree which God had commanded them not to touch. "You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die," He had said.

But the tree was within their reach. There was nothing to prevent them from touching it, except loyalty to God by their own free and happy choice. Who would be content with any other kind of love or loyalty? Would a lover be happy if a reluctant woman were hypnotized into marrying him? Why, one great joy of courtship is: "She chose me when she might have chosen others. She marries me of her own free and happy choice." Would any wife be happy if her husband stood by her because he was mentally incapable of doing otherwise? Would children be happy if they were forced by threats to profess love to their parents? Never! And that is just the difference- between the government of God and the government of Satan. God depends upon the proclamation of His love to win men to choose His kingdom. False religions depend upon compulsion, threats, fear, loss, ridicule, unpopularity.

Happy days in Eden followed peaceful nights, week followed week, and month followed month in the gladness of God's presence with each other's love. All was new and beautiful and curious around them. Their interest was keen as that of a child in new surroundings, while their intelligence was little inferior to the angels.

They had no want to tempt them to steal, no fear to induce them to be untruthful, no lack to tempt them to covet. No need that might induce them to work on the Sabbath, no one to cause pain or suffering. No fear of death or disease. How could they be tempted to do wrong?

The Devil's Plot-Will It Succeed?

Satan-Lucifer, the fallen angel-looked on their happy lot with displeasure. How could he expect to induce them to transfer their loyalty to him?

Obviously there was only one place where he could hope to trap them. The forbidden tree was the place. But how? It was useless to hope to frighten them. He would endeavor to work on Eve's love of beauty-and beguile her by flattery of her own loveliness.

So this fallen spirit entered into the serpent, then a very beautiful creature, possibly gifted with the power of flight. Taking his place by the tree he waited his opportunity. One day, when Eve had wandered off alone, she found herself near the forbidden tree.

She looked on it with curiosity. It was very lovely. "Why has God forbidden us to eat it?" she wondered. It was the serpent's opportunity. He spoke up, as if incredulous: "Oh, Fairest of the Fair. Hath God said, You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" Eve stared, hearing a serpent speak. "We may eat of every tree of the garden, except this," she answered. "God hath said, 'You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" "You shall not surely die," said the tempter scornfully. "Why, if you eat this fruit, your eyes shall be opened and you shall be like gods, knowing good and evil. God knows this; that is why He commands you not to eat of it." Will She Trust the Devil?

Eve hesitated. Was that, then, the reason? Was God withholding the fruit because He was afraid they might have something of His power?

"The serpent has evidently eaten; he has not died," she reasoned. "Possibly this beautiful fruit has given him the power of speech. Shall I taste-or shall I trust God?" She lingered-always a dangerous procedure in temptation. Taking advantage of her hesitation the serpent pressed the fruit into her hand. A flutter of excitement passed over her-but she felt no harm. Impulsively she tasted-then ate of the fruit.

Still no harm followed. Perhaps she felt an exhilaration like that which sometimes comes to those who sin after long restraint. But not the least sensation of pain arose. She hurried excitedly off to her husband with the tempting fruit.

Adam's Consternation Adam listened with alarm. He was not deceived. Not he! The serpent was the tempter, he was sure. [1] What should he do? There was Eve, beautiful as ever. Must she die! How could he live without her, should she be taken from him? Life would not be worth while without her companionship! "If she must die-then I will die with her," he resolved. He hurriedly took the fruit from her hand, and recklessly followed her example.

What Will Be the Result?

Suddenly they both became aware that the robe of light, token of their innocence and loyalty, was fading away. A little while-and it was gone. Then a sense of chill seemed to come into the garden. "Our Maker will know. Oh, yes! He will know," said the now frightened Eve to herself. "Oh, what shall we do?" They hurriedly fashioned some garments of leaves. But if the chill of body went, the chill of the heart remained. "Shall I taste-or shall I trust God?" questioned Eve. A familiar voice sounded over the quiet of the garden-a voice always loved before. "Adam!" it called.

"Hark! That is the voice of God calling." They hid themselves in confusion.

Was there a sound of grief in the Voice which was now calling again? It was heard clearly in the quiet of the garden. "Adam, where art thou?" it called.

There was no hiding possible from those loving but searching eyes. "I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself," Adam responded.

"Has thou eaten of the tree?" asked the Voice-still a loving voice, yet now in their guilt, almost terrifying.

What will Adam answer? Will he choose the right and manly path? Will he confess his wrong, endeavor to shield Eve, and take the blame himself? Love and loyalty do such things.

No, he said what once he would have thought impossible:- "The woman." "The woman Thou gave me," she tempted me, "and. I did eat," said he, now the self-excuser, who a little while before would have died for her. This is what sin does.

And she, left to herself, said that which she never would have said before:- "The serpent." "The serpent," he "beguiled me, and I did eat." Thus they excused their sin.

What Had They Done?

Eve disobeyed God-and believed Satan. She disbelieved the Father of all good, and believed the father of evil. She distrusted Him who loved her, who had provided all to give her happiness-and she trusted instead him who had sought her destruction. She chose to cast off her loyalty to God, and chose the way of the father of lies. And Adam did the same-and then endeavored to throw the blame on Eve, and on God.

The Sentence of Justice “And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou has done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shall thou go, and dust shall thou eat all the days of thy life:

“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her Seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shall bruise His heel.

“Unto the woman He said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shall bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

“And unto Adam He said, Because thou has hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and has eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shall not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake. In sorrow shall thou eat of it all the days of thy life; “Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shall eat the herb of the field; “In the sweat of thy face shall thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it was thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shall thou return.” [2] Sadly thus spoke God to the erring children of His love. They must leave the garden, He said, and the tree of life. They must face toil, and experience pain, and finally, death.

Had they been left to themselves forever that would have been the end of their lot. For the wages of sin is death-for eternity. [3] Unless some miracle were performed, never again would the joy of a sinless heart in happy Eden be theirs. They would perish. After death they would never taste the joy of each other’s company again.

God’s Love Will Find a Way Out But because God so loved the world, He would give His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. [4] The Son of God would suffer a cruel death that they might live again for ever. If they henceforth chose to be His, and trusted in His sacrifice for them, they would one day be raised from the dead and be restored to Eden together with a multitude of their trusting children.

Probably when Adam and Eve understood that the plan for their salvation called for the death of the Son of God, they felt how great was God’s love for them, and how great was their sin. If only they could turn back the course of time and begin again, how different things would be!

But now, they must leave those beautiful groves where so much happiness had come to them. Cherubim with flaming swords were stationed there to bar the way to the tree of life. Sadly they left the garden. “Our beautiful home!” wept Eve. “Our beautiful home!” Why They Must Leave Their Home If Adam and Eve and their descendants had been allowed continued access to the tree of life, they would have lived for ever. Eating of its fruit from day to day, they would never grow feeble or old. This would be a boon worth more than caskets of diamonds if men were always loyal and helpful to one another.

But if men continued in sin-what then? Who would wish that murderous Cain or cruel Nero should live for ever, ever growing more fiendish? Who would desire that the brutal Sennacherib, the scheming Pharaoh should prolong their cruel days? Who would wish to extend for ever the life of the murderous baby-killers, the freedom-suppressors, the torturers, deceivers, and adulterers of our own day? They would be ever growing in fiendishness as their years increased. No, it was in mercy to the world that sinners were excluded from the tree of life.

But What Was the Outside World Like?

In itself there was little “punishment” to Adam and Eve in being sent into the world outside the garden. True, there was a curse now resting on the ground. Thorns and thistles began to grow, and men would have to till the earth in the sweat of the brow. But it had been cursed “for man’s sake,” so that the extra labor now involved would keep him from an idleness which would have been disastrous under the new conditions. Invigorating victory over thorn and thistle after hard battle would inspire him in the conflict against the thorns and thistles which grow too soon in the human heart.

It had always been God’s plan that man should multiply and completely fill the earth. From the beginning it had been His design that they should spread out from Eden and fashion the whole earth after the mode of the garden. The plains and valleys of the whole world were still in their primeval beauty and fruitfulness. So even now, outside its angel-guarded gates, if they chose to be loyal to God and

their fellow men who should be born, Adam and Eve and their descendants would live in rich plenty, and life might go forward with gladness and song for centuries. Life might still be full of blessing.

What Course Would They Now Choose?

Alas! Cain, Earth's first-born, chose to harbor jealous feelings against his brother Abel; and in a fit of temper killed him. What tears and sadness came to Eve as a result! Her son Abel lay motionless in death. Her first-born was a murderer.

Then Lamech chose to marry two wives, Adah and Zillah. Others followed his example, and as a result a tide of sharp voiced bickering, jealousy, and crime has flowed through Eastern homes ever since. Sin often seems to be but a trivial thing. The light of time's lantern always shows it to be an accursed thing.

The next few centuries began to reveal the harvest which choosing sin always brings in its train. And surely we of the twentieth century need no one to convince us that sin leads to untold misery. Sin is a horrible thing. We have seen too much of its fruit in the cruel destruction of war, the young widow's tears and orphan children's grief. We know!

The "Law of Sin and Death" Cain's choice of violence was imitated by thousands of others in the old world, until God was forced to end it all by the Flood. They made force their choice-the fist, the club, the knife, the sword - until the whole earth was filled with murder, robbery, and violence. Under Satan's rule it seemed to become a law of man's being to choose to do the wicked and cruel thing. [5] If only someone could give men a new nature, give them back the spirit of Eden, so that they would always choose to do right, what a boon it would be! A new nature! The nature of God! That would be the way out. [6] But What Miracle-Worker Can Give a New Nature?

Thank God, the Lord Jesus Christ can. If we turn our back on sin and invite Him to come into our poor hearts, He will take possession of us and give us His own loving and helpful nature. This is "conversion." Then as day by day we choose to do His will, trust in Him, love Him, and copy Him, He will restore in us the nature of the sinless pair in the garden-His own nature.

This is the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit. This "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," makes us free from "the law of sin and death," which was in us.' The Garden Will Appear Again At the time of the Flood the garden of Eden disappeared. Men sought its groves and its marvelous tree of life, but found it not. Four great rivers were named after those near the garden, but the four divisions of the river that flowed through those valleys ablaze with blossoms were gone.

That beautiful place which was to be the garden-like metropolis of the earth, "Mother of us all," had disappeared. But in his visions of the future, Isaiah the prophet saw her again, thronged with happy beings, as God had planned at the foundation of the earth. "Sing!" he cried to her with joy.

"Sing, O barren, thou that did not bear," Isaiah exclaimed; "break forth into singing thou that did not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, said the Lord." "Thou shall forget the shame of thy youth," rang out the cheering, comforting voice.

"For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee," came the glad promise of God. [8] Yes, God's glorious way leads right out of sin-and out of the ruin and disappointment left by the Flood, into Eden restored. And in the years that have intervened between lost Eden and our own time He has shown Himself always able to make a way out of every present difficulty and perplexity which the reign of sin has brought. Look up, you whose heart is sad or anxious because of some loss or some perplexity. Both you and your dear ones are precious to the Father in heaven. He will make your path clear and will cause your sorrows to vanish as you trust in Him and walk cheerfully in His way. [9] He knows the way to restore Eden in your heart as well as in the earth. [10] God's Way Out-read in the narratives which follow how He opened the way out for those who trusted in Him.

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6. 2 Peter 1:4;
7. Romans 8: 2;
8. Isaiah 54:1,4,7
9. Isaiah 43:1, 2, 4
10. Deuteronomy 11: 21.

3. The Wrong Way Led to Disaster

If you are wondering, “Why doesn’t God do something” to punish the wicked nations, read this chapter and see how surely God’s judgments follow oft-rejected mercy.

AFTER all the jokes that have been made about the story of the Flood, it has been discovered that Noah was a real man of flesh and blood—one of the young world’s outstanding heroes, and that the Flood was a mighty deluge which drowned the whole world and changed the whole surface of the earth.

Over two hundred different nations or tribes kept it in memory for centuries. Nigh five hundred traditions tell the story of this mighty catastrophe. [1] In more than five hundred different parts of the earth you yourself can actually see the havoc caused by the Flood of Noah’s day. Once you get the key you will be astonished by what you discover.

The Apostle Peter and the Apostle Paul both testified to the truth of the story. [2] They were men who would die rather than deceive, so their word is of weight. And the Lord Jesus Christ Himself witnessed to the accuracy of this strange narrative. [3] Certainly no one could accuse Him of falsification.

Noah himself became famous as the builder of the ship which weathered this greatest storm our old earth has ever seen. That huge vessel was called the Ark. It had the tonnage of the old Mauretania.

Noah’s ancestors were famous men. His father was Lamech, son of Methuselah, “earth’s oldest inhabitant.” Methuselah lived over nine centuries, and probably assisted in the building of the Ark. He died about the time it was launched. [4] His name in Hebrew actually signifies “when dead it shall be sent.” Three children were born to Noah and his wife: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. They have been famous for millenniums as the founders of the three great races of mankind.

If Noah was interested in the story of our world’s creation, and the drama of lost Eden, he had unparalleled opportunity for hearing it, for Enos, the grandson of Adam, was still alive when he was born.

Judging from the Bible description and by the contents of our earth, as we find them today, the world of Noah’s day was still a beautiful place to live in. There were no fierce extremes of climate, no rigors of cold and heat.

[5] Europe was warm and pleasant, and there was eternal spring near the North Pole. Coral grew in its beauty in the warm rippling waters of the arctic, and giant sequoia trees waved their branches where polar bears now amble along.

[6] Luxuriant grape-vines, oaks, walnuts, and magnolias grew in Greenland.

There was still an abundant supply of food for man and beast, and in that delightful climate the life in the open air could have been a perpetual joy. The earth also yielded her treasures and gave the men of that time precious stones, fine perfumes, gold and tin, iron and copper. [7] The saddles and bridles of their galloping horses were, beautifully inlaid with gleaming gold and shining white metal.

The men of those days were by no means savage pygmies or half-witted cavemen. Noah’s grandson, Mizraim, was founder of Egypt with its clever architects and skilled pyramid builders. Another grandson, Javan, was the progenitor of the Greek races, men of genius with a love of art and beauty. Another was the founder of Persia, and still another began the mighty race of the Assyrians. [8] Great Giants and Intellectual Leaders Many of the men of Noah’s day were giants in stature and strength. Life was short if a man died at four hundred. Many of them lived eight centuries. Think of it! Eight centuries of education for men whose intellect and memory were as extraordinary as their stature! [9] What opportunities they had! And they used them. Among these celebrities was Jubal, the father of music, who produced sweet melody from the harp and the organ. His brother, Tubalcain, was a master metal-worker who brought ringing music from his anvil to mingle with the strains of Jubal’s harp. Brass and iron he hammered and forged into useful implements for the men of old. [10] Earth’s women were beings of beauty, too, for they were near descendants of the beautiful Eve, earth’s first mother. In that fair land there was much misery and unhappiness. The record of those days is an extremely sordid one. The blacksmith’s father was a murderer and a polygamist. . His two wives, Adah and Zillah, had to listen to the gruesome tale of his crime in killing a young man. To their horror they found their husband was earth’s second murderer.

But those mighty men of old were not to be called atheists. Who could be an atheist when the garden of Eden was still to be seen on the earth? Who could disbelieve the record of the drama of Eden while there at those garden gates stood the glorious cherubim with that flaming, waving sword barring the way to the tree of life?

They had listened to great preachers, those strong-muscled men and fair women. Enoch had preached before them with impassioned fervor, telling of a solemn judgment to come. Opening before them those solemn scenes, he declared:- "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds." [11] Did they take heed to those solemn warnings? Did they cease to use the club, the knife, and the sword on their fellows?

No; very few changed their lives. Instead they ceased to respect the law of God, and the earth became full of violence, wrangling, fighting, quarrelling, bloodshed, cruelty, oppression, adultery, fornication, and all impurity. The Bible record declares:- "The wickedness of man was great in the earth." "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." "The earth was corrupt"-rotten to the core of the people's hearts.

Probably those who suffered under that violence asked: "Why doesn't God do something? Why does He allow wicked men to continue their violence? How often that question is asked today! "Surely the great Judge of the earth will take action!" Surely He will!

But often the roots of the wheat are twined around the roots of the tares. Often a good mother's heart-strings are twined around a wicked, cruel man. Her prayer goes up: "Lord, save my son; give him opportunity to change; to turn to Thee." A Catastrophe Coming- The Way of Escape So when God at last spoke, infinite mercy was blended with sure justice. The evil men should be destroyed-true! But a way out was provided for all who would believe. A great flood should destroy the wicked, but a ship-God's way out-was to be provided to save all who would believe.

"My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh; yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years," said God.

What an opportunity? God gave them one hundred and twenty years of grace-enough time for all to repent and for all to perfect their characters.

Abundant mercy was offered for all-but then followed the solemn warning: "Behold, I ... bring a flood of waters upon the earth," came the message of God to Noah. "I bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh. . . and everything that is in the earth shall die." A great world-wide catastrophe should swallow up those wicked men of old! Loudly the voice of Justice clamored from all the universe: "Let them be swept from the earth! They are not worthy the gift of life!" "Make thee a great ship," said the voice of Mercy to Noah. "Make a ship of strength that shall weather the mighty storm. Make it of hard gopher wood-pitch-wood-that shall resist long months of crashing waves. Then come thou and thy wife, thy sons and their wives into the Ark.... And urge the people to come into the Ark and be saved from the Flood. Declare unto them that whosoever will may come! Whosoever will may come!" Reverently Noah listened as the divine voice gave those minute directions.

"I am to build a ship of gopher wood," reflected Noah, "three hundred cubits long, her breadth of fifty cubits, her height thirty cubits! A mighty vessel that will be; large enough to house men and women and a host of animals and birds to repopulate the world after the waters subside. What material must be gathered! What work must be done! In truth we shall need the six score years which mercy has proclaimed. Let us begin. This Ark shall be God's way out for us." So earth's first ship was begun.

How practical were those measurements and dimensions! Why, the warship Oregon, built to these proportions, broke the record for speed in its voyage from San Francisco to the, Atlantic, via one of the wildest seas on the globe, the storm-swept Cape Horn route. The Ark was built for storms.

Was there room for man and beast? Yes, counting up the deck space the Ark had the tonnage of the old Mauretania over 30,000 tons. [12] They built the Ark of gopher wood-probably cypress durable, and unaffected by damp. The vessel was to be caulked and painted within and without with pitch. There was iron enough available to make strong joints, for had not Tubal-Cain, the smith, with his glowing forge, instructed men to work in iron and brass long before this time? So for one hundred and twenty years they built and fitted out this mighty ship.

God Is Not Mocked It may be there were popular preachers who said: "God is love; He is too good to punish sin." But plain speaking Noah declared: "God will punish every unforsaken sin with death. He will punish violence, cruelty, impurity, selfishness, idol worship, Sabbath-breaking, and neglect of parents. Forsake sin, and enter the Ark!" His own children came: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Their wives came, too. And that was all. Eight persons! For the sun arose and set as usual. The moon came up and went down as of old. There were no signs of a flood anywhere, [13] except this old man and his sons, hammering and sawing and working away on that great ship.

On with the dance! Sing with music of flute and harp! Dance with laughter and joking! But the hundred and twenty years passed. Suddenly-impossible! There were the animals coming, coming into the Ark! What supernatural power was impelling these dumb creatures? Strange feelings must have come over the spectators as they watched the animals come. What if Noah's preaching were true?

A Message of Mercy One hundred and twenty years of mercy! To us it is just as if some preacher in the early days of Dickens, 1820, or 1830, had begun preaching: "The end of the world is coming," and was, still preaching it in these nineteen fifties. What attitude should

we ourselves take if such a solemn message came to us from God? Probably many were startled at first and threw in their lot -and then grew careless as the with the shipbuilder-preacher years went by. Just as we do.

Many others, no doubt, said: "Oh, there's plenty of time" and delayed too long. How delay deadens conscience! Yet all those years they had the living preacher, Noah, warning them: "Cease from sin. Come into the Ark. The hundred and twenty years are passing." Every blow of the hammer and mallet said: "Come, come!" "Come for your children's sake. Bring them into the Ark. The great Flood is coming soon!" There stood Noah at the door. Earnestly he pleaded that they would board the ship of safety.

But no more came. Then "the Lord shut him in." The great door in the side of the Ark was closed. [14] Still no sign of a flood! Still the sun shone as usual. So men their way, eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, buying and selling-and laughing at the men in the Ark.

But the seventh day the Flood came. Dark angry clouds rose up and blackened the heavens. The thunder roared. Cataracts of water poured from on high. The rivers rose. Great waves came in from the sea. Subterranean waters burst through the earth's crust. The land began sinking beneath the waves.

Oh, for the safety of the Ark now! groaned the men and women who had laughed at its builder. See, the great ship is afloat; she is riding the waves. How she reels and plunges in those mountainous seas! What strange cries from those frightened beasts and birds inside! But they were safe-safe under the protection of God. Peace and gratitude gradually came uppermost in the hearts of Noah and his family.

That raging storm was such that even demons might fear for their lives. As the fury of the tempest increased, great tidal waves were hurled across the earth's surface, breaking up temples and palaces, throwing down idols, tearing up rocks, and felling forests, pouring mile-deep layers of mud and sand and gravel over the old surface of the earth. Crushing, grinding, and burying monster animals-mammoths, dinosaurs, fish, lizards, and reptiles-along with the cruel and bloodthirsty, selfish and evil men and women of those days.

Remembered for long ages was that mighty Flood. Among over two hundred peoples in nigh five hundred traditions the memory lingered for centuries. [15] What a solemn fulfillment of God's warning message! How did God bring about such a Flood?

Scores of the traditions suggest that great astronomical changes took place at the Deluge and played their part in causing that unforgettable catastrophe. From the Scriptures also this seems very probable. Here are four illuminating suggestions:-

1. It would seem that at creation the moon gave out light and heat like the sun, [16] and the sun gave out much more heat than at present.
2. The earth was apparently surrounded by an envelope of water vapor, thick at the equator and thin at the poles by centrifugal motion. Because of this vapor envelope no excessive heat penetrated to the tropics, but ample warmth came through in the northern and southern regions of earth. [17]
3. At the Flood the moon was by a miracle suddenly cooled, and the sun's heat reduced. As a result earth's great envelope of watery vapor condensed and fell as cataracts of rain.
4. The disappearance of the water-vapor envelope, the decrease of heat from the sun, and the lack of heat from the moon left the polar regions in the arctic cold which prevails today.

If these suppositions are true-why, even the moon's fair face bears the scars of the Flood to this very day!

For forty days and forty nights torrents of rain poured from the sky while floods of water gushed up out of the earth. And after the rain had ceased, the waters still prevailed until the mountain tops were fifteen cubits below the waves. [18] For five months the waves swept the earth with tremendous force. Fearful and long was the voyage for those in the Ark.

Then the waters began to subside. By mighty, miraculous forces the mountains were pushed upward out of the muddy tides and the wet land once more appeared. The sea-bed slowly sank to its resting-place as it had done on the third day of creation. The Ark floated safely among the mountain peaks of Ararat, in Armenia. [19] Still the Flood subsided, and on the glad New Year's Day, Noah and his sons broke open the roof and looked out over the landscape. Cold, moist fresh air greeted them; the atmosphere of a new world!

What a scene of devastation met their eyes! Mountain and valley, hill and dale, stretched out before them, gaunt and desolate. Miles and miles of mud and pebbles and shells appeared. Rocks and stones were strewn in confusion over the earth.

Gone were the idolaters with their shrines; gone were the murderers and cruel tyrants. Buried beneath the mud were the selfish, unthankful, and unholy adulterers of old. God's one hundred and twenty years of mercy had passed and the wicked were gone.

We See the Signs of It Still Signs of the Flood and fragments from the times of Eden still stare at us wherever we go. Sea shells and pebbles are found lifted high on the hills and mountains. Remains of huge animals are found below the earth in our great caverns. Mammoth elephants and horses are found frozen in the ice of Northern Siberia. In Greenland, Spitzbergen, and the Antarctic, as well as in our own land are found coal beds which are naught but the trees and the plants of the time of the Flood.

As the waters went roaring down to the sea, huge ravines were formed in the deep mud over which they flowed. Behold the Grand Canyon of Arizona! Behold the great chasm of Niagara! Behold a thousand other marvels formed at that time!

For scores of years, perhaps centuries, until this mud hardened into rock and shale and slate and stone, the ocean carved away continually at the soft land. See how the waters of the English Channel steadily hewed out Britain's southern coast until half a hill of chalk was washed away at Dover and two thirds of a hill of red mud-rock at Teignmouth.

How these remains witness of God's sure justice! Yet tender mercy is displayed on every hand.

"See, these beds of pebbles in the woods tell of God's justice," says the teacher to his wife.

"Yes," she replies, "but see how the bluebells are coming! Look, a beautiful dreamland of bluebells is covering the shingle left by the Flood! These lovely flowers are tokens of God's love and tender mercy for all." Oh, yes, beautiful flowers grow in profusion on the rugged Rockies. The rough, boulder-strewn wastes of Norway's fields are musical with the song of birds, and breath-taking with the beauty of the blue hepatica in spring. The valleys of the bleak Himalayas are often gorgeous with red, pink, and yellow wild roses and apricot blossoms-blossoms which show God's love and tender care for all, and remind us that He who brought Noah safely through the flood has promised us: "When thou passes through the waters, I will be with thee." [20] Even in the solemn scenes of the end of this world He will be our Ark and bring us safely through.

And one day God will restore the earth to its Edenic beauty. All marks of the great storm through which our planet sailed will disappear, and the joy and love of Paradise will be restored.

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4. Through Plenty and Famine to God

If ever you have wished you could have insight into the way God plans for the nations, this remarkable story will satisfy that desire. Read this strange fourteen-year plan.

THE Flood had been well-nigh forgotten-as we have well-nigh forgotten it today. But to those who forget that God can send or withhold the rain, it will come as a surprise to learn that divine providence once stepped in and definitely controlled Abyssinia's rainy season for fourteen years. That was "God's Great Fourteen-Year Plan." There were seven years of heavy rains, to prepare for seven years of scanty rains-seven years of famine.

For it now seems definitely established that Abyssinia's summer rains, filling the tributaries of the Nile, were responsible for Egypt's seven years of plenty as foretold in the story of Joseph in the Book of Genesis. [1] Meager rains in the Abyssinian mountains brought about also the seven years of famine that followed. The words used, "Years of famine," literally mean "Hunger Years"-the exact term the Egyptians used in speaking of years when the Nile flood ran low. And God not only controlled this but revealed it to the king in advance. He who sent a deluge that covered the earth also watches over the floods of the Nile.

The fishermen around Abyssinia's Lake Tana probably wondered about it the first year. What could be causing these strangely heavy rains?

Lake Tana itself, forty miles wide, poured out every rainy season a mighty volume of water through its overflow in the south. But this year, and for six years after, fed by a thousand rivulets and a million trickles from the mountains, it was enough to awaken widespread comment.

And when that overflow, the River Abai, was joined by the roaring flood of the River Didessa, the surging waters of the Jamma, the noisy Muger, the Rahad, and the Dinder, other rivers of Abyssinia, there roared down to meet the White Nile a sweeping flood of nigh ten thousand tons of water a second. [2] Ten thousand tons of brown, muddy-looking water every second! What a mighty torrent!

Outside of the rainy season this Abyssinian river-now called 'the Blue Nile-passes scarce two hundred tons of water a second. No mean river this! But when the White Nile from Victoria Nyanza, with its eight hundred tons a second, unites with this rough giant of a river from the Abyssinian mountains in flood time-what a mighty volume of water is sent swirling down the valley to Egypt!

Such a roaring flood would work havoc in most countries, but in the Nile Valley the annual inundation is received with joy. Big Nile, big harvest. Low Nile, little harvest. Even the small boys in Egypt knew that. There, where the patter of rain is seldom heard, it is the yearly flood which causes the vegetation to flourish. So, as the great river rose, there was gladness in the homes of Egypt.

"Overflow thy banks, O Nile, thou river of food. Cover and soak these parched fields! Splash through the sluices and the canals prepared for thee!" sang the people in their hearts. "Fill the waiting reservoirs!" "Rise, rise, O Nile! Out of thy fertilizing flood shall come fat cattle for our sustenance; ears of corn, full and good; wine of the grapes to fill our cups. Yea, rise, rise up, O Nile!" Such were the joyful hopes expressed in the Egyptians' songs of praise to the great river which brought the waters of Abyssinia over two thousand miles to bless their land. In the royal palace of Egypt, God revealed His plan for the future to Pharaoh in a strange dream, and the king felt when he awoke this was a revelation of tremendous import.

In the dream, Pharaoh stood by the River Nile. As he looked over its rippling expanse, he saw seven fine fat cows-water buffaloes-come splashing up out of the water. There was a splashing sound farther out in the river, and behold! seven lean, hungry, ugly cows follow the fat ones. To Pharaoh's astonishment the lean cattle at once attack the stronger ones and proceed to devour them. And after devouring them, the thin ones are still as lean-looking as before!

Then seven plump ears of corn grow up on one stalk of wheat. And behold! seven withered ears of wheat seize them and devour them. No wonder the great ruler of Egypt was puzzled, and called for his wise men when he awoke. No wonder his magicians and astrologers could give him no interpretation of the dream. But Joseph, the Hebrew man of God, being hurriedly brought out of prison, gave the explanation: "There shall be seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt-and then seven years of famine," he declared. "The famine shall be very grievous, so that all the plenty shall be forgotten." Pharaoh and his people well understood that the Nile was responsible for bringing Egypt food, but they worshipped the flowing river itself, forgetting Him who gave the rain to fill its channel. God in His love was now planning to send them a period of great prosperity, and so that they might recognize Him as the Giver of this good thing, He had caused Pharaoh to dream this dream and had raised up Joseph to explain it.

"What God is about to do, He is showing Pharaoh," declared the handsome young Hebrew interpreter. "There are coming seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt, and then seven years of famine." "This is a prophetic dream from God, O King. It is a light shining in a dark place. Store up all the surplus food during the seven good years so that there shall be food during the years of famine." What Will Pharaoh Do?

Pharaoh listened intently. What a simple interpretation! What a practical suggestion! After he had conferred with his ministers it was felt: "Here is the very man." Joseph was appointed to carry out the plan. That was God's way out of famine. That glimpse of the future which came by night enabled Egypt to lay up barns and barns full of corn-so much corn that she had sufficient for herself, and food to sell to other nations during the years of famine.

What a Fourteen-Year Plan!

What a hope-giving light from God! Into the gloom of the hunger years the prophecy shone with its message, "Not for ever! Seven years-and no more. Seven years-and no more!" "What God is about to do, He shows," said Joseph. Often God has set apart a period for some great plan. We do well to search the Scriptures for these prophecies which relate to our day. Perhaps we, in this twentieth century, are becoming dull of hearing to that Power which speaks to us through the Word of prophecy, through the fruitful harvests, through the falling rain, and the rising sun. Is not God still able to do wonders with the elements He has ordained?

Yes, God still sees our future. He will do good to those who trust Him. Do not fear to confide in Him. "God is good, O mighty King," whispered the waves of the rising Nile as the abundance of the first year's flood surged and rippled over the land. "Worship Him that made the fountains of waters, and forget the gods of wood and stone." "Yes," came the song of rustling corn and the tremulous vine leaves in the harvest months that followed. "Yes, praise Him who sent the vision and the dream. Praise Him who raised up Joseph-Zaphnath-Paaneah - the Revealer of Secrets." God was true to His word. The prophecy came to pass. In the seven years of plenty the earth brought forth grain by handfuls. Joseph, the one-time prisoner, now Grand Vizier or Prime Minister, wearing the king's gold chain about his neck, was able to gather supplies of "corn as the sand of the sea, very much until he left numbering; for it was without number." No wonder if his beautiful young Egyptian wife, Asenath, spoke with pride and tenderness of her capable, affectionate, high-principled husband.

After the Seven Years of Plenty Then God's great pendulum swung again. Prosperity, adversity! Prosperity, adversity! Both are God's agencies to lead the children of men out of trouble and back to Himself. After those seven years of plenty-"there shall arise after them, seven years of famine," Joseph had said. And, true to the divine word, the years of famine came.

The river rose so little in the eighth year-what had happened to the springs of the Nile? Where were those bountiful floods which had brought such prosperity to the land? Well might the priests chant: "Tell us, O Hathor! Help us, O Isis!" But Egypt's gods were dumb. The rains of Abyssinia had failed-or the seasons shortened, perhaps. But why? And why came there just now on Egypt's scant riverside growth that scorching, blasting wind of the eastern desert, spoiling even that which did chance to grow? Why? Because God had withdrawn His prospering hand. Adversity's voice is often heard when prosperity has called in vain. The churches fill in time of adversity; they empty in time of prosperity.

Egypt thought little of God or His messenger in the time of prosperity. But in the years of famine they were directed to Joseph. "Go to Joseph," the king instructed them. "God has shown him the way out of famine." The eyes of all Egypt were on Joseph. And Joseph satisfied their needs. The wonderful dream of Pharaoh was probably talked of in every town and village, in every market square and street. Joseph's testimony to the true God would be the subject of conversation in every home.

"Joseph's God has saved Egypt from death through famine. The gods of Egypt-Hapi, Hathor, Isis, Thoth-are powerless!" would come the conviction to every open mind. Just as in our day science, invention, education, and wealth without God, are powerless. But the influence of God's great fourteen-year plan was noised abroad far beyond the boundaries of Egypt. "All countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn; because that the famine was so sore in all lands," [3] says the Sacred Record.

Caravans came converging on old Egypt-camel caravans from the Sudan and Arabia-caravans with braying donkeys and snarling camels from Syria and Mesopotamia. Phoenician traders were shouting in their little ships as they approached the delta of the ancient

Nile. Traders from all lands chatted excitedly in the market-places of Egypt. For the famine was in all countries of the earth, and the news had spread that there was food to be bought in Mizraim's land-Egypt, the land of the Pharaohs.

The report was true. Here the merchants found the state corn stores were packed with golden grain in overflowing abundance!

To the strangers there was a mystery about all this. Egypt's parched fields showed that this land had suffered crop failures almost as severe as those at home. No wonder the merchants' tongues wagged excitedly as they puzzled over these strange contradictions. "Your fields are stricken with famine like ours, but you have stored up corn like the sand of the sea for abundance. Marvelous! When did you harvest all this grain? Did you know these hunger-years were coming?" And the answer was the strange story of the royal dream of eight or nine years before. A dream given by the God of all good to Pharaoh; interpreted by Joseph, who was re-named "Zaphnath - Paaneah" (Revealer of Secrets), worshipper of Jehovah, who knows the future and sends the sun and the rain for the blessing of His creatures.

What a drama! Idol-worshipping Ethiopians, Libyans, Assyrians, Phoenicians, Arabians-they go to Egypt for bread; they return with their sacks full, and with thankfulness to Joseph and his God. The nations who had wandered from God heard His voice again as their women sang at the millstones and ground out the wheat which His love and foreknowledge had supplied. God's way out, His great fourteen-year plan to bless the world by supplying their needs in time of famine-it would be the great news of that century. Probably a million lives-or more, perhaps-were saved by the wonderful dream-prophecy.

Sure as the incoming tide, the divine plan had gone into operation at the time appointed. And just as surely it closed.

When God's great clock showed the midsummer hour of the fourteenth year, the rains beat as of old on the dark faces of the fishermen on the shores of Lake Taila. Again the tributary rivers-the Didessa, the Muger, the Jamma, and the Dinder poured their floods into the Blue Nile with the fertile silt that was to make the parched lands of Egypt green once more.

This was God's way out of famine!

REFERENCES:

1. Encyclopaedia Britannica, article Abyssinia, page 85.
2. Encyclopaedia Britannica, article Nile, page 695.
3. Genesis 41:57.

6. The Way To The Prime Minister's Seat

If you have lost sight of someone you specially care for, read in this chapter and the next how marvelously God devised means of re-uniting loved ones. If you are anxious about a husband or son in danger across the seas-this chapter may give you fresh hope.

If those Syrian corn-buyers had halted their camels long enough at the noisy market in Egypt they could perhaps have heard the full romantic story of Prime Minister Joseph's early life-a story which might have increased their astonishment. For-wheels within wheels-God was working for Joseph at the same time that He was planning a way out from idolatry for the nations. God's plans for us also are often like that in these strange days, too.

Prime Minister Joseph was not an Egyptian. He was born in Syria, and his boyhood had been spent amid the sound of tinkling camel bells, the bleating of sheep, the lowing of oxen, and the braying of donkeys. His father, Jacob, was a Hebrew stock-breeder, a grandson of the great chief Abraham. His mother, Rachel the lovable, was a beautiful Syrian woman. [1] Alas for Joseph! His mother died at the birth of his brother Benjamin, when Joseph was little more than a baby himself died while the family were travelling from Syria to the south of Palestine, or Canaan as it was then called. Besides Benjamin, Joseph had ten older brothers. Reuben the eldest, vacillating and uncertain, was almost a grown man when Joseph was born. Simeon and Levi, the two next in age, grew to be bold, fierce-tempered men who dared even to attack a whole tribe of Hivites when they were aroused. [2] The other sons were little better. Quarrelsome and envious they often brought sadness to their father's heart and trouble to Joseph their young brother.

Joseph, on the contrary, grew up helpful, cheerful, kind, and modest. He inherited his mother's beauty of form and feature, and was a constant source of comfort and pleasure to his father. Sometimes it seemed that the Spirit of the living God was moving on the heart of this boy, with his quick, active brain, and gentle, endearing ways. And so it was. God was preparing His great "Fourteen-Year Plan" to bless the world, and this boy, unknown to himself, was the one He had chosen to carry out the great plan.

If God has a definite and sure plan for this present twentieth century it will be interesting to ask: How does God train men and women to carry out His stupendous plans in all ages? Listen to the story of Joseph, and see!

What Was God's Plan?

Jacob grew to love this son above all the others, and unwisely showed his favor by making for him an embroidered coat such as was worn by the princes of that time. [3] His brothers promptly resented this partiality. And when he told them of two strange dreams he had dreamed, they could not speak peaceably with him.

But the dreams were so mysterious! Who could keep quiet? it was absolutely impossible.

"Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed," said the boy.

"Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and stood upright; and behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf-they bowed down to it." "Made obeisance?" The angry brothers saw the meaning of the dream at once. "Shall thou indeed reign over us? Or shall thou indeed have dominion over us?" And they hated him yet the more.

But a dream still more curious was given to Joseph. "Why, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me!" said the wondering lad. "What could it mean?" "Mean? These dreams come because thou art always thinking thyself better than others." And his brothers angrily nursed their hatred and jealousy.

Envy Brings Dark Plans Envy and jealousy, these green-eyed monsters have wrecked many a home. Had the brothers only known what sorrow was to come to the tents of Jacob in the Hebron valleys as a result of harboring those bitter feelings! Shortly after the dreams had so angered them, these older sons of Jacob traveled far from home, leading their flocks over hills and valleys where pasture was to be found. They were away for a long period, and Joseph was sent by his gray-haired old father to see how they fared.

After a weary journey of sixty-five miles he heard the bleating of their flock around Dothan, and joyfully hastened forward to greet them. But they-there was no welcome from them.

"Behold, this dreamer comes," growled one of them angrily.

"This dreamer; let us kill him-this son of Rachel the envious -the little upstart! Kill him-and see what becomes of his dreams." "Yes! No! Yes! Kill him and throw him into this pit. And tell his father some wild animal has killed him." "Yes! Yes!" "No! No!" disagreed Reuben, the eldest brother, shrinking from such a foul deed. "No, let not his blood be upon us! Not that! Let us cast him down this pit and leave him there to die. Poor lad-look how tired he is. Do not sin against the child." They' were scowling, jealous faces that greeted the boy as he came wearily but joyfully up to his angry brothers. Then alarm and terror came over him as they seized him threateningly. What was the matter?

"Come, you dreamer-down in this pit! Down, down! We will see what becomes of your proud dreams." Terror-stricken, Joseph pleaded with his brothers. But all in vain. They lowered him into the pit, and having made sure he could not escape, they sat down to cook and to eat their meal.

But after the heat of the moment had passed, conscience began to stir. What was the next step?

To kill their own young brother would be a terrible crime. No, they must not do that.

But to release him now would be to expose themselves to the anger of their father. Joseph would be sure to tell him all. What Just then they saw along a distant stretch of the road, a group of travelers coming toward them.

"Look over there toward Gilead! A caravan of traders with camels is coming this way. Where are they going?" "To Egypt, no doubt. See, the camels bear loads of myrrh and balm and perfumes, to rejoice the fair ladies of Egypt while they live, and to embalm them when they die!" [4] "Die listen! what profit is it if we cause our brother to die?" broke out Judah. "Come, let us sell him to these Ishmaelite traders. Let not our hand be upon him, for he is our own brother and our flesh." "Good, good! sell him to the traders. Then it cannot be said that we have killed him. And he cannot go back to tell his father. And those dreams-we shall see what will become of his dreams!" Sold as a Slave The brothers halted the merchants. Joseph was hauled out of the pit. The haggling for a price began. But when Joseph understood his brothers' dreadful design, his anguish was pitiful to see. He struggled vainly to get free from those muscular arms, then broke into an agony of weeping.

"A slave? In Egypt!" he cried out in terror. "Oh, no, not that! No! Not that! No! No!" To be a slave in the land of the Pharaohs, where one might die under the taskmaster's lash! Fate worse than death! Oh not that!

Was he never to see his father again? Never to play with laughing Benjamin again? Ah, no! "Let me go!" he pleaded.

The anguish in the boy's eyes remained with his brothers for years. [5] But now it was too late. The price was paid: twenty pieces of silver. Blood-money!

The old caravan road to the south left the grasslands of Dothan, skirted the plain of Sharon, kept east of Jaffa, and passed through the old town of Gaza. Ah, those hills, away on the eastern horizon! Beyond them lay his father's tents at Hebron. The kind, kind father, perhaps waiting expectantly. No wonder if Joseph broke into an agony of weeping again as those beloved hills faded into the distance.

The green of Canaan departed; the sandy desert south of Gaza appeared. As a weeping boy Joseph left the plain of Dothan. But it was as a resolute young man that he arrived at the slave market in Egypt. Joseph had remembered the God of his fathers, and "his soul thrilled with the high resolve to prove himself true to God." [6] Joseph was sold to Potiphar, the captain of the king's guard. "A strong, good-looking lad; almost a man," thought the captain. Joseph was set to work in various duties around the house. He did everything with a right good will, and God gave him favor with his Egyptian master. "A fine worker is Joseph," he said to himself.

"The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man," says the Bible story. Or, as Wycliffe's old version puts it: "The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a lucky fellow." Oh, yes! one can believe in the kind of luck Joseph had. It is "lucky" to be on time every morning. It is "lucky" to work a few minutes extra every evening when necessary. It is "lucky" always to study to please your employer and to look after his interests. "Who keeps the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof," says Solomon. "So he that waits on his master shall be honored." [7] Potiphar was so pleased with Joseph's work that he finally made him overseer over his house, over his estate, and over all that he had.

Loyalty to God Brought Prosperity Joseph was loyal to God and openly confessed Him, although surrounded by idol worship. And God showered down His blessing upon Joseph and upon the Egyptian's house. As the years passed quickly by, the Hebrew servant rose high in Potiphar's favor. Tall, handsome, smiling, modest, energetic, and pure-hearted-Joseph soon became treated almost like a son. He was present when Potiphar entertained guests of wealth and position. Captains, generals, diplomats, priests, and princes-they came to visit Potiphar, and Joseph gained from their conversation a knowledge that was to stand him in good stead in the hidden days of the future.

And often, of course, these officers of state brought with them their wives and daughters. Probably when Potipherah, the prince of Heliopolis, came to visit Potiphar he was accompanied by his wife and his lovely daughter Asenath. Joseph's eyes (who shall doubt it) perchance, followed Asenath's graceful movements, and Asenath's laughing eyes may have often met those of the handsome young Hebrew for whom Captain Potiphar had such high praise.

"Best of the azure lotus flowers for thee, O Asenath! Perfumes of Gilead on thy head, and carpets of rose petals at thy feet. May the breezes ever blow sweetly for thee!" For young men and maidens will dream, as the dear God appointed when He fashioned them in the dawn of time. Surely the future was full of glad promise!

An Unexpected Crisis Then the great crash came. Just when the rosy light of hope strengthened on Joseph's sky, Potiphar's wife charged him with a foul crime and he was thrown into prison. Thrown into prison with the burning brand of shame on him. It came like ruin to him. She had, it seemed, urged him to break that great law of love and purity, "Thou shall not commit adultery." Joseph refused point blank. "Never! How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God? Never!" Plain speaking-sin against God! Joseph had been loyal to God in prosperity; he would not deny Him in this crisis. This woman would bring him favor and rewards if he denied God. She would probably try to ruin him if he continued to refuse. Well-let the ruin come! He would be faithful to God at all costs.

An innocent man-here he was, in this dark Egyptian dungeon. His freedom gone; his hopes for the future gone. Farewell, happy dreams of Asenath!

REFERENCES:

1. Genesis 28:2; 29:18; 30:24.
2. Genesis 34:25.
3. Genesis 37:3.
4. The Mystery and Lure of Perfume, Pages 13,23.
5. Genesis 42:21.

7. The Prime Minister's Seat

If you have suffered through false accusation or slander, read in this chapter how God brought one of His servants victoriously through, this kind of experience. You are precious in His sight. Do not fear to trust Him.

IN that Egyptian prison Joseph was treated as a common criminal along with others who had been bound by order of the king. His feet were put into fetters which gave him much pain. "He was laid in iron," says the Hebrew historian. [1] Probably he prayed earnestly for release: "Oh, Lord God, my Father, bring me out of this place! O God of Abraham, vindicate my character. O Most Merciful, let not my hopes of the future be crushed. O God, that hears prayer, deliver me." But the days passed and the weeks passed. The months passed, and there seemed no reply from God. Joseph was still in the prison.

Did he rebel against God in the darkness? Did he complain that God had requited him unfairly?

"No, come life or death, I will be loyal to the God of my fathers," determined Joseph. And so, from down in the darkness came fragments of a Hebrew song. Shut in that dungeon Joseph spoke encouragingly to the other prisoners, though little did he know that his sympathy would open God's way out of the prison. Irksome tasks were done with cheerfulness and energy. Joseph was loyal to God.

"Strange prisoner this!" thought the jailer. "Gives me no trouble." Then after a while he set Joseph over the other prisoners. A jail foreman, forsooth!

Then came a gleam of hope. One morning Joseph noticed that two of the new prisoners seemed down-hearted and sad. Two of the king's servants, his butler and his baker, they had displeased Pharaoh and had been thrown by him into prison.

"We have both had strange dreams this night," they said in answer to his sympathetic inquiry. "Are they portents of evil or omens of good?" "I dreamed of a vine with three branches," said the butler. "As I looked it budded and blossomed and then bore grapes, and I pressed out the juice from the grapes and gave it Pharaoh to drink." "And I," said the baker, "dreamed I had three white baskets on my head. And the top one had all kinds of cooked foods, bread, and cakes for Pharaoh, but the birds swooped down and ate them." "Alas! Thy dream means that Pharaoh will take thy head within three days, I fear," said Joseph sorrowfully. "But thou," he said to the butler, "within three days shall Pharaoh restore thee to thy office and thou shall serve him once again." "But when that time comes, think of me and make mention of me to Pharaoh and bring me out of this house. For I have done nothing that they should put me into this dungeon," said Joseph. Just as Joseph had interpreted, so it came to pass. The third day was Pharaoh's birthday, and he made a feast for his servants. Both prisoners were called from the dungeon and said "good-bye" to Joseph.

New hope sprang up in Joseph's heart. Henceforth he had a friend in court. Eagerly he waited for some message. But no message came.

The weeks went by, and then months, without any word from the butler friend. He had forgotten Joseph. Many are soured by the forgetfulness of those who should remember. But Joseph went cheerfully on doing each duty as to his God. And his self-forgetting kindness was not passed unnoticed by God. These sharp trials, as we ourselves need to remember, were God's way to higher joys and greater usefulness.

Two more years passed. Joseph had learned many lessons in the prison. The results of crime were before his eyes; the results of oppression, unfairness, and arrogance-lessons that God saw Joseph would need in days to come.

The Dawn of a New Day-Pharaoh Dreams But one day the royal messengers came hurrying to the prison. The great Pharaoh had sent for Joseph to interpret a dream. God's time had come. He would now restore to the nation a knowledge of the true God, who was planning to bring them to an Eden of heart and home again.

It was the mysterious double dream of the fat and lean cattle; of the seven plump ears of corn and the seven blasted ones. Perhaps in the ordinary way a dream like this would have had little significance. Pharaoh might have forgotten it in a few moments. But God Himself had given the dream, and He troubled Pharaoh's spirit so much that he could not rest until he knew its meaning. A foreboding of evil was on him.

Pharaoh sent for all his magicians and his wise men, but none could interpret the vision of the night. The servants of the great king were aroused as they saw their master's anxiety. And then the butler remembered! Joseph was brought out of prison and listened to the dream of the mighty ruler on the throne.

Can Thou Interpret?

“God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace,” “God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do.” While the young Hebrew gave his strangely simple interpretation he turned Pharaoh’s thoughts again to the true God. “The thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.” How naturally Joseph told of God!

God was ever in Joseph’s thoughts. He honored God in all things. No wonder Pharaoh recognized the source of this young man’s wisdom and intelligence. “Look out a man discreet and wise,” Joseph had counseled, “and let him store the corn of Egypt so that the land perish not through the famine.” Famine-dread word! Seven long years of famine! The king’s heart knew terror at the awful possibility. Men, women, and children without food. “In truth we need a man discreet and wise. Can we find a better man than this Hebrew—a man in whom the Spirit of God is?” demanded the king. “God hath sent us this man.” The King Decides on the Man Calling Joseph, the king declared: “Because God hath shown thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art. Thou art the man!” “Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou.” Seven whole years of famine coming? Yes, but seven years of great plenty first, ordained by the merciful Most High God, who has sent this man to serve Egypt.

Pharaoh took off his royal ring; “See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt!” And on to Joseph’s hand was slipped the golden symbol of authority.

“Over all the land of Egypt thou art ruler.” By Pharaoh’s orders were then brought fine linen clothes, a gold chain for his neck, and one of the royal chariots with its out runners.

“Because God hath shown thee all this, thy title-name shall be ‘Revealer of Secrets-Zaphnath-Paaneah.’” Gratefully Pharaoh loaded Joseph with dignities and honors as he assumed his new task. Doubtless also he discussed with Joseph a glad ceremony which should be as befitting Egypt’s new Prime Minister—a matter which the Father above had also carried in His tender care. For soon the news went out that Pharaoh had given the new Prime Minister a wife, whose name was—Asenath, the daughter of Potipherah, prince of Heliopolis! Years of Plenty—Then Years of Famine The seven years of plenty passed rapidly by. Joseph’s energy and wisdom filled the barns and storehouses to overflowing. These abundant harvests and the presence of Joseph, were God’s way to save thousands of precious lives.

Often in those good years of plenty Joseph gazed on wide fields studded with sheaves of corn, some upright, some bowed on the ground. Often at night he watched the stars as they marched their nightly way. Watched the eleven stars of great Orion go gliding by. Watched the course of the moon as she sailed by the Pleiades; watched the sun as he bowed down in the west at the close of day. Was there a curious smile on his face then as he thought of his dreams in the tents of Hebron, those twenty years ago?

And now two years of famine had passed. Joseph, happy in his work, which was to save so many lives, happy in the society of Asenath and the children, ever had God’s honor in mind. With gratitude he thought of God’s way out of slavery; His way out of prison; this, His way out of famine. God, who sees the future and cares for those who trust Him, had blessed him abundantly. God had requited him for the loss of home and those he loved.

Strange Visitors Arrive Joseph himself supervised the sale of the corn to the merchants from abroad. Possibly he inquired of them if there was food in Canaan, his homeland. Was his father in need? he wondered. For love swiftly thinks of its loved ones when danger comes.

“Some men from the land of Canaan are here to buy corn, your Excellency.” And Joseph’s heart thrilled as he recognized faces he had not seen for so many years. Here were his brothers!

Yes, Reuben, Simeon—here they were!

They bowed low before him! The fulfillment of the dream of his boyhood! “We would faint buy corn, your Excellency.” Though Joseph promptly recognized them, yet he, in his Egyptian official clothes of white linen, and with twenty-two more years upon him, remained unknown to them. Should he tell them? But, stay—where was Benjamin, his younger brother? Had the elder brothers harmed him, too? Were they still the envious, jealous men he had known in the past?

A plan sprang quickly into his mind. “You are spies!” he declared. “You have come to spy out the weakness of the land!” “No, indeed, sir! Never!” said they. “We are no spies! We are the sons of one man in the land of Canaan. There were twelve of us. One is dead. One is at home. We ten have come to buy corn.” “We shall see!” retorted Joseph. “One of you shall stay here as hostage—the rest can go home. When you come again, bring this younger brother; then I shall know you are telling the truth.” He ordered Simeon to be detained. Then he loaded the others with corn and they departed toward the desert and Canaan. The old father received their message with great

misgiving. “Benjamin shall not go!” he exclaimed. But hunger is a strong pleader. When the food was gone, Jacob was forced to let Benjamin join his brothers in another journey to Egypt. The brothers maintained that it was useless to face the governor without him.

“God Almighty give you mercy before the man!” he prayed, as they departed. “If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.” “I will be surety for Benjamin,” declared Reuben, reassuringly. The caravan turned toward Egypt. Would some cruel fate tear these eleven stars from their father’s firmament for ever? Anxiety and foreboding filled the old man’s heart. Little did he know what joy God had in store for him. God’s way to reunion was hidden from his eyes as it is often hidden from ours.

Strange feelings came over Joseph as the brothers were announced again. There they were-Reuben, Levi-(he thought to himself) Judah, Dan-ah, there was the youngest! Oh, Benjamin! Benjamin! my Benjamin! He forced back the words of love with difficulty.

He recovered himself. “Is your father well?” he asked aloud, “the old man of whom you spoke? Is he yet alive?” “Thy servant our father is in good health, he is yet alive,” they responded.

“And this,” indicating Benjamin, “is this your youngest brother, of whom you spoke?”

“God be gracious unto thee., my son!” he said chokingly and suddenly left them all.

“And Joseph made haste; for his bowels did yearn upon his brother: and he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there.” “Oh, Benjamin! Oh, my father, my father!” A strange mingling of homesickness, love, and joy, which most of us have experienced.

After a while he calmed himself, washed his face, and went out to them. A feast had been spread for the party of Hebrews, and Joseph dined with them (although at a separate table). He asked them questions and set various tests for them. He proved for himself their love for Benjamin and their thoughtfulness for their old father. They were changed men.

He could keep his secret no longer. Over his mind came again the memories of happy days with Benjamin in the Hebron valleys. Memories of his kind old father who had lavished the wealth of his love. upon him. He must reveal himself!

“I am Joseph; Joseph! does my father yet live?” he cried to his brothers, tears of joy flowing down his cheeks. “Come near to me, I pray you.

Can It Be Possible?

“I am Joseph your brother, whom You sold into Egypt,” he said, as he saw their troubled, frightened faces. “God did send me before you to preserve life, to save your lives by a great deliverance from this famine. Blame not yourselves!” he urged.

His brothers looked at him, almost terrified by the revelation. Joseph-alive? Governor of Egypt? He could put them in prison or kill them in revenge. But here he was generously excusing their wicked crime! What God-like forgiveness!

Around Dothan’s ancient well these ten brothers had turned away from the path of kindness and right-doing. But Joseph’s dreams-probably now remembered vividly-showed that God knew all this in advance. Yet God, instead of planning through the intervening years to visit judgments upon them, was planning to save their lives and the lives of their little ones in the great famine.

“Here we are, as those strange dreams showed, bowing low before Joseph! And Joseph, after all the evil we did to him, has nothing but kindness and help for us!” They could not help but marvel.

What a picture of God’s love for a world which had turned away from Him! Pharaoh Hears The news that Joseph’s brothers had come, quickly reached the royal palace and gave great pleasure there. Pharaoh, with his heart full of gratitude to Joseph, insisted that all his father’s family should come to live in Egypt so that they should suffer no want through the famine. “I will give you the good of the land,” he promised the brothers.

For Joseph’s sake he gave them the best of the country to dwell in-grasslands of Goshen, watered by the Nile. Here their flocks and herds would have pasture even in those dry years of famine. Amid these pleasant surroundings the old father Jacob had the joy of living near his loved son for seventeen happy years before he passed away.

“I had not thought to see thy face again, my Joseph,” he said. “But here God hath shown me thy seed.” And before he died he laid his hands tenderly on the two boys’ heads and blessed them. Blessed Ephraim and Manasseh, whose mother was Asenath, daughter of Potipherah, the prince of Heliopolis.

Think of This When in London Town Modern Heliopolis is on the railway from Cairo to Suez. The ancient town with its temples and obelisks is now a heap of ruins nearly four miles away. But one of its tall stone obelisks is on the Thames Embankment-Cleopatra's Needle, the Londoners call it.

So Cleopatra's Needle is a reminder of Asenath, wife of Joseph, mother of the Tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. Reminder of Joseph and God's great plan. A rugged stone, a silent but eloquent speaker, declaring to London's crowds that God's omniscient eye sees the future and makes a way out of every difficulty for those who put their trust in Him.

REFERENCE

1. Psalm 105:18.

7. Can Obstacles Block God's Way Out?

If ever you wonder if God will remember His promises, read in this chapter how swiftly He moved to liberate a whole nation at the exact time He had appointed.

If the hills around Hebron could listen and speak, they would whisper of a wonderful dream of the centuries. For it was here that Abram heard the voice of God giving one of the most far-reaching of prophetic utterances.

And nigh four millenniums later-could the hills of Hebron speak-they would have whispered to Allenby's soldiers, to tourist, and Arab shepherd: "Every word came true!" The divine Voice by Hebron declared to Abraham: "Thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall afflict them four hundred years." Then, "that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance," added the Voice. "In the fourth generation they shall come hither again." [1] How mysteriously it all came to pass!

Down in the rich lands of Egypt the seed of Abraham-the families of Joseph and his eleven brothers-grew to be a great multitude, just as God had foretold. But, as the prophecy had indicated, persecution and oppression came.

Surely enough, "when the time of the promise drew nigh" [2] when the four centuries were almost completed-the kings of Egypt had turned strangely against the children of Israel. Another king rose who knew not Joseph. [3] Cruel were the sufferings of the Hebrews at his hands. He forced them to slave under brutal taskmasters, in his brick fields. Fearful lest they should ally themselves with possible invaders, he determined to reduce their numbers. He ordered that all their male children should be thrown into the Nile as soon as they were born. [4] He ordered the Hebrew midwives to kill them. The first "Jewish pogrom" had begun.

Clay-besmeared, sweating, panting, gasping, toiling slaves they toiled till the veins stood out on their foreheads and the heart raced and thumped ominously as they lifted the heavy bricks and clay. Their backs were scarred and bleeding with the taskmaster's rod. Anger went raging in their spirits at the indignity and the insult of it all.

This dictator-like cruelty in the presence of suspected danger -this, they found, was the fruit of idolatry and man-worship! Sometimes we have to pass through such trouble-or to witness it-that we may learn for ever to shun and despise the worship of man, metal, and wood.

Could they ever escape this toiling slavery?

Possibly Amram and Joses discussed it when the taskmaster looked away while they toiled at their brick making:

"Oh-h, Amram! I ache in every limb with this labour in the clay. Will Pharaoh ever finish building cities?" "Release will come soon, Joses. Remember God's promise to Abram. After four hundred years the people of Israel would be freed from this bondage and go back to Canaan with great riches!" "Four hundred years! May its end come soon!" "It will. The time is almost gone. Soon the deliverer will appear, and we shall march out of these brick fields, never to see them again, Joses." "But Pharaoh will never let us go. Will he free over half a million slaves who are all working for him for nothing? Never!" "We must seize spears and swords, Joses, and find the leader from God. Then will we fight our way out." "Fight? Fight Egypt? Mightiest nation on earth! Hopeless, Amram. Thou talks without thought. Did thou not see that mighty army pass by on its way to Zoan? A great multitude of flying horses and swift chariots? Soldiers quick as light with their spears 1 Trained to smash a man's face with one blow of their heavy maces [5] We could never match them." "Not now, Joses, no! But God will raise up a mighty leader who shall outmatch all Egypt's generals. Did not Joseph declare: God will surely bring you out of this land?" "Oh, but they laugh at our invisible God-the blasphemers! And they say that Egypt's Nile-god and dog-faced gods and cow gods, and even their dirty black-beetle gods, are mightier by far. Else would they be the slaves and we the conquerors." [6] "So laughed the people before the Flood, Joses. But when God's hundred and twenty years of mercy had been

laughed to scorn-how suddenly they were buried beneath the wild waters!” [7] “True, Amram. And here in Egypt also-in Joseph’s time God declared that after seven years the Great Hunger should come.” “And it did come, at the time appointed, Jose.” “Yes. Yes! I know we should be patient. But thou says that God has promised that Israel shall come out with great substance? Lo, Amram, we be as poor as the mice of the desert. Whence shall we find gold and silver and precious-hush, hush! here comes the taskmaster! Give me more stubble!” But this toil and labor, hard though it was to bear, was a sign that the rest of the prophecy would soon be fulfilled. Perhaps that-very night, when Amram went home to his wife Jochebed, he was greeted by the cry of a new-born baby, who was to be the very deliverer he had spoken of to Jose.

“What a lovely boy!” they whispered together as they looked at the infant.

“He is a lovely boy,” Jochebed repeated to her husband as the days went by. “He must not die, Amram! The Egyptians must not kill him, as they have killed so many Hebrew babies. Throw him into the river? Not for a dozen Pharaohs!” Will the Baby Escape?

Prayerfully the parents sought wisdom from God, and when the boy was three months old, his mother, moved by an impulse which must have come from Him who loves the children and knows the future, laid him in a tiny covered boat made of papyrus reeds, and placed it among the flags by the Nile brink.

Strange was the sequel. The cruel king’s daughter (possibly Princess Hatshepsut [8]) came down to wash at the riverside with her maidens, after the manner of Egypt. She saw the little boat in the cool, quiet water and sent her maid to fetch it.

When she lifted the lid she saw the beautiful child. “And behold, the babe wept.” “And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews’ children.” Her woman’s heart was touched, and she determined she would adopt the tearful baby. He should not die!

But how should she care for him?

Clever Miriam, the baby’s sister, solved the problem. She was at the elbow of the princess now.

“Shall I call thee a nurse of the Hebrew women to nurse the child for thee?” she inquired.

By all means! Perhaps the baby would cease his walling then.

The Hebrew woman came up and the princess committed the baby to her. “Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages,” she commanded.

And probably her eyes grew moist and twinkled understandingly as the baby snuggled to the breast of his “nurse,” and stopped crying.

“I know well enough who this Hebrew nurse is,” she decided. “My adopted baby will not go short of love and care.” His mother bore her baby back to the hut with great joy in her heart. Her boy had been restored to her and was under the protection of the great princess. Surely this was the goodness of God, she thought, as she crooned over him.

“Ah, peacefully does thou sleep, my baby, now thou art in my arms again. Thou art yet my’ own darling for a little, little while. But perchance one day thou shall be Israel’s deliverer. How swiftly, how well I must teach thee, so that thou wilt ever be loyal to the God of thy fathers!” “My precious, soon thou shall be taken from me to live at the great palace of Pharaoh. Then will they try to turn thee away from thy mother’s God, my ‘bright-eyes.’ Wilt thou then worship senseless idols? Nay, I will teach thee of the God of love.” Moses-that was the name the Princess had given him seems to have remained with his mother about twelve years. [9] How earnestly she taught him, and how well she succeeded!

When Moses was taken to the palace he was educated in all the learning and wisdom of the Egyptians. But he remained true to his mother’s God. Perhaps he went to the great colleges of Thebes [10] and Heliopolis. Probably he studied astronomy at Dendera, where was a great plan of the Zodiac.

He became a great favorite with the people as well as with his foster-mother and the king. But he remained true to his mother’s God. Ever before him was the picture of the restitution of all things lost by our first parents. Ever before him was God’s way out of darkness into the light of God’s kingdom.

Moses’ Education What a man of learning he became! He was well acquainted with the story of the Shepherd Kings who had invaded Egypt some time before. He knew the exploits of the Pharaohs-Zoser, Khufu, and Khafre, the mighty pyramid-builders. What our Egyptologists could learn from him!

It is very possible that Moses saw Cleopatra's Needle dragged to its place and set up in Heliopolis. He saw the great pyramids in all their towering solemnity, before a stone had been taken away from them. The Sphinx looked down on Moses, and Moses returned the stare with bold disdain.

Moses saw the state funerals and looked on the strange pictures of "The Book of the Dead" in the tombs of the Valley of the Kings. Therein he saw the hyena-headed gods, the god with the balances, and the dog who devoured the wicked. Day by day he saw priests and noblemen participating in the worship of dogs and cats, frogs and birds, the sun, moon, and stars, and the Nile which flowed through the land.

Moses could read the hieroglyphics at a glance. [11] He knew the history of the great towns of those days. Was not Hebron built seven years before Zoan? Was not Damascus one of the first cities? Babylon-the great metropolis of the East-was not Nimrod the man who founded it? [12] In wars with Abyssinia he showed himself a successful military leader. The king determined that he should be heir to the throne. But neither threats nor flatteries would induce him to worship the idols of Egypt or to participate in the wickedness which was all around him. He continued loyal to his mother's teaching. What an encouragement to every mother as she endeavors to train her children for the conflict of life!

Moses never forgot his mother's lessons. "When God's time is ended, Moses, Israel shall be delivered from Egypt," she had taught him. "One day God will set up a glorious Eden kingdom that shall endure through endless ages," she had said. So when, later, the Spirit of God called him to be the deliverer of Israel, he actually turned his back on Egypt's throne with all its power and wealth and accepted the divine commission.

Has the Time Come?

When he was about forty years old, he was stung to anger one day by the sight of an Egyptian who was brutally smiting a man of the Hebrews. "Thou base coward! The time has come to intervene," he thought. His dagger was out in a flash, and in a moment the Egyptian lay dead on the sand. Moses buried him out of sight.

"But surely all Israel will soon see that the time has come! Before long they will rise against these oppressors and I will lead them out of Egypt," Moses told himself. But Israel did not rise. They were afraid. The time of God had not yet come. Instead of finding himself at the head of the hosts of Israel, he had to flee for his life from an angry Pharaoh who had in some way learned of his killing of the Egyptian. "Moses is stirring up a great rebellion," was the news which the king received.

He Disappears-and Appears Again The fugitive found employment as a shepherd in Midian, and for forty years he was absent from Egypt. Forty more years of oppression for the nation of slaves! Would the day of deliverance never come?

When would those predicted four centuries end? It was uncertain just when they began. Was the end as uncertain as the beginning?

But after forty long years, Moses reappeared with the great tidings: "God has sent me to deliver you from Egypt! He has appeared to me in a bush which burned with flame but never burned out. The end of the time is at hand. Look at these signs!" He threw down his shepherd's rod and it became a serpent. He took the serpent by the tail and it became a rod again. He put his hand in his bosom and it was leprous when he took it out. He put it in his bosom again and drew it out sound and whole.

The Signs Convinced the People There was great rejoicing in Israel. "At last! At last the time of release has come." But surely Moses could never persuade Pharaoh to free these slaves. One could just as soon have expected Germany to release the Poles in 1941, endowing them with gold and silver and jewels as well. Moses and his brother went up to the palace and gave the king their message from God. They showed their miraculous signs before him and said: "Jehovah commands: Let My people go!" "Let Israel go!" roared Pharaoh. "Never! Who is Jehovah that I should let them go? They shall not go. Their burdens shall be increased." And instead of the expected release, the astonished and disappointed Israelites were compelled to labor harder than before, until they would not listen to Moses for very anguish of spirit.

Moses was greatly distressed. How could he deliver a people who had so little faith in God? Little could he see that in a very short time this people would be singing a great song of victory over the Egyptians. Just as it is hard for us in these times to see how soon God's people will be rejoicing over the eternal defeat of the powers of darkness.

But the Pharaoh of Moses' day seemed as immovable as some of the pharaohs of our day.

"My armies are invincible," thought Pharaoh, "and these people are unarmed." "I have control of all Egypt's wealth. They have no wealth but their four-legged beasts, which I can take whenever I need them," he persuaded himself.

“My priests are highly educated men of science. They can work magic. They are perfect physically; there is not a spot or blemish on them; so they can influence all the gods on my behalf, while these dirty, lazy shepherds-what god will listen to them? Who bath ever seen their God?” “But my gods,” Pharaoh liked to think this, “my gods are the most powerful in the world; they have showered their gifts on Egypt and on me their associate. The Nile-god brings his gifts in bountiful crops and shoals of fish. Great Ra, the sun-god, causes the wheat and the flax and the vine to grow. The spirit that dwells in the sacred Apis bull gives its blessing in the increase of herds and flocks. And great Death himself hath no terror for me, for the sacred scarab beetle on my embalmed body will ferry me home to the realms of the blest. Who is Jehovah that I should let Israel go?” [13] “Tomorrow morning I will go and worship the mighty Nile god. I will bring offerings to our beautiful river, and later I will drink of its pleasant waters,” determined Pharaoh.

Strange Plagues Begin Oddly enough, Aaron and Moses were at the river’s edge when Pharaoh went down to worship. They gave him the message from God once more, and then stretched out the shepherd’s rod over the waters of the river. Consternation! The waters of the river became blood!

Blood in the river and blood in the streams! Evil-smelling blood in the ponds, and blood in the garden fountains. Shudders! “O Pharaoh, think thee of the blood of the Hebrew children. Woe to the world because of the innocent blood that has been shed through idolatry and man-worship!” “Behold, O Pharaoh! The Nile-god is brought low!” voices whispered. But Pharaoh refused to heed. After seven days Moses and Aaron appeared before Pharaoh again with the message from God:- “Let My people go! If thou refuse I will smite all thy borders with frogs.” “I will not let them go,” resolved Pharaoh. “Heki, the goddess of frogs, will drive them away when my priests call on her to help.” But Heki, the frog goddess, could do nothing to remove these immense swarms of frogs. There were frogs in the houses and frogs in the bedrooms. Frogs in the ovens and frogs in the kneading-troughs. Frogs, frogs, frogs, frogs!

“Behold, O Pharaoh! Heki, the frog goddess, is brought low,” voices whispered.

“Ask the Lord Jehovah to take away the frogs, and I will let the people go,” lied Pharaoh at last.

And when God removed the plague he refused to keep his word. At the command of God, Aaron stretched out the rod and beat the dust of Egypt. Beat and beat the “sacred” soil of Egypt. And behold from the “sacred dust” came loathsome lice fastening on man and beast.

“This is the finger of God,” said the shuddering lice-bitten magicians.

“Behold the sacred soil is brought low,” voices whispered. But lice-tormented Pharaoh refused to hear.

Then came swarms of great venomous, biting flies. Biting flies all over the land-except in the land of Goshen, where Israel dwelt. Painful bites were inflicted on Pharaoh and on his priests; on his chariot-drivers and on his sacred cows. Pharaoh again made lying promises-how easily to trust in the power of lies! Lying to God on the throne of heaven!

Often had Pharaoh trusted in the wealth of Egypt. Silver and gold, cattle and sheep, asses and camels, were his in abundance. Great is the power of wealth! But in a few short hours Egypt’s wealth of cattle and sheep came to disaster. Some swift strange disease fell upon all which were out in the field, and they died.

“Alas, O Pharaoh! the sacred rams of Khmim are brought low!” voices whispered. Then fell a plague of painful boils on wicked priests, deceiving magicians, cruel king, and selfish, cruel people. How often their stinging whips and lashes had brought painful sores, blood, and tears to the Israelites and other captives!

Plague followed plague, disaster followed disaster. Always the warning came first, giving opportunity for escape. But punishment follows every cruel action in God’s own time, whatever the position of ruler or citizen. Yet always there is forgiveness if we turn to God.

The Israelites were under the protection of God and suffered none of the more grievous plagues. Thus their confidence in God grew as they saw His power manifested. At His word a terrific storm arose, with great hailstones raining down like shrapnel splinters. The thunder roared, and lightning flashed. At His word the east wind blew, and clouds of locusts came to devour the Egyptians’ crops. He spoke, and the west wind blew the locusts away. He spoke again, and clouds of darkness hid the sun for three days. Great Ra, the Egyptian sun-god, was utterly vanquished! What folly to worship Ra!

The Last Strange Scourge “Prepare to leave Egypt!” Moses now commanded the people of Israel. “Demand your wages, so long held back, from the Egyptians. Demand gold and silver and jewels that are easy to carry. Prepare to leave Egypt! Tonight comes the last great plague, and Pharaoh will let you go!” “The destroying angel will pass over tonight and all the first-born shall die,” declared Moses. “The first-born of Pharaoh upon the throne-the first-born of all!” “All who would escape, listen! Before the destroying angel comes this night, strike the door-posts and the lintel with a bunch of hyssop dipped in the blood of a lamb. For God hath said: ‘When I see the blood, I will pass over you.’ 97 Mercy’s pleas went out over Egypt. “Strike the door-posts with blood. Trust in the blood of the

Lamb. The destroying angel comes this night. Trust in the blood of the Lamb.” And not -one was lost where the loving offer of mercy was accepted. When the blood appeared on the door-posts not one mother, Egyptian or Israelite, suffered bereavement that night And not one will be lost in God’s great day who puts his trust in the Lamb of God, slain on Calvary for us.

“It came to pass, that at midnight the Lord smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh unto the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon.” “And there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead.” Pharaoh urgently summoned Moses and Aaron in the dark ness., “Get you forth. . . . Take your flocks and your herds, ... and be gone!” “And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the self-same day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt.” God’s great prophetic timepiece had struck the hour, and His people marched forth as He had promised. God Himself leading in a pillar of cloud, they strode forth with their little ones, with gladness in their heart and songs of gratitude on their lips. But in a few days their rejoicing was turned to alarm. They had marched into a valley which terminated at the Red Sea. They could not go forward; it seemed as though they had been led the wrong way.

And that very evening cries of terror arose from those in the rear. Away in the distance, coming from the direction of the Nile, was Pharaoh’s dreaded army, a multitude of flying horses and swift chariots, soldiers quick as light with their spears, and trained to smash a man’s face with one blow of their heavy maces. “O God, we can never match them!” the people murmured fearfully.

But the mighty God of Israel moved swiftly to defend His people. The pillar of cloud, emblem of God’s presence, which had gone before them, moved majestically between the host of Israel and Egypt’s armies. It became darkness to the Egyptians; it glowed with light over the Israelites. “Fear you not!” Moses called out to the frightened people. “The Egyptians whom you have seen today, you shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you!” A Miraculous Way of Escape “Take thy staff and stretch it over the sea!” God commanded Moses. “Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.” Neither Pharaoh’s armies nor the depths of the Red Sea shall prevent God’s prophetic word from being fulfilled! Moses obeyed. He stretched over the sea the wonder-working rod.

Instantly a strong east wind sprang up, and the dumbfounded Israelites saw the sea making way for them. Along the very bed of the sea a great wide road appeared with a dark wall of water on both sides-God’s great way out of danger. With shouts of exultation they bowed their heads to the gale and rushed forward down the wet slope, lighted by the glowing pillar of cloud.

“A night in the bed of the sea”-they talked of it centuries after. But when Pharaoh reached the sea a few hours later, his stubborn heart was still set on defying God, and he urged his army after them. As the last of the Israelites reached the farther shore, the Egyptian host were hard behind them in the bed of the sea. “We will have them yet!” he raged inwardly. “We will not endure this disgrace.” Fear rose among the Israelites. But Moses was listening to the Voice again, and at the command of God he stretched his hand over the waters. What was going to happen?

Suddenly the east wind ceases. There is a roaring of waters across the channel. The road through the sea is awash! Cries of terror rise from the Egyptians. Confusion falls upon confusion. They try to turn their chariots and retreat! Woe to Pharaoh! Woe to Egypt! Pharaoh’s army had met the Leader who should outmatch all Egypt’s generals!

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3. Exodus 1: 8.
4. Exodus 1:11, 16, 22.
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6. Where Moses Went to School, Page 3.
7. Genesis 6:3.
8. The Bible Comes Alive, Page 5.
9. Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 244.
10. Exodus 2:5-10. Also “Unfinished Man,” by Albert Wilson, M.D.
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8. From Egypt's Idolatry to Sinai's Purity

Many are making plans for the security of nations and peoples. Read in this -chapter of God's sure way to peace, security, and happiness.

WHEN the Israelites saw the cruel, dreaded army of Pharaoh disappear below the waves, what wonder if wild shouts and songs of rejoicing rent the air and echoed from the distant hills! "Gone! Gone! The enemy is gone for ever!" they exulted. "Ah, Pharaoh's chariots! Ah, Pharaoh's horses! Ah, you cruel soldiers! You thought to take us again! Ah drowned in the Red Sea! Gone! Gone!" their shouts went up.

And for the very joy, with hearts overflowing with the relief of it all, the women of Israel danced and sang with sounding timbrels on the beach of the Red Sea, their little ones laughing and singing with them, till the sheep and the cows began lowing and bleating in strange amaze at the sight.

What a thrilling, happy day that was! A never-to-be-forgotten day! God who had made a way out for Noah to escape death in the Deluge had made a way out through the sea for His people. He will make a way back to Eden for all who trust Him.

Along the Red Sea Coast and to Sinai And so Egypt was gone for ever. After they had rested a while, the great pillar of cloud moved majestically forward; they looked for the last time at that gap in the mountains on the farther shore, then marched south. South, along the Red Sea beach which is seen by the passengers on British and American ships now sailing between Europe and Australia.

Moses went forward with confidence. He knew that God was leading them first to Mount Sinai, for when the Divine Presence had appeared to him in the burning bush the word had come: "When thou has brought forth the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God upon this mountain." [1] And there the pillar of cloud was leading now. It led them on to the wells of Marah. Then forward to the springs of Elim, and afterward to an encampment by the seashore. Then leaving the coast, they turned south-east through the valleys that led to Mount Sinai.

How wonderfully God provided for them! If the water of the wells was bitter, He made it fresh and sweet. If there was no water at all, He brought a rushing torrent out of the rock. They needed food, much food, that great multitude. And behold! It seemed to have rained food during the night. For all over the ground was a small, round sweet grain which had all the goodness of good bread. Like wafers sweetened with honey! God had provided "a table in the wilderness." [2] This wonderful bread lay on the ground every morning when they awoke-twice as much on Friday morning so that there should be no need to gather it on Saturday-the Sabbath. What divine provision!

"To wake in the desert dawn is like waking within the heart of an opal," says Miss Gertrude Bell, a modern writer, speaking of the district near Sinai. [3] But to the trustful Moses it was waking in the loving presence of God.

The lofty heights of Sinai, now known as Jebel Musa, or the "mount of Moses," by the Arabs, came in sight at last, and the pillar of cloud rested on its peak. It is a majestic mountain whose summit is eight thousand feet above the sea. The valley below was to be the camping-place of Israel's great cavalcade for over a year. Here God was to instruct them in the laws which, if followed, should make them the most wonderful nation on earth.

Moses Climbs the Mount When the camp of Israel had finally been pitched, Moses started up the mountain to speak with God again. There is a narrow and steep ravine leading up to the top of Sinai, and probably Moses took this course. The path is still pointed out to the traveler. Scores of steps have been laid or cut since Moses' day, and up these the pilgrim climbs. Here by the side of the track is "a spring welling fresh and clear from a grotto under two vast rocks." Farther ahead is a running brook from the melting snow on the heights above. [4] From the summit of Sinai there stretches out a strange and grand panorama of mountains. "As if an ocean of lava with its waves running mountain high had been suddenly commanded to stand still." [5] Here probably the great winged eagle lived, and uttered its cry as it flew from crag to crag. No wonder Moses felt the might and majesty of the Creator and listened with eagerness and meekness for His voice.

And the Voice spoke again. The Lord God called to him out of the mountain and gave him a message for the waiting people in the valley below: "Tell the children of Israel" commanded God: "You have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself." "Now therefore, if you will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then you shall

be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people. You shall be unto Me a holy nation. These are the words which thou shall speak unto the children of Israel.” The People Promise to Keep the Law The voice of God ceased. Moses reverently turned and retraced his steps to the valley below. He called the chief men of the tribes together and gave them God’s gracious message. “All that the Lord hath spoken we will do,” said the chief men unanimously, after they had listened. “To be a holy nation! God’s special treasure! ‘What a future!’” These descendants of Jacob had increased to a great multitude in Egypt. The twelve sons who went down to the Nile had now become six hundred thousand men. [6] With their wives and children they formed a mighty army. And now, this week was to see “the birth of a great nation.” With what royal ceremonies would the week be attended? What laws would the Most High issue, to guide this new nation to the leading position. He had planned? This knowledge would be of highest value to our statesmen who are thinking of “reconstruction.” Moses carried the answer of the people back up the mountain of God. Then the divine Voice instructed him to prepare the people to meet with God. Three days were occupied in this preparation. As the people had been accustomed to multitudes of “gods” in Egypt-some stronger, some weaker-it was necessary that they should see that the majesty and might of the living God, the great Creator of a thousand worlds, was not to be likened for a moment to Egypt’s dumb deities. And the law of Jehovah was not a thing which could be carried out or neglected at will. It was God’s standard of righteousness. Carried out it would bring happiness: if broken, misery and death would follow. So, on this day God would declare to them His great law of love to God and love to man: the Ten Commandments. What a solemn day that was! It brought fear and trembling and heart-searching to all.

God Proclaims His Law The heights of Sinai were often touched with rosy hue at dawn. But this morning, as the people gathered in the valley below, the mountain was overhung with a thick dark cloud which brought a strange dread upon the tribes. Fearsome lightning flashed about the cloud, and terrific peals of thunder followed.

“Listen! The sound as of a great trumpet up in the heights! It waxes louder and louder! The mighty God is summoning us to listen!” murmured the people to themselves. “See, a great fire is descending on the mount!” “O God, keep us! the mountain is all of a smoke! It quakes! It trembles! Ah, listen! Ah, listen! The voice of God Himself speaks.” Gone were all thoughts of self-confidence.

“And God spoke all these words, saying: I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

“Thou shall have no other gods before Me.” 2 “Thou shall not p make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shall not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them.

For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me. And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep My commandments.” 3 “Thou shall not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that takes His name in vain.” 4 “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shall thou labor, and do all thy work. But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. In it thou shall not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy 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.” 5 “Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God gives thee.” 6 “Thou shall not kill.” 7 “Thou shall not commit adultery.” 8 “Thou shall not steal.” 9 “Thou shall not bear false witness against thy neighbor.” 10 “Thou shall not covet thy neighbor’s house, thou shall not covet thy neighbor’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor’s.” The people listened fearfully as the voice of God proclaimed the Ten Commandments. But as they heard the thundering, the noise of the trumpet, and the voice that shook the earth, they rushed away from the foot of the mountain and stood afar off.

“Speak thou with us, and we will hear,” they called to Moses, in terror. “But let not God speak with us, lest we die.” “Do not be afraid,” responded Moses. “God is come to prove you, and that His fear may be before your faces, that you sin not.” “That you sin not.” This great sight had come to them in so impressive a way that they might ever remember the Ten Commandments in their new homeland, and never break them. We need to remember them, too, as the laws of Him who shall be our Judge. Up to this time the Israelites had been travelling south-east, and it must have seemed to many that they were going away from the Promised Land. But when they moved from Sinai, a year later, they turned and marched north toward Canaan. Sinai was “the beginning of the way home.” And what a home God intended that to be! Every man, woman, and child in that kingdom with the Ten Commandments written in the heart. An ideal kingdom! What joy and gladness there would be! What safety!. What prosperity! Probably many a young Rachel and Gideon sang it aloud for joy: “Oh, we are going home. Home to the land of Joseph and Jacob, Isaac and Abraham!” “Yes, Rachel! Home to the country where no one will covet our goods. Where no one will covet our land or our home. And no one will covet his neighbor’s wife or anything that belongs to anyone else.” “And we shall not be dragged before judges on false charges, Gideon.” “No, Rachel! People will be ruled by the commandment which says: ‘Thou shall not bear false witness against thy neighbor.’” No scandal will be heard; no back-biting, no one will exaggerate our faults, no one will -deceive people by flattery. What a wonderful country!” “A lovely country it will be, Gideon! A lovely country!” And they might have talked away for hours as they marched through the desert by day or sat gazing at the northern stars by night. In Egypt they had been forced to give their toil for nothing, but in the new land, the law, “Thou shall not

steal,” would ensure servants due payment for their work. It would also keep the laborer from cheating his employer of the time he was paying for. Industry and diligence would be assured. No thieves! No bars to the windows! No prisons!

“Thou shall not commit adultery.” In Canaan, that happy land, how sacred the marriage relation was going to be! There the rosy dreams of youth would become a heaven and not a desert mirage. There love and respect would ever continue. There the union of two loving hearts would ever be safeguarded by the sacredness of the marriage vows, by good common sense, and the tender, unselfish, thoughtful love of husband and wife. There loving children would ever look up to father and mother as their ideals of strength and loveliness of character.

What a change from the gross impurity and the dark practices of idolatrous Egypt! “Thou shall not kill.” No more would mothers need to fear a Pharaoh who doomed their children to death in the Nile. When the land was in their possession, then-no more the sword! No more the battle shout! No more the war-chariot with its stamping, peacock-plumed horses! What a land of safety and peace!

Safety and Happiness for Children If those wise laws should be kept by the grown men and women who were to settle by the flowing Jordan and on the green slopes of Mount Hermon, how much easier it would be for the children to obey as they heard the law, “Honor thy father and thy mother!” Yes, one thinks then it would be easy. For surely parents who were wise in the keeping of God’s law would be given wisdom in the upbringing of their children. Abounding love and care, compassion for the inexperienced feet, would be mingled with happy association in play and work, and with firmness and sound judgment. Those last six of the Ten Commandments ring forth our duty to one another. The other four, which showed man’s duty to God, are just as practical.

God Planned for Rest and Gladness “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.” There was to be no unending toil in the Promised Land. Each Friday evening, as the sun sank down in the west, work was to be finished, the sound of the saw and the hammer was to cease, and the song of praise to God was to rise from Hebrew homes, with the music of harp and viol. On the Saturday morning the families were to gather at the house of God for divine worship. During the day parents were to enjoy with the children the loveliness of flowers and trees, the song of birds, and the beauty of hill and vale. They were to tell them of the guidance of the gracious God who created all things for the happiness of mankind. What a day of singing and gladness of heart it was to be! [7] The Sabbath was to be a day of rest that they might be refreshed. It was also a “sign” distinguishing them from the idolatrous nations around, and pointing them out as worshippers of the true God, the Creator of heaven and earth. [8] How much we lose in these days if we forget the Sabbath!

By the third commandment the Hebrews were to treat with reverence the sacred name of God. “Thou shall not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.” Farmers and merchants, mothers and maids, would gain faith in God’s presence, and confidence in His power, if they guarded His name and His honor with care.

“Thou shall not make unto thee any graven image,” commanded God. Back in Egypt the Hebrews had seen all manner of idols. There were images of human beings with dog’s heads, frogs’ heads, and hyena heads. There were images of cows and images of crocodiles and snakes. In the dim interior of the pillared temples were colossal ugly idols, and it was taught that spirits came and dwelt in these dumb images. Music of harps and viols and the perfume of incense gave enchantment to the temple service. Thus the people were led away from the worship of the great invisible God, the Creator of heaven and earth. Besides this, there was danger that the Hebrews would be taught to adore images of the true God, of angels, patriarchs, and saints. All this was forbidden by the second commandment. God would not have His children, made in His own image, degrade themselves and Him by kissing wooden hands, bowing to stone saints, or kneeling before brazen serpents, [9] pots of manna, or pieces of food-however sacred the associations of these things might be. No worship of human beings, either-though they be priest, or king, or emperor! No worship of the sun, the moon, or the stars.

Only One True God “Thou shall have no other gods before Me.” “Him only shall thou serve.” It was common to worship a large number of gods in those nations of old. A foreign king on a journey would probably worship Bel and Merodach in Babylon quite cheerfully, as a matter of respect. If he were visiting the Philistines the next month he might gladly step out of his chariot at Ashdod and make an offering to Dagon, the national fish god. If he arrived at Jerusalem he would be pleased to offer sacrifice to the true God.

But what a worship! Surely it was designed by the devil to throw contempt and ridicule on the Most High! Should men give to a stone fish or a metal calf the same honor as they give to the Eternal God, Creator of the heaven and earth? Never! It was a design of Satan himself! No! “Thou shall worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shall thou serve.” This, the first commandment, was the very foundation of God’s law.

At creation this law of God was in man’s heart. Before sin came, Adam and Eve had no other gods beside the Creator. They would not have dreamed of making an idol-image of God. He walked with them in the cool of the day. They would not think of taking God’s name in vain, nor of breaking the Sabbath, happiest day of the week. Day with the blessing of God on it! Set apart by Him for all holy purposes!

Nor would they have broken any of the other great commandments. Alas, that sin came in! Long centuries of wandering and sin! Sin was ingrained in human nature, and it was necessary to proclaim the law with the thunders of heaven to the nation chosen to represent

God. All too soon the rosy picture of a sinless home for the Israelites in Canaan was spoiled by sin. They had promised to obey this bright law, but ingrained sin was stronger than their promises. That was the weakness of their covenant.

Better Promises But now - now God has made a better covenant with man. "This is the covenant that I will make with them said the Lord, I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them." [10] So our hope is not in what we can do. "Emmanuel, God wit us," will do it for every willing man or woman, boy or girl. Jesus 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." [11] Yes, Jesus the Son of God, living in our poor hearts, will cleanse them and, day by day, will cause us to walk in the glad way of His commandments. He whose finger wrote the law on slabs of stone can write it on our hard hearts. [12] "Is religion simple" a middle-aged business man asked m rather wistfully, I thought, as our train sped rapidly toward a northern town. "Oh, yes, its duties are very simple. "Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." [13] "And its power is very simple. Trust the Lord Jesus to fulfil His promise to come into your heart. 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shall be saved!'" [14] This is God's Way Out.

REFERENCES

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2. Exodus 15:23-25; 17:14; 16:14-31.
3. With Lawrence in Arabia, Page 106.
4. In the Steps of Moses the Lawgiver," Page 330.
5. In the Steps of Moses the Lawgiver," Page 340.
6. Exodus 12:37.
7. Isaiah 58:13,14.
8. Exodus 31:13,17.
9. 2 Kings 18:4.
10. Hebrews 10:16.
11. Revelation 3:20.
12. Ezekiel 11:19, 20.
13. Ecclesiastes 12:13.
14. Acts 16:31.

9. The Way of Release from Invaders

If you are facing some great danger or an apparently insuperable difficulty, this chapter may give you new confidence and peace in your life.

HERE is a message of hope to all who have alien armies in their land: God has often intervened suddenly to cast out the invaders and to bring relief to invaded countries. He can make a way out of seemingly hopeless situations. One of these amazingly sudden interventions was the judgment on Sennacherib's army when he invaded Judea in the days of the good king Hezekiah.

Sennacherib was the great king of Assyria whose army invaded Judea about 713 BC. A merciless tyrant, he treated with relentless cruelty all those nations which stood out against him. Already the kings of Assyria had crushed every smaller kingdom which had dared to resist them. Gozan, Haran, Arphad, Sepharvaim-no country or city had been able to stand against those cruel, bearded destroyers with their chariots. They would gouge out the eyes of their captives; they would even skin them alive! Brutal, devilish men!

Jerusalem in Peril And now the great dictator, Sennacherib, had sent a powerful force against Jerusalem. The rest of his army he planted across the road from Egypt so that no possible help should come from the land of the Nile. He would gain such a victory that his sons' Esar-haddon, Adrammelech, and Sharezer, would boast of their father's might for ever! While Sennacherib himself watched the

Egypt road, Rabshakeh, his fierce general, taunted the leaders of Judah at their very gates, demanding surrender. The situation seemed hopeless! "Let not Hezekiah deceive you," shouted this Assyrian Minister of Propaganda. "He shall not be able to deliver you." "Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord," he blasphemed. "Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria?" No, they had not. And Hezekiah's heart quailed. Many a Hebrew face grew pale. Many a breast beat with terror at the thought of those ferocious troops smashing through the gates. The future was dark with fear.

If Hezekiah had been able to get any news from his other towns he might have been still more dismayed. For Lachish, his chief defended city in the west, had gone-stormed by Sennacherib. And Libnah was now surrounded. [1] How Sennacherib gloried over the fall of Lachish on his return to Nineveh! He had a great series of stone carvings made giving the details of his glorious victory there. These carvings may be seen today in the British Museum. They were transported to London from the ruins of Sennacherib's proud capital many years ago.

Can God's Prophet Hold Out Hope?

Hezekiah sent to the prophet Isaiah. Was there any help in God at this time? he asked. Was there any way out of this trouble? Swiftly came Isaiah's answer-a prophecy of hope in the blackness: "Be not afraid!" "Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumor, and shall return to his own land," continued the prophet. "And I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land." Strangely enough, Rabshakeh did "hear a rumor," just as the prophecy had suggested. He heard that Tirhakah, the king of Ethiopia, was advancing across the desert from Egypt to make war with the Assyrian armies. He therefore withdrew his army from Jerusalem so that in union with Sennacherib's main army, they could crush this new foe. Little did his men know they would never reach Sennacherib!

The "rumor" had come, according to Isaiah's words. Would the other part of the prophecy be fulfilled? Sennacherib himself had not the least thought of retreating to his own land. "Just a brief battle with Ethiopia," he reasoned; "of course it will be another victory-then Jerusalem shall be crushed." Another blasphemous proclamation was sent to King Hezekiah by Rabshakeh as he withdrew. "Let not thy God deceive thee," said the bullying message. "What god has ever been able to stay the conquering might of the king of Assyria." It Is Good to Take Our Problems to God Hezekiah took the fearsome document up to the temple. He spread the sheet out before God and earnestly entreated mercy and deliverance. "Incline Your ear, O Lord," he cried. "O Lord, our God, save us from his hand." And once more came a message from the divine Protector, like a welcome glow of warm light in the darkness! "The Assyrian shall not come into this city nor shoot an arrow there," rang out the new prophecy from the lips of Isaiah. "I will defend this city, to save it, for Mine own sake," said God.

Strange prophecy! To the men and women in the city it must have sounded almost too good to be true. How could it be fulfilled? But God had spoken. Hope lit many a home that evening when Jerusalem mothers pressed their good night kisses on children's lips as they went to bed. "Precious word of prophecy," they must have thought. "No, my darling, the wicked men will not come here. God has promised." That night Rabshakeh's host lay down to sleep, boastful and confident of victory. But that night the angel of the Lord went, forth through their camp and smote them with the unanswerable stroke of death! They never woke again. The "blast" had come-just as foretold! And what a "blast!" One hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrians died that night! One hundred and eighty-five thousand! "All the men of valor, and the leaders and the captains in the camp of the king of Assyria." Rabshakeh's biting tongue was silenced for ever! His brutal face lay motionless in death!

"By the way that he came shall he return," had the prophecy declared of Sennacherib. Terror fell upon the great king as he heard of the dread night judgment on his eastern army. In fear, shame, and confusion he turned his remaining forces about and marched ignobly and in haste back to his own country never to return!

Never! The prophecy had predicted that he should die by the sword in his own land. A little while after, while he was worshipping in the temple of Nisroch, his heathen god, he was assassinated by Adrammelech and Sharezer, his sons. They did not glory in their father's might. They smote him with the sword. And Esar-haddon-he took the throne of the dead tyrant.

"Vengeance is Mine! I will repay!" God declares. Every deed of cruelty, every act of oppression, every lying word shall have its just punishment unless there is true repentance. The light of prophecy, which brought hope to God's people, was the death sentence on the cruel and blasphemous Assyrians.

What a Thanks giving!

In the Judean capital there was rejoicing and amazement light and gladness. How wonderfully the word of prophecy had been fulfilled! "Thanks be to God! Hallelujah!" What happiness and peace came now to hearts so recently dark with fear and foreboding! How the mothers hugged the children to their hearts with gratitude and rejoicing! What laughter was heard! What tears of relief they shed! Yes, in just a few hours God can wonderfully make a way out of the gloomiest situation. And He will work for every trusting soul in these our own momentous times. Do not fear to turn to Him. "Watchman, what of the night?" The cry goes up in these dark distressful days.

Swiftly the answer comes from the Book of God: "The morning comes! If you will inquire, inquire you! Come!" To the ships steaming up the English Channel shines out one guiding light after another. One from the south, the Griz-Nez lighthouse on the French coast. Another friendly blink comes from the north, the English lighthouse on the white cliffs near Dover. Before these are passed the navigator sees a swinging beam from the South Goodwin Lightship. A red light from Deal pier. Then the North Foreland Light. After that many smaller lights-until the steamer anchors safely in her home berth in the London docks.

So the living light of prophecy shines out on our dark waters in these strange, eventful days. Great lights, smaller lights! Danger signals, safety signals! We ignore them to our loss; we heed them and find a clear course home. "We have also a sure Word of prophecy, whereunto you do well that you take heed," said the Apostle Peter. We can know what is coming. The Bible's prophetic lights shine brilliantly in these thrilling days. "Come! Inquire!" is God's gracious invitation.

REFERENCE

1. The Bible Comes Alive, Page 120.

10. Why They Missed -the Way Out

Almost unbelievable-in this chapter is set forth God's plan to keep enemies from the land and to bring happiness and prosperity to its homes.

GOLD! Solid gold! Over four thousand tons of pure, gleaming gold! Yes tons! Scores of goldsmiths were employed hammering it, beating it, carving it, melting and molding it. This astounding mass of precious metal was gathered by King David and his princes as material for the now temple of God which Solomon his Son was to build at Jerusalem. [1] No wonder the fame of Jerusalem and its temple spread over the valleys and plains of the ancient world. Kings and ambassadors spoke about it in ancient Babylon. Visitors from other countries afar off came to see and admire. [2] The work of building that temple employed 183,000 men for seven years. Eighty thousand of these were needed in the mountains of Lebanon and other places to cut down the fir trees and cedars, and to hew the timber and stones for the building. Seventy thousand men were employed transporting the wood from Mount Lebanon to the sea, floating it along the coast to Joppa, carting it from Joppa to Jerusalem, and in fetching and carrying the stone and other materials. [3] What processions of straining oxen moved up that steep road from the Mediterranean with their creaking carts and wagons! Gold? Yes, the whole interior of that temple was overlaid with gold.

Beams, floors, posts, walls, and doors, were all covered with the precious metal. [4] Besides its gold the temple had other wonders. By the inner door were two immense pillars of brass which in those days were triumphs of the metal-founders' skill. Down in the valley of the Jordan the furnaces had roared, and in the clay ground Solomon's men had made the huge moulds. When these were ready the glowing metal had been poured in and cooled. [5] See those great pillars which were then lifted out! Thirty feet high and six feet wide, bearing finely molded pomegranate fruits and artistic wreaths, to be surmounted by eight-foot capitals with carving of lilies. There was another wonder of brass in the court of the temple, a huge water-basin, seventeen feet across, supported on twelve brazen oxen, and was accounted by the ancients the largest brazen vessel ever made. [6] In the most holy place were set two exquisitely carved cherubim of great size, bending over the ark of the covenant below. It was a work worthy of a Hebrew Michelangelo. [7]

Under these overshadowing wings was the ark of the covenant, the sacred chest containing the two tables of stone inscribed with the Ten Commandments. The cover of the chest bore two beautifully molded figures of cherubim, wrought in solid gold. Between the two cherubim the glory of God was manifested in a mysterious glowing radiance. [8] What an object lesson! Heaven itself was mirrored in that building. The temple was an emblem, a type or picture of the temple of God on high, where God dwells in glory between the cherubim which overshadow the mercy-seat of the ark of His covenant, [9] where righteousness and judgment, shown in His holy law, are the habitation of His throne. Yes, God Himself gave the pattern for the temple. [10] The city of Jerusalem itself was of outstanding attractiveness. "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion," sang David. Hebrew exiles far from home sang: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning." [11] Jerusalem had strong natural defenses, besides its great walls. There were deep valleys on the east, the west, and the south of the old city. Across these valleys were the everlasting hills, symbols of God's guardian care.

"Oft of old the psalmist David, Playing harp of solemn sound, Sang his songs of God's protection When he viewed the hills around.

"Sunset gleams over Judah's mountains, Touched the clouds with heavenly light Till they seemed like hosts of angels Sent to guard him through the night." And so long as God's people were loyal to Him, He Himself was their protection, stronger far than walls or valleys or hills. The Eternal God, Creator of heaven and earth, manifested in that beautiful temple, would ever prosper them.

Its King's Fame Among the Nations Solomon, the handsome young king, began well. Oppressed with the thought of his own inability, he appealed to God for direction. "Give me now wisdom and knowledge," he prayed. "And the speech pleased the Lord." Swift came the answer in a dream. "Because thou has asked this thing, and has not asked for thyself long life, riches nor the life of your enemies lo,

I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart. So that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any rise like unto thee.” [12] And because Solomon had so humbly asked this great gift, God declared He would add that which he had not asked: riches, honor, and long life. Soon it was noised abroad that this young king showed unusually good judgment, outstanding intelligence, profound knowledge, and practical goodness. The Queen of Sheba came from “the end of the earth” to hear his wisdom.

His wise sayings were compressed into three thousand little nuggets of wisdom which delighted his hearers. A multitude of these are preserved in our Bible in the Book of Proverbs. [13] He was an accomplished composer of music, and created a thousand and five songs. We have just one left-Solomon’s Song, a love story which makes one wonder that the human heart could experience so much happiness. As a naturalist, he studied the trees, the birds, the animals, the insects, and the fishes. He became one of the foremost zoologists of his time.

As navigator, he had a fleet of trading ships in the Mediterranean and another in the Red Sea. To the wonder and delight of his people these ships brought home ivory, gold, silver, peacocks, monkeys, and cargoes of other valuable and strange products. His Red Sea ships may have gone as far as Ceylon. In Solomon’s reign the country with its beautiful capital seemed destined to lead the world. After the dedication of the temple, God appeared to the young king in a second dream and promised him: “Mine eyes and Mine heart shall be there perpetually.” What a precious assurance that was!

“And if thou wilt walk before Me in integrity of heart,” said God, “to do all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep My statutes and My judgments: then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever.” “But if you will not keep My commandments but go and serve other gods and worship them: then will I cut off Israel out of the land.” [14] A Promising Beginning, But- Had Solomon only remained loyal to God! What an object lesson of divine blessing the land would have been! But Solomon married heathen wives. God had forbidden such alliances, but the king persuaded himself that these attractive women would listen to him and be converted. And as most of them were daughters of the kings of surrounding nations, great prestige would come to his court, he hoped.

Vain hope! Many once-Christian young people of our day could have told him from bitter experience how much he would be deceived. Instead of becoming converted, the heathen wives led Solomon into idolatry. He actually built pagan shrines for them near the holy temple of God.

With paganism, as always, came indifference to the rights of others. The people’s welfare became of secondary importance to Solomon’s growing love of luxury. His tax-collectors appeared oftener at the people’s doors with increased demands.

When Solomon Died The burden became insufferable. When Solomon finally died and Rehoboam his son came to the throne, the people asked that their burdens should be lightened. [15] The new king refused. “No!” said he, haughtily, “my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.” This was enough. A cry of rage rose from the people. Ten of the twelve tribes revolted. They left Rehoboam and chose for themselves a new king, Jeroboam. From that time onward there were two separate kingdoms. They never united again. Jeroboam’s new kingdom in the north was henceforth called Israel. Rehoboam’s little remnant of a kingdom was called Judah. Its area was less than two thousand square miles.

It is easy to remember the character of the two lines of kings. Judah’s kings-some were bad and some were good. Israel’s kings-some were bad and some were worse! The men of the northern kingdom became noted for their idolatry. They worshipped the sun, the moon, and the stars; they sacrificed their children; they left God’s commandments. Though the Most Merciful sent His messengers to warn and to win, their efforts met with little success.

In the year 724 BC, the beginning of the end came for them, The armies of Shalmanezar, the Assyrian king, came marching into the land. After three years’ siege. Samaria was taken, and the people of Israel were deported to the land of Media, south west of the Caspian Sea, almost a thousand miles from home. [16] The Southern Kingdom Escapes-for a While The southern kingdom of Judah retained some of her independence for a hundred and thirty years longer. Good kings like Hezekiah and Josiah were loyal to God’s commandments, and succeeded in partially checking the drift toward idolatry. But the drift could not be wholly stopped. Idolatry and Sabbath-breaking seemed too attractive for the people. Perhaps it was human nature-or human selfishness-if they reasoned that little harm was done by breaking the first four commandments-their duty to God. What did it matter if King Manasseh set up in his courtyard an altar to Baal, the sun-god of the Assyrians? It would hurt no one, and it would make the Assyrians feel at home when they came to Jerusalem. It would give the king influence with them.

And whom did it hurt if Ben-Israel used profane language in his temper and took God’s name in vain? Or what did it matter if Merchant Joaz and Merchant Simeon and two score other shopkeepers opened up their businesses on the Sabbath day? Or worked in their gardens? What did it matter? Just this. Where the first four commandments are broken, the reverence for God dies. The authority of the Giver of the Ten Commandments is then no longer respected, and the six other commandments are lightly regarded. Unbelievably cruel deeds may then take place.

So when King Manasseh set up the altar to Baal and worshipped him, and ten thousand of his subjects did the same, what wonder if they took part in the adulterous ceremonies connected with Baal-worship? Was it any wonder that soon they began to offer human sacrifices?

And when Ben-Israel and his wife took God's name in vain, could he be surprised when his children ceased to honor God, and set light by their father and mother? When Merchant Joaz and his companions opened their businesses on the Sabbath, and no longer went to the house of God with their children, then it would be a marvel if the sons and daughters obeyed any of the commandments. And the grandchildren even less! We see this plainly enough today. We need to take solemn warning.

Before long Jerusalem presented a sorry sight. There were the children gathering wood, and the fathers kindling fires, so that the mothers could bake cakes as an offering to the moon! Of all foolishness! Also they worshipped the sun and the stars of heaven. They listened to deceiving astrologers, but forgot Him who made the planets. They brought in witchcraft and consulted familiar spirits. They burned their children in the fires.

They became hardened to the needs of the fatherless. They neglected the widows. They would steal, murder, and commit adultery-and then go to worship in the temple of God. [17] The hypocrites! Surely at such times the priests and ministers of God would be striving to turn the people back to God! Some did faithfully endeavor to do this-and were martyred as a result. But the majority were infected with idolatry like the people. Scores of them burned incense to abominable beast idols. From between the porch and the altar of the very temple of God they worshipped the sun-god after the manner of the heathen. If they venerated any day of the week, it was "the venerable day of the sun." A Storm Approaches Does God continue His protection of a country which sets His law at naught? Was it mere chance that storm clouds began to gather over the nation? No! Strange stories came to Jerusalem. The great Assyrian nation had been felled to the ground, as God's prophets had predicted. The rulers of Babylon and Persia had laid Assyria low. But rumor said that the new king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, was ambitious to be the greatest monarch of the world.

Then news came that Nebuchadnezzar's armies were on the move. They were conquering city after city. At any time they might turn south against the little kingdom of Judah. What should the men of Jerusalem do to keep the day of doom away?

Way Out of Threatening Danger Men discussed the news gravely as they went about the streets. What preparations should they make? What should they do? As the people walked in and out of the city gates one morning, a voice rang out with the strange answer: "Hear you the word of the Lord, you kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that enter in by these gates." [18] "It is the prophet Jeremiah," said Ben-Israel to his companion. "What foolishness is he uttering now?" Jeremiah looked over the groups of people and called out earnestly: "Thus said the Lord; Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem; "Neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath day, neither do you any work, but hallow you the Sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers." "Hallow the Sabbath day!" "And it shall come to pass, if you diligently hearken unto Me, said 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." "A wonderful promise is this-but hard counsel," thought Merchant Joaz. "I have agreed with those buyers to meet them on Sabbath. I shall lose contracts if I disappoint them." "And I should lose my employment," thought Merchant Simeon's assistant. "The Sabbath is one of our busiest days." "I feel I ought to keep the Sabbath," reasoned the Hebrew young woman. "But no one keeps the Sabbath now. How people would laugh at me!" "What is the fellow talking about?" says a military officer scornfully. "What difference would it make to Nebuchadnezzar's plans if every one of us began to keep the Sabbath this week? Nebuchadnezzar does not care one hair of Bel's beard whether we keep the Sabbath or not. He would probably hasten and attack us on the Sabbath!" "Yes, yes! From now on we ought to work seven days a week preparing our defenses against him," assented his hearer, looking at the gates and the walls guarding their city, their temple, and their palaces.

"Much more practical, that," growled many of the people. "This fellow ought to be stopped!" "But if you will not hearken unto Me," the prophet's strong voice was speaking again with anguish in its tones-"If you will not hearken unto Me to hallow the Sabbath day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem -on the Sabbath day. Then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched." It did look preposterous. Will God do miracles for those who keep the Sabbath? Would the German bombers have kept away from London town in our day if all the people of the city had begun to keep the Sabbath of God-Saturday, busiest day of the week?

But God knew, and Jeremiah knew, that if the people of Jerusalem had begun with all their hearts to keep the Sabbath, then their other wicked practices would cease. Their eyes would be turned to God, the great Deliverer, and He would have saved Jerusalem from Nebuchadnezzar as He had saved the city from Sennacherib's cruel hosts. He may do astonishing things for our own loved country if we all regard His holy day. Surely we, in these days, should at once begin to walk in God's way, keeping His Ten Commandments-keeping the Sabbath. He will make the way clear to every loyal heart and will bless abundantly.

But what course did the people choose? They listened to Jeremiah as he continued to warn the Hebrews at the various city gates. They thought over his words, but finally they refused God's counsel, or put off action for a more convenient day. Fatal was their delay. Merchant Joaz and his competitors still worked on the Sabbath, and their assistants followed suit. The Hebrew young woman refused to face ridicule-and plunged deeper into sin.

Jeremiah himself was thrown into prison; his life was threatened. Foul deeds were committed by a people who had turned from the righteous God to wicked idolatry. Neighbors slandered and deceived each other. Brother supplanted brother. Murders, robberies, and assassinations increased until it seemed as though the streets were polluted with blood. The messengers of God pleaded to no purpose. God did all in His power for the people-only to be rejected. Then the Babylonian army came.

"In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon to Jerusalem, and besieged it. "And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he 'carried into the land of Shinar [Babylon] to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god.'" [19] Many of the young princes, among them Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, were taken to Babylon.

But if Nebuchadnezzar hoped that Jerusalem would submit for ever to being under Babylon, he was mistaken. It was necessary for his armies to come again and again to this city on the hills of Judea. The second time they took away large numbers of the people. They broke up the rest of the golden vessels and took the valuable metal to Babylon.

The third and last time, the city withstood the Babylonian siege for eighteen months. There was a great famine, and at last the king and his men of war fled by night by the way of the gate by the king's garden. They hurried away down the steep toward the plains by the Jordan. But the army of the Chaldeans swiftly pursued after the king and overtook him not far from Jericho. All his army scattered from him and fled.

Zedekiah was taken by the enemy to Riblah, on the River Orontes in Syria, to the king of Babylon. He was tried. His sons were slain before his face, then his eyes were cruelly put out and he was carried captive to Babylon. What a tragic ending to a reign which might have had the smile of God upon it! Never let us endanger our children's future by lightly regarding the Sabbath. Let us begin its observance this very week. The Father in heaven will open the way for us.

Four weeks after the king's flight, Nebuzar-adan, the Babylonian guard, began the destruction of the city. At his command his soldiers burned the house of the Lord and the king's palace. Every great man's house they burnt with fire. All the houses of Jerusalem were burnt with fire; they all went up in smoke. The soldiers broke down the walls of the city. They smashed up those famous pillars of brass, and the great brazen sea, and carted the metal away to Babylon. The gold of the temple, those thousands of tons, had long since gone. The city was a pile of blackened, smoking ruins.

The holy city of the Jews, the holy temple of Solomon's days was gone. [20] Gone! because its people refused to "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." They missed God's way out.

A Better City But, thank God, He has given a promise that raises in our hearts the vision of a New Jerusalem, more glorious by far than that city of old. We see by faith the Holy City of God, and within its walls we hear no shout of battle nor crackle and roar of burning. Through its pearly gates shall pass the princes and kings of the kingdom of Christ. Among them are men and women, boys and girls, of our own generation. They are preparing now. They have received forgiveness of sins and acceptance with God. They keep the Sabbath of God; they walk in His way; they are loyal to His commandments. They love God and their fellow men. Soon they shall tread the streets of gold in the train of Christ Jesus, their Redeemer. And, praise God! This city shall stand for ever!

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11. At the Dictator's Court

If you are planning for the education of your children, read in this chapter of the principles which brought four young men to leading scholastic attainment.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR, king of Babylon, was a real man-no myth about him! He lived from 641 BC, to 561 BC. Eighty years! [1] He reigned four years as co-regent with his father, Nabopolassar, then forty years alone. He was a real dictator. We know about his life from five hundred written contracts which have been unearthed, and from thirty inscriptions on buildings or memorials. Also from writers of the Bible: Daniel, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel; and ancient historians like Berosus, Menander, Megasthenes, and others. [2] The ruined buildings of his great city are still out there in the desert near the Euphrates River, two hundred miles south of the Haifa oil-pipe line. They are open to inspection by anyone. You can go by taxi from Baghdad, or take a train to "Babylon Halt"-if it deigns to stop there. [3] No, there is no myth about the story of Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel! This dreaded king swooped down on Jerusalem in the third year of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, about 606 BC. After a short siege the defenders of the city were overcome and submitted to the conqueror.

"And the king spoke unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes. "Children in whom was no blemish, but well favored, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans." Thus it came about that a group of Hebrew youths on their march north, turned round to gaze at their native city for the last time. Daniel and his three companions, with many others, were saying farewell to their Judean hills. And farewell to Jerusalem! As prisoners of the great king Nebuchadnezzar they were travelling to the distant city of Babylon, hundreds of miles away. With bearded Babylonian soldiers guarding them-no chance' of escape-they slowly traveled north.

North, past the plains of Megiddo, where once God had delivered Israel by Deborah and Barak. [4] Past Mount Carmel, away over on the west, where God had answered Elijah's faith. by sending down fire from heaven. North, past Zarephath, where God had miraculously caused the widow's oil and flour to multiply for Elijah's sake. [5] Ah! where was the God of Elijah now? He had made a way out for Noah and Joseph, Moses and Hezekiah. But now He seemed strangely far off.

A hundred years before, when good king Hezekiah reigned in Jerusalem, God worked mighty miracles on his behalf. At that time Merodachbaladan, king of Babylon, had sent his messengers south along this very road with presents and greetings to the Judean king.

How very different things were now! Had Hezekiah only remembered to point those men to the true God, Daniel and his friends might have been spared this sad separation. But instead, Hezekiah had shown the ambassadors all the gold and silver vessels of the temple, with all his other treasures. The ambassadors had returned to Babylon with tales of gold instead of testimonies to God.

No wonder Babylon had coveted those treasures ever since. That was the reason those golden vessels were in that wagon over there—also going to Babylon. Was this God’s way out? Isaiah the prophet had warned Hezekiah of this danger. “Behold, the days come, that all that is in your house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, said the Lord.

“And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shall beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.” [6] Like every other prophecy from God, this one had been fulfilled. Here were the sons of the royal line on their way to the palace of Babylon, just as the prophet had said!

It was good that Hebrew mothers had steadfastly trained these boys for this emergency. While they had doubtless shown them the prophetic scrolls with the predictions mentioned, they also had shown them the prophecies which told them of God’s love and care for His faithful children. They had filled their minds with the assurance of the presence of God, and taught them the law of kindness and courtesy, goodwill and practical helpfulness.

So, as the young prisoners journeyed north, they lifted up their hearts in prayer to God and thought of His promises of protection. Had not God instructed Isaiah: “Comfort you, comfort you My people?” [7] One day, not far distant perhaps, the Lord God would come with strong hand and would rule over the earth, bringing fair Eden back again; He would gather the lambs with His arms; He would carry them in His bosom, and would gently lead those that were with young. As they marched by the side of the cedar-clad mountains of Lebanon and under the shadow of Mount Hermon, they had cause to remember that the mighty God in whom they trusted was He who “comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance.” [8] Surely He would take care of them. Surely He will take care of our loved ones who trust in Him. After travelling north many days they came to the great road junction and turned east to the Euphrates River.

“God brought Daniel into favor and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.” This handsome boy who combined cheerful helpfulness with high principle, won the favor of the Babylonian officer. When they reached the Euphrates they had left the hills and mountains behind. Now they marched through a fruitful plain, almost as level as the sea. Not much rain fell in this region, but great irrigation canals intersected the land, carrying the life-giving water from the river to the fields. No wonder the captives were astonished!

“What marvelous wheat-fields, my lord Ashpenaz! What a fruitful, verdant land is this!” “Yea, Daniel, my lad, the wheat fields of Babylon deserve to be famous. Sow a bushel of wheat here and thou shall have two hundred bushels to harvest. Maybe three hundred. See the blade of that wheat, too. Each blade the breadth of four of thy fingers.” [9] “Great harvests and a great river, my lord Ashpenaz. Much greater than our river Jordan at home.” “Yea, lad. Everything in the land of Babylon shall be great and mighty. Great is my lord Nebuchadnezzar, and great and mighty is the city of Babylon, the glory of the Chaldeans—as thou shall soon see.” What Was Babylon Like?

“Babylon must be a wonderful city, my lord Ashpenaz?” “Does thou see this river, Daniel? The city of Babylon is so great that the river which enters at one corner must flow full six leagues before it flows out at the other corner.” “Six leagues! What a great city!” “In truth it is; and its walls are over three hundred feet in height. So thick are they at the top that there is good room for chariots and horses to race along. And the river banks are lined with mighty walls, too.” [10] “If only Jerusalem had possessed such walls, my lord.” “Ha, ha! yea, it would have been hard for my lord the king to force his way in. Then, too, the moat around Babylon is full of water far deeper than your river Jordan.” “Was not Babylon first called Babel—confusion—because here God confounded the language of the builders of the tower of Babel.” “Aye, lad, so say the Hebrew writings. But in our Chaldee language, ‘Babel’ means ‘Gate of God.’ Gate of our great god Bel, who gives us the victory over the nations. Great is Bel.” Soon the captives and their guards arrived at Babylon. They tramped over the great moat bridge, through the gateway with its massive brazen doors, under the archway in the mighty walls, and into the famous city of which they had been speaking. The outlook was none too bright for these boys. They never dreamed—how should they know that one of their number was to show God’s way out for the whole world’s troubles—the way back to Eden? God often plans to give us some joyful surprise.

Nebuchadnezzar was at this time about thirty-five years of age. Strong, clever, ambitious, and intolerant of opposition, he planned to make Babylon the greatest monarchy on earth. “Did I not help Nabopolassar, my father, to smash the power of mighty Assyria? Have I not made an alliance with the king of Media by marrying Amytis, his daughter? I have been successful in my western wars. If I fight with all energy in the present, and plan swiftly for the future, my fame may ring down the ages for ever!” Following this plan he seems to have chosen the best of the youth of the conquered nations to be educated as wise advisers of the king. They could then influence their own countrymen to be loyal confederates of the great monarch of Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar Plans Their Education “You are to be taught the learning and the tongue of the Chaldees—the Babylonians’ learning, my lads. You are to study three years, and then my lord the king will question you himself. He hath graciously ordained that you shall eat the same food and drink the same wine that he himself drinks, so that you may be strong in body and mind. Does thou understand, Daniel? My servant Melzar shall be over you to help you.” So spoke the king’s officer.

“But, my lord Ashpenaz, is not the king’s food first offered to the gods of Babylon” inquired Daniel.

“Yea, it is offered to Bel and Merodach and Nebo, that their strength and spirit may be in the eater.” “Then, my lord Ashpenaz, may we humbly ask that thou wilt give us other food. For thou knows that we worship the Lord Jehovah of the Hebrews, and He hath commanded us that we worship none other gods. Let them give us pulse-the food which makes strong the men who toil in the fields,” pleaded Daniel.

It was a bold request, more than Asphenaz dared grant. “I fear my lord the king, Daniel. If he should see you looking worse than the other youth of your sort, then will you make me endanger my head to the king!” Daniel tried Melzar: “Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. Then let our faces be compared with the others-and as thou sees, so deal with thy servants!” That fearless, smiling, respectful youth was hard to refuse. “It will not hurt to make this trial,” thought Melzar. So he consented, and “at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king’s meat.” So Melzar for the future let them have the simple food of their choice.

Judean Parents Versus Babylon’s Learning Now they begin their studies of the Babylonian learning. Tremble, you fathers and mothers in far Judea! The king hopes to turn their allegiance from God the Creator to the worship of Bel and Merodach. How often faithless men in great universities turn young lives into the path of unbelief!

But the Judean parents had laid a good foundation, and God blessed their faithful work. He made their sons a mighty influence for good. The Chaldeans’ language was a difficult one to learn. Instead of using our twenty-six letters of the alphabet, they had over five hundred signs. Yet these Hebrews passed with honors. In astronomy and the science of figures the Chaldeans had made much progress. “The clear sky and the unbroken horizon of the Chaldean plains, lending an unusually brilliant aspect to the heavens, naturally led the Chaldeans to the study of the stars.

“They early divided the zodiac into twelve signs, and named the zodiacal constellations, a memorial of their astronomical attainments which will remain for ever inscribed upon the great circle of the heavens. They foretold eclipses, constructed sundials of various patterns, divided the year into twelve months, and the day and night into twelve hours each.” They used the week of seven days, and “the seventh, fourteenth, nineteenth, twenty-first, and twenty-eighth days of the lunar month were kept like the Jewish Sabbath, and were actually so named in Assyria!” [11] Made mentally clear-sighted by their home training in the Scriptures, the young Hebrews were quick to discern the true and the false in this learning. Many of the mysteries and much of the vagueness of the worldly teaching disappeared before the light shed by the writings of Moses, David, Solomon, Isaiah, and the other sacred books from which their parents had taught them.

They studied hard, and God blessed them. “As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had, understanding in all visions and dreams!” What Will the Examination Show?

The three years’ course passed rapidly by. At its close the king examined all. The great test had come. Ashpenaz, Daniel’s old friend, brought them in before the king. With deep interest the lord of Babylon set them questions and listened to their answers. Imagine that examination of old. The king finds they are rapidly acquiring proficiency in writing with the wedge-shaped characters of the Chaldean language. They already speak the king’s own tongue reasonably well.

In history: “Who was the founder of Babylon the great?” “Nimrod, the great-grandson of Noah, your majesty.” “And Egypt, with all its Pharaohs-who founded that nation?” “It was Mimaim, uncle of Nimrod and grandson of Noah.” “The nations of the west, Greece and the lands beyond-who were the founders of Greece?” “Javan, the grandson of Noah, your majesty. Javan and his sons were the founders of Greece with its isles and some of the lands of the west.” [12] The wise men of Babylon taught that the earth was supported on two great mountains. Daniel could say with assurance: “No. God stretches out the northern stars over empty space. He hangs the earth on nothing.” [13] “Tell me of the stars in their courses. Does Bel, the great god, dwell in the sun? Does the goddess Ishtar live in the morning star or in the moon?” “Your majesty, the God of heaven, the great Jehovah, created the glorious sun and the gracious moon to be lights for the children of men. And the great God upholds and directs them still by the word of His power. He brings forth the stars of the zodiac in their season.” [14] “Nay-yet-” the king was visibly interested. “What is the saros?” “The saros, your majesty, is a period of a little more than eighteen years during which all the solar and lunar eclipses repeat themselves. Knowing of this, we can predict the eclipses of the future.” So the questioning went on-language, history, mathematics, astronomy, theology. To all the questions came simple, direct answers from these four. God had blessed their loyalty to Him.

Nebuchadnezzar was greatly impressed. To himself he, thought, and probably declared aloud: “Why! In all matters of wisdom and understanding that I have inquired of them I find them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that are in my realm. Marvelous!” So these four young men received their appointments at the king’s court of Babylon. Henceforth they were counted among the king’s wise men. The principles of the Bible taught by godly parents had proved themselves the best foundation. Those principles were God’s way out of ignorance into the highest education. Strange experience. What had God in store for them?

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12. The Way of Nations Revealed

If you are facing some great problem for which you have not sufficient wisdom, see in this chapter how swiftly guidance was granted to four young men who called on God. And if the future seems obscure, see how God can lift the curtain.

THE sun had long since gone, and the busy activity of Babylon's streets had subsided. Merodach Street was quiet, and darkness had driven the traffic from the Street of the Moon God. The city was becoming as still as those huge stone bulls which loomed up in the darkness by the river gates. King Nebuchadnezzar had retired to rest in his beautiful palace by the Euphrates. But his mind was still active and his thoughts went out over the prospects for his flourishing kingdom in the years to come. What would be its future? [1] At the age of sixteen he had seen mighty Assyria fall from her age-long power. He had been with his father Nabopolassar at that time, and had seen the proud city of Nineveh brought down. Surely the city of Babylon could not perish like that! When Nineveh fell, Saracus, the last Assyrian king (so it was said) threw himself into the red crackling flames of his burning city in despair. [2] Surely no king of Babylon would ever come to like desperation!

No! he meditated. Babylon should ever increase. The city was built to endure for millenniums. In the ages to come the ends of the earth should still journey hither to admire his great capital. From the windy uplands of Ethiopia in the south and the freezing steppes of Muscovy in the north, they should come to wonder. The straw-colored men of Sinim (China) and the skin-clothed pagans of the Tin Islands of the far west should talk of the glory of Babylon for ever.

"Just a few months ago-what a battle we fought at Carchemish!" his thoughts ran. "That was a death-blow to Egypt. I must follow that up soon. I must besiege Tyre with its ships and sailors. I must invade Egypt-all this world shall feel my might. I will be ruler over the whole earth." But what of the future? Could I but peer into its dark recesses! What of the future? And Nebuchadnezzar fell asleep.

He Dreams a Mysterious Dream But in his sleep he had a vivid dream. [3] Perhaps this was the answer to his questionings. Yes, yes! It must be! No wonder he awoke. But the dream which was so vivid had vanished completely from his memory. What was it? What was that dream? Just as when God gave the strange dream to Pharaoh in Joseph's days, so now a great anxiety fell upon Nebuchadnezzar. He must know what that dream meant at all costs! Urgently he speeded his messengers. "Call the magicians!" he exclaimed. "They have done strange marvels in the past." "Send for the astrologers! They say they can foretell future events by the stars. They should know." "Tell the sorcerers-the spiritualists-to come at once. They claim that the spirits of dead friends teach them. And fetch the Chaldeans!

Fetch the scientists! They profess to have gathered the wisdom of the past. They are in touch with the god Bel and the god Nebo. I must-I must know the meaning of that dream!" "I have dreamed a dream," said Nebuchadnezzar anxiously, when the servants were assembled round the throne. "I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit is troubled-strangely troubled to know the dream." "O king, live for ever!" said the wise men reassuringly. "Tell thy servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation." The king's wrath flamed up at once. Probably this was the answer he expected-and it was not good enough! If these men really could interpret a dream, then they must be in touch with whatever power it was that gave strange dreams-and they ought to have power to know a forgotten dream. If they were not in touch with that power-then-and the thought made him furious-they had solemnly fooled him in the past and intended to fool him again. "Fool me-me-Nebuchadnezzar! Nebuchadnezzar, son of Nabopolassar! Conqueror of armies! Mightiest monarch of the world! And perhaps they laughed at me when my back was turned." The effrontery of it! Fooled by astrologers and spiritualists, conjurers and lying scientists! He flamed out: "The thing is gone from me! If you will not make known unto me the dream itself with the interpretation thereof, you shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill." "Let the king tell his servants the dream," replied the frightened men, "and we will show the interpretation." Dream or Death "I know of certainty that you would gain the time," roared the angry king. "But if you will not make known unto me the dream, there is but one decree for you. You have prepared lying words-corrupt, lying words to speak before me. Tell me the dream-then shall I know you can show the interpretation." "But," expostulated the wise men, "there is not a man on earth that can show the king's matter. There is none other that can show it before the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh." "Out with you! Out with you! Arioch, captain of the guard. Take these men out and execute them. Kill all these 'wise' men The impostors!" Nebuchadnezzar's "Brains Trust" had failed. The wise men were led off to await execution. The guards tramped out to bring Daniel and his three companions to be executed with the others. To the four Hebrews it came as a complete surprise. Probably they knew nothing about the dream until the royal guards appeared at the door with the fearful announcement that they were to be executed.

To be killed like this! When they had hoped to witness for the true God and turn others to Him in the years to come! "What Time I Am Afraid, I Will Trust in Thee" But Daniel was calm. The promise of God was fulfilled in him: "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." [4] "Why is the decree so hasty, Arioch?" he inquired of the captain of the guard. Arioch explained. "His majesty the king was furious because the wise men could not tell him his dream. He feels they have deceived him in the past." Daniel asked for Arioch's permission, and went in to speak to the king: "If your majesty will give us a little time, I think we can show the king his dream." The king granted the petition. "Anything-if I can recall that strange dream and get to know the interpretation." Thankful to God for the respite, Daniel went to his house and told his three friends.

"Let us pray to God and ask Him to give us the secret of the forgotten dream, so that we shall not perish with the wise men." So the young men knelt in prayer. Does not God say: "Call unto Me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knows not?" [5] Yes, great and mighty things have come to pass as the result of some little prayer-meeting or national day of prayer.

God Delights to Help His Children While Babylon was enfolded in darkness that night, God revealed the secret to Daniel in a vision. There it was-as clear as- if Daniel had dreamed it himself. "Thanks be to God; we are saved!" Fervently and gratefully, Daniel thanked God. "He reveals the deep and secret things. He removes kings, and sets up kings. I thank Thee, and praise Thee, O Thou God of my fathers, for Thou has now made known unto us the king's matter." The chief of the executioners was gratified to receive an early call from Daniel. "Destroy not the wise men of Babylon," said the young Hebrew. "Bring me in before the king, and I will show the interpretation." "Art thou able to make known unto me the dream?" asked Nebuchadnezzar searchingly, when Daniel was brought before him by the eager Arioch.

"The wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot show this secret to the king," said Daniel. "But there is a God in heaven that reveals secrets, [6] and is making known to the king what shall be in the latter days." A thrill passes through Nebuchadnezzar. His dream is a message from God, telling him just what he wanted to know as he lay on his bed on that wakeful night!

"What shall come to pass in the latter days"-a thrill passes through our own hearts, too-our hearts that beat and move in these "latter days." Is Nebuchadnezzar's dream a message from God to us as well? Confidently and solemnly Daniel continues: "O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter: and He that reveals secrets makes known to thee what shall come to pass!" How earnestly the king listens! How earnestly we listen! If Daniel gives a panorama of the great events which have happened from Nebuchadnezzar's time down to our own, then-then we shall know what we have often longed to know of the future.

A Dream Sent by God Confidently Daniel goes on: "Thou, O king, saw, and behold a great image. "This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou saw till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. 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: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." "This is the dream," said Daniel, with calm confidence. The king's memory awakened, quick and eager, and his heart assented: "Yes, this is the dream!" How Simple the Explanation!

“We will tell the interpretation thereof before the king,” Daniel went on.

“Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory.

“And where so ever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath He given into your hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold.” “I-my Babylon-is the head of gold,” thought the king. “Good! But what shall come to pass hereafter? If the God of heaven has given the world dominion to me so that I may be victorious wherever my armies march, will Babylon’s rule last for ever? What is Daniel saying now?” “After thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee.” “What?” thinks the king. “Will my kingdom pass? Will an inferior defeat the stronger?” “And another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth.

“And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and subdues all things:

and as iron that breaks all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise.” “But those strange feet-what can they signify?” thinks the ruler of the golden kingdom.

The voice of Daniel goes on: “And whereas thou saw the feet and toes, part of potters’ clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou saw the iron mixed with miry clay.

“And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. - “And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.” “Strange feet-mystery of iron and clay-but now that stone?” Nebuchadnezzar thinks, amazed.

“And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; “The great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.” As Nebuchadnezzar thus saw unrolled before him the vivid procession of world kingdoms to the end of time-to the setting up of the Eden-kingdom again-his heart was deeply moved. He seemed to realize that he was in the very presence of the God of heaven. Forgetting his royal dignity, he fell upon his face and actually worshipped Daniel.

“Offer an oblation and sweet incense before Daniel!” he commanded.

“Of a truth,” he acknowledged to Daniel when he had somewhat recovered from his emotion, “your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou could reveal this secret!” “Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and the chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon.” The Detailed Interpretation of the Dream How strangely that marvelous dream from God has been fulfilled! How easy it is to understand! “Thou art this head of gold,” said God’s interpreter. “Thou -Babylon” (pointed out and named in Daniel 2:37, 38). Nebuchadnezzar, hoped that his kingdom would stand for e ver -as nations hope in these days. What nation could vanquish his armies? And who could break down those mighty walls and take his great city? Why, Babylon was strong enough to defy a siege of a thousand years’ duration!

But Babylon’s armies were beaten, and the city of Babylon was taken. Taken practically “without fighting,” as Cyrus himself boasts in an inscription. The armies of the Medes and Persians surrounded the city, and secretly made plans to turn the Euphrates into another channel. This they did on the night of Belshazzar’s feast. Slowly the waters sank, and then the Persian soldiers entered at the river gate at the corner of the city. They rushed along the river bed, and, finding the gates to the streets open, as they had hoped, they took possession of the city. The king was killed, and the proud empire of Babylon went down for ever.

The Medo-Persian empire then became the world’s greatest power. Its territory stretched from India to Greece, and from Russia to Libya and Ethiopia. But Medo-Persia passed away, vanquished by Greece. Both these world kingdoms are pointed out by name in the Scriptures See Daniel 8:20,21. While Alexander lived it seemed as though Greece were invincible. There seemed every prospect that the great empire would endure for ever. Just as it seems with some nations of today. But when Alexander died his kingdom was divided into four parts. And, behold! a new power arose in the west, and Greece was crushed by Rome.

That Rome was the fourth world power is shown in the Scriptures also. See Luke 2:1. Rome had the power to tax “all the world.” How long the power of Rome endured! Symbolized by the legs of tough, durable iron, it seemed as though its power would never be broken. Even now we have many Roman laws and customs. Its language is still used in the medical and scientific world.

But Rome fell, as Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece had fallen before. Angles and Saxons took Britain, Franks took Northern France. The Suevi took Portugal. The Visigoths took Spain and south-west France. The Burgundians took south-east France. The Alemanni, Lombards, and Ostrogoths took part of Germany, Switzerland, and Austria. The Heruli took Italy. The Vandals took North Africa. [7] Thus imperial Rome's territory was divided among these ten tribes, who were in large degree founders of the present nations of Western Europe. Some weak; some strong. What an astonishing vision is this! It stretches from Babylon's time to the time of the crash of world empires in the setting up of God's kingdom. Gold, silver, brass, iron! The vision portrays four mighty world empires, then the fourth divided into a number of kingdoms.

Babylon, the golden kingdom, was followed by Medo-Persia in 538 BC. Medo-Persia ruled two centuries and then was overcome by Greece in 331 BC. Greece took the power in her turn, but came under the rule of Rome in 168 BC. Rome endured three times as long as any of the three preceding empires. But by AD 476 her kingdom had broken into fragments. The "Ten Kingdoms of Western Europe" ruled in her place. Will they ever be united as one great "world-power" again? Never!

Charlemagne tried to weld Europe into one. Napoleon wished to do so. Kaiser Wilhelm followed suit, hoping for world dominion; Adolf Hitler had far-reaching plans for the same. But never again will this take place. No, the feet have the weakness of clay as well as the strength of iron. "They shall not cleave together, even as iron is not mixed with clay," declares the voice of God.

Good News for Our Day But "in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed." This is the best news the world has ever heard! This prophecy is sure as the rising of the sun. It will come to pass at the time appointed. When God announced that the Flood would come after one hundred and twenty years-the Flood came. When God declared seven years of plenty in Egypt, and then seven years of famine-the plenty and the famine came to pass.

When God declared that Israel should be freed from Egypt after four centuries-they marched out at the time appointed. Not all the armies or dictators in the world could prevent it. So when God declares that in the days of these kings-our own time-earthly kingdoms will crash and crumble and be seen no more, while He will set up His glorious Eden-kingdom of everlasting health and peace, then, thank God, it will come to pass as He has appointed.

In our own time - "in the days of these kings"-Jesus, the Prince of Peace, is coming to reign over the world. And His kingdom shall stand for ever. He who welcomed the mothers and blessed their boys and girls, is calling us now. His kind and tender voice invites us, at this moment, to become His dear children. And to as many as open the heart's door to Him now, to them gives He "the right [margin] to become the sons of God. [8] Then, "when He shall appear, we shall be like Him. [9] "And now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming." [10] What a blessed time of peace and progress His coming will usher in for those who trust in His name! What a sad, sad disillusionment to those who reject Him! But "yet there is room." Our heavenly Father will not refuse even the weakest or the most sinful who turn to Him in confidence. If you come to Him just now, turning your back on sin, He will in no wise cast you out. His arms of love will welcome you. Though your feet may have slipped over and over again, He will receive you and call you His own. Do not fear to trust Him.

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8. John 1:12,13.
9. 1 John 3:2.
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13. The Way Out of a Fiery Furnace

If you who are reading this story are passing through some fiery trial-remember that “the form of the fourth,” the sympathetic Savior, will ever be wear you as you do His will and trust in His loving-kindness.

HOW soon we forget! The dream of the great image left a great impression on Nebuchadnezzar the king. He felt he had indeed received a revelation from God. But as the years rolled on, the impression faded away. Victory after victory had flushed him with pride. Success after success had dulled his once keen perceptions of God-as success often does.

Since the year 602 BC he had ground down all resistance from Judah and its capital, Jerusalem. He had burned the city with fire, executed King Zedekiah’s two sons, put out the eyes of the king, and carried him off prisoner to Babylon. [1] He would show them who was master! When the city of Lachish closed its doors against him he built furnace fires against the walls until the hard stone crumbled into powdery lime. [2] Nebuchadnezzar’s Plan to Unite the Empire How could he weld these newly conquered cities and countries together into the great empire of Babylon? Someone had a bright idea. Why not set up a mighty image that would represent Babylon? Then educate all the people to worship this symbol of empire? That image which the king had seen in his dream-that was a remarkable symbol. Why not actually make a copy of that, with its glorious head of gold, and call on all men to bow down and pay homage to it? They would then see Babylon in its rightful place as the golden city, head of all kingdoms.

“Yes, yes! Excellent suggestion! We will make a mighty image like the one I saw in my dream,” determined Nebuchadnezzar. “But no! Not of diverse metals. It shall be all of gold. All of gold. Else may one of the conquered nations take courage and think to become that ‘other kingdom inferior to thee.’ No, Babylon shall endure for ever.” It is human nature to try to forget unpleasant truths, and Nebuchadnezzar did not like to think Babylon would pass away. No, no!

So the word went out to the goldsmiths, the image-makers, and the artificers, and a site was selected on the Plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. There the goldsmiths set up their burning fiery furnace and began their work. By a rough irony, the gold used had been pillaged from the conquered countries; the image was therefore a union of the wealth and worship of them all. What a stir it must have caused! How the Babylonian merchants and the Euphrates boatmen must have discussed it! Listen how the boatmen talks:- “Has thou seen the king’s great image, Tartanis? Never has such a wonder been set up before.” “Nay, Rabsaris, never! They tell me it measures full ninety feet from the foot of the pedestal to the tip of the helmet. Nine feet across are those golden shoulders and chest. And thou and thy two sons could safely sit inside that head.” “How it gleams, and glimmers in the sunlight with its excellent brightness! But the form thereof is terrible!” “Thou speaks truth, Rabsaris. Our lord will brook no opposition. Great is Nebuchadnezzar! Ruthless is Babylon!” “But, Tartanis, why have they left the ugly gold-furnace near the golden image? Why has it not been taken down and removed?” “Nay, I know not, Rabsaris. Maybe our lord has some plan on foot.” When the dedication day was fixed, the great king sent out messengers to the leading officers of all countries of his dominion. They were to repair to Babylon at once to take part in the ceremonies of that great day. What a “Pageant of Empire” it was! What a gorgeous scene that assembly-ground presented when the great day arrived!

Here were the princes and the governors in colorful array. Grave judges sat with careful treasurers, and counselors mingled with sheriffs and captains of armies. The greatest dignitaries of the Civil Service and the high officers of the king’s vast army gazed up at the golden image. Nebuchadnezzar planned to impress their minds so deeply that they should all go back home saying, “Great and glorious is Babylon! Babylon will endure for ever.” But God had greater plans for that day. Unseen to human eye, there were other watchers. “Thou, God, sees me,” was true that day as it always is. There were angel watchers present, too, for when God’s children are in danger, then “the angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him, and delivers them.” Well may it be that the whole vast assembly of heaven had its eyes turned to the plain of Dura that day as the great drama, “Force or Freedom in Worship,” was played.

What Is the Furnace For?

There is quiet as the king takes his place on the royal throne. The great orchestra with its instruments of music is stilled, awaiting the signal for the special pieces arranged for that day.

Listen! The king’s herald is calling. His loud, strong voice booms out over the vast assembly: “To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, that at what time you hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, you fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up. And who so falls not down and worships shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.” “Ah! So that is why the gold-furnace was left on the site.” Who would dare to disobey when faced with the possibility of death by burning in that awful fire if one refused to worship the image? Now comes the test. The cornet blares out the awaited signal. The sounds of music are heard in the great dedication hymn. Louder and louder rise those barbaric notes from voices and instruments; and with one accord the people fall down and worship. They worship the golden image which Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up:- “Spirit of Babylon, hear us call!

Lowly before thee now we fall; Mighty in battle, glorious as gold; Thou shall be young when we grow old; Spirit eternal, hear!" Heroes Who Dared the King's Wrath But there were three Hebrew officers who stood erect. They bowed not the knee. They worshipped not. The dull, sinister fires of the gold-furnace gleamed threateningly on Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, but they heeded not. Had not God said: "Thou shall have no other gods before Me?" [4] Worship a-graven image? Had not God commanded: "Thou shall not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them." [5] No, they would not worship. Had not all the trouble come upon their nation through this very thing? Inward voices may have suggested excuses: "Oh, everybody else is doing it. Why be different, Shadrach? Whom does it hurt, anyway?" Or, "Oh, just pretend, Meshach. Kneel down and gabble out: 'Foolish, senseless, metal idol god, I would never dream of worshipping thee!'" And Abednego's fast-beating heart may have heard voices saying: "God is love. He will never condemn you for a little sin like this when life is at stake." But the three Hebrew men were of sterner stuff than to make excuses. "We are here to witness for the true God, and, come life or death, we will play the man! Never will we deny our God!" Tinkling dulcimers may have reminded Shadrach of the musical streams of far-off Judea and his mother's teaching. He would be loyal to her and to God! Had she not taught him God's precious promise: "When thou walks through the fire thou shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God." [6] Ominous beating of drums may have warned Meshach of the, tyrant's wrath. But he, too, would be loyal to God! The sound of the cornet may have reminded Abednego of the Archangel's trumpet, when the King of heaven shall appear. He would be loyal to Him at all costs! When earthly governments command that which God forbids, then we ought to obey God rather than men.

Informers Were Looking On But crafty eyes had been watching them, and jealous tongues were whispering as the people rose to their feet. Soon Nebuchadnezzar heard that his authority had been flouted-set at naught by men whom he had signally honored and favored. Yes, certain of the Chaldeans, forgetting that they owed their lives to these brave Hebrews, accused them now before the king:- "O king, live for ever. Thou has made a decree, that every man who shall hear the sound of the music, shall fall down and worship the golden image," which thou has set up; and whosoever refuses is to be cast into the burning fiery furnace.

"There are certain Jews whom thou has set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou has set up." "Can this be possible?" raged the king. "I worshipped the God of these Hebrews. I have allowed them freedom to worship their invisible God. How dare they humiliate me before all my lords on this memorable day? Will they be so intolerably rude as to refuse a little thing like this?" "Bring them to me!" he commanded.

"Is it true, O Shadrach, Mechach, and Abednego, do not you serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? Now" his voice was as heated and menacing as the great furnace – "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"-his voice rose, angry and threatening-"who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" The faces of the Hebrew men may have paled at the blasphemous words. Their limbs may have trembled. But true courage acts even when the face is pale and the limbs tremble.

We Will Be Loyal to God "O Nebuchadnezzar," they said, with brave dignity, "we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. 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," even if not – "be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou has set up.

"Will not? Will not?" Nebuchadnezzar raged in fury. "We shall see! Ho, furnace master! Heat the furnace fires hotter! Heat them seven times hotter than is wont." "Captain, ho, captain! Bring thy mightiest men, here. I will roast these Hebrews. They shall see." The Dread Ordeal Is Come "Hotter, furnace master! Heat the fire seven times hotter' Hotter by far than when they melted the gold! I will teach these impudent, disloyal scoundrels.

"Ho, captain! Are these thy mightiest men? Let them bind these traitors fast. Then hurl them into the midst of the flaming furnace. Right in! Right in! Even Moloch's fire-walkers would be consumed like chaff in those roaring flames. Right in." Swiftly the three men were bound with ropes. Then the brawny soldiers carried them like trusses of straw to the furnace mouth, swung them back and forward thrice, then hurled them into the leaping, crackling flames! Into the midst of that volcano like fiery furnace! The horror of it!

The furnace master's men had worked at the huge bellows only too well. The brawny soldiers who had thrown the heroes in staggered blindly back from the fire, their faces scorched, their hair burned off. Staggered back a few paces and fell in a crumpled heap-dead! Dead!

A shocked stillness fell over the assembled lords. "Those ill-fated Hebrews!" they gasped. Suddenly a murmur arises from those near the royal throne. What is the matter with Babylon's king? Why does Nebuchadnezzar start up from his seat? Why stares he so fearfully into the furnace? Why has the crimson fury of anger gone? Why is his face so white and awe-stricken? Are wailing fiery ghosts threatening him from the flaming furnace?

As if in a dream, he speaks fearfully to the lords near by: "Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" "True, O king," they reply wonderingly.

"Lo!" came the astounding words from his lips: "I see four men loose, walking" - free - "in the midst of the fire and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." The Son of God, of whom Daniel used to speak!

He stepped forward. "Shadrach!" he shouted, "Meshach! Abednego! You servants of the Most High God, come forth, and come hither." And behold, the three Hebrews walk forth unharmed from the jaws of that burning white-hot hell! What a hubbub there was! How excitedly the spectators talked and pointed!

"See, the ropes are burned off!" "But their faces are not singed!" "Not a burn on them!" "Look, their sandals are not scorched where they trod upon the white-hot coals!" "Not even the smell of fire is on them!" says an evidence weighing judge who is near enough to apply that test. And now the voice of the king is heard, ringing out over the excited chattering:- "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego," he exclaimed, "who hath sent His angel, and delivered His servants that trusted in Him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God." "I make a decree," he proclaimed, "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 homes shall be made a dunghill." It is doubtful if ever a professional Babylonian story-teller (and there were many of them) could have aroused such interest as did these princes, governors, counselors, judges, and treasurers when they told of the burning fiery furnace, and asserted with Nebuchadnezzar that: "There is no other God that can deliver after this sort." And if you who read this story are passing through some fiery trial-remember that "the form of the fourth," the sympathizing Savior, will ever be near you as you do His will and trust in His loving-kindness. God will not leave you alone in your trials. It may seem at times that the flames of affliction or sorrow will consume you. You may be tempted almost beyond endurance by some fascination which Satan holds before you. Do not yield. Jesus "is able to keep you from falling." He will bring you out of the fiery furnace, and you will yet praise Him for His goodness.

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14. More About God's Way for Nations

Perhaps you have sometimes wished you could have a elite to the mysterious movements of the nations in these times. If so, read in this chapter and the next the lines of the program which God holds in His hand. The last item is a glorious climax just what your heart has longed for.

MORE remarkable than Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and even more startling than the prophecy which aroused Cyrus, were the visions given by God to Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar's Prime Minister. So remarkable were they that Christ Jesus the Lord commended these words to His disciples' study. [1] For God revealed to Daniel not a fourteen-year plan, not a four-hundred-year plan, but one which covered a space of twelve hundred and sixty years and another which' spanned two thousand three hundred years. He told the story of nations before ever they were born. He unfolded the future right down to the new Eden kingdom.

Daniel had often thought of Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great image-the "Primer of Prophecy." He remembered its four great world empires, and especially, perhaps, the fourth, which divided up into weak and strong kingdoms. He himself was to see Babylon, the first kingdom, overturned by Medo-Persia, the second. The winds of war were even now raging among the peoples, nations, and languages of the ancient world. His own visions repeated the outlines given to Nebuchadnezzar, but filled in strange new details.

The Night Vision of the Strange Beasts In Daniel's vision he stood by the seashore in a bewildering storm. The east wind raged, the north wind lifted the waves, a roaring gale from the south sent the spray flying; then the billows heaved and sank with the violence of a storm from the west. It seemed as though all the world was in tumult.

Then to Daniel's astonishment, four wild beasts came splashing out of the sea. Strange, weird creatures they were, born of the tumult and war of the winds.

The first was like a lion, but it had wings like a great eagle! Then, behold! Some unseen power plucked the wings out, and made the king of beasts stand on its hind legs like a spiritless circus lion. The second beast was like a bear. It came shuffling out of the water, its claws rattling on the sand and shingle, a brute of stubborn strength. Between its teeth it was cracking three gory ribs, remnants of a recent feast.

Daniel marked the bear's movements and noted that it heaved itself up ponderously, first on one side, then on the other. And suddenly a voice called out to the shaggy creature: "Arise, devour much flesh!" Following the bear out of the waves was a leopard. But what a leopard! Four tossing heads rose from its shoulders, and four great wings from its black and yellow back. "Speedy beast this!" Daniel must have thought, as he noted with surprise the eagle pinions. "What beautiful, double-spotted markings! What a lithe, low-built creature! The sea-water is still dripping from its white fur underneath." Some beast is following the leopard out. "What monster is this?" he questioned in dread. Never had he seen such an animal as the huge, fearsome creature which splashed out behind the leopard. It lumbered up the beach, a beast with titan muscles and ugly face. See its iron teeth grinding up that piece of flesh! See its brazen nails are tearing up the carcass of some unfortunate creature swept up by the tide. Now it is actually stamping into pulp what it left.

What Changes Foreshadowed!

Daniel looked up at the ferocious head. It was surmounted by ten vicious-looking horns. As he gazed he saw another little horn forcing its way out and uprooting before it three of the other horns. And, strange sight! There were shrewd, cruel eyes in this horn and a moving mouth speaking great things. See the horn makes war with God's children and seems to have the mastery over them! Suddenly another scene appeared to the prophet. Gleaming thrones were placed in position, and God Himself, the Ancient of Days, solemnly took His place in the principal seat, which now glowed like a fiery flame.

The other thrones were occupied by mighty angels of high rank. Then thousands and thousands- of other radiant angels thronged in. The judgment was set, and the books were opened. A flaming, fiery stream now flows from the dazzling light of the throne of God. "The hour of God's judgment is come!" gasped Daniel to himself. "Oh, the hour of His judgment is come. Father in heaven, may our sins be all forgiven." And probably he thought of the annual day of judgment at home in Judea, when the high priest solemnly cleansed the sanctuary, and the names of those who had left the faith were blotted from the records. [2] Incongruously enough, the little horn began speaking again. Speaking great ill-timed words against the Most High. See, now the angels are in action against the beast! His body is destroyed and given to the burning flame. The scene shifts back to the shining company of angels before the throne. Cherubim and seraphim, angel princes and leaders, ministering spirits in rank after rank, arrayed in dazzling light, bow before that Form of insufferable glory on the throne of fire.

"Alas! Alas! What place is this for a sinful human being an ordinary man like me?" thought the shrinking prophet. But just then his heart brightened with hope. Among that shining company of angelic beings came a Man with the clouds of heaven.

Who Was That Man in Heaven?

"Ah! A Man!" rejoiced Daniel. "A Man, like me! I am no longer alone. I have company of my own kind in the judgment." But lo! This glorious Son of man, also Son of God, was brought near to the Ancient of Days, who gave to Him dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him. "His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away," Daniel was assured.

So the vision ended. Like Nebuchadnezzar's dream, it closed with the God of heaven setting up His everlasting kingdom of joy and peace. Glad hope for Daniel-and for us-the Son of man would then be the King for ever and ever and Eden would be restored again.

What Does It All Mean?

Daniel in his dream asked one who stood by to tell him the meaning of all this. "These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise," explained the interpreter. "But the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever." What a joyful prospect!

Daniel, without doubt, promptly recognized the similarity of this explanation with that of Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the image with its four metals symbolizing the four great world kingdoms. Possibly he ruminated: "Babylon was the head of gold in the king's dream. Babylon, here in this vision, must be symbolized by this lion-beast. Is Babylon near its end now? Will Medo-Persia triumph? Is Medo-Persia the bear?" "Yes, prophet!" we of the twentieth century reply: "As the lion was followed by the bear, so Babylon was followed by

Medo-Persia.” Then, as the bear was followed by a leopard, so Medo-Persia was to be succeeded by a kingdom remarkable for beauty and for the amazing swiftness of its conquests.

How exactly this came to pass! The signposts of history came in sight with the passage of time, just as the vision suggested. The blundering forces of Medo-Persia were defeated by the incredibly swift-moving leopard-like armies of Alexander the Great, head of the Greeks-the nation of handsome athletes and beautiful women. Just as shown in Daniel’s dream. [3] Then when Alexander died, his kingdom was divided under four heads-just as the divine symbols had indicated.

The Fourth Beast Arouses Daniel’s Alarm “But the fourth beast?” “I would know the truth of that dreadful fourth beast,” said Daniel to the one who stood near by. “What is that?” “The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth,” says the heavenly interpreter.

“Ah! like the fourth kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar’s image, the legs of iron,” thinks Daniel.

But was Greece conquered by a stronger power?

“Yes,” says the voice of history. “At the battle of Pydna the Roman army under Emilius Paulus defeated Perseus and crushed the Macedonian power. The last great power in the east was here broken. The Roman Senate was henceforth recognized by the whole civilized world as the source and fountain of supreme political wisdom and power.” [4] A stronger power? It certainly was. “The fourth kingdom shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces,” said Daniel’s informant. “It is Rome, Rome!” calls out the accusing voice of history. “Rome conquered almost all the known world!” “Rome, Rome!” echo the voices of thousands of valiant Gauls, hewn to the ground by the Roman legions. “Rome, Rome!” voices of thousands of ancient Britons reply. “Rome, who trod us down, sold us as slaves, and broke in pieces our brave Boadicea’s army.” “Rome, Rome!” the accusing voices of thousands of Jews reply. “Rome, who conquered and crushed us. Rome, who burned our beautiful Jerusalem and carried ninety-seven thousand of us away as captives to the slave-market.” [5] “Woe is me!” Comes a cry from ruined Corinth. “Rome burned all my buildings to the ground.” “Alas, that so much cruelty and perfidy could exist!” says the dust of Carthage. “Rome deceived me and burned me to ashes!” “Rome broke down my walls and wore out my people,” laments an accusing voice from Spain’s once prosperous city of Numantia.

“Yes, Rome, Rome!” comes a multitude of voices from Christian martyrs. “Rome threw us to the lions in the arena. Rome burned us like flaming torches. Rome, Rome!” Yes, Rome was the fourth beast, dreadful and terrible and strong exceedingly.

But Rome Was Broken Up in Her Turn “The ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall, arise,” continues the interpreter.

“Ah, Rome! Then thou, too, shall be broken and divided,” hosts of revengeful voices call from the kingdoms which she had cast down. “Into ten kingdoms shall thou be broken.” “Come, you tribes of Franks, you Visigoths, you Ostrogoths, you Angles and Saxons!

“Come, you Vandals, you Lombards, you Burgundians.

“Hasten, you Suevi, you Heruli, you Alemanni. Smash into fragments this kingdom of Rome, who crushed the nations to the ground.” They came. They came, as God had foreseen and depicted. Barbarian tribes forded the Rhine, crossed the Alps, descended upon the luxury-weakened peoples of the Roman Empire, and broke down its ancient power. To Roman Britain came the Anglo-Saxons in their ships. To France came the Franks. Eight other tribes surged westward and wrested the scepter out of Rome’s palsied hands. As we look back at the year AD 476, we hear the voice of history proclaiming:

“It is done! This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. Rome, whom men expected should live for ever, is divided among the ten kingdoms of Western Europe.” Yes, the ten kingdoms were now possessors of the land from the borders of Scotland to the blue waters of the Mediterranean, and from the Rhine to the rough Atlantic. How long shall they remain at peace? Not for long. “Another king shall rise after them,” continues the prophecy. “He shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings.” What Is the Little Horn-the New Persecuting Kingdom?

“Another” king-another power - “diverse from the first,” said the interpreter. Yes, there was a different power coming into view right at that time. Strange to say, it was in the Christian church itself. For almost three centuries after the Lord Jesus had died, the Christian church had progressed amid the fires of persecution. Sometimes it was tolerated; often it was fiercely persecuted. But then Constantine had battled his way to the Roman throne. He had accepted the Christian faith, and the long despised sect had come into royal favor. In AD 313 the heralds proclaimed Christianity the state religion of the Empire.

But the Emperor’s favor had brought spiritual declension. The warm love and simplicity of the Christians had cooled off. Religious wars broke out. Swords were drawn, and fierce battles raged even about theological terms. The Bishop of Rome struggled with rival Christian leaders to secure the highest place of authority in the church.

Times and Laws Changed Standards were lowered in order to attract numbers. Sabbath keeping was disparaged and then prohibited. Sunday-keeping was easier for those who had been sun-worshippers. The second commandment was set aside and image-worship began again. Thus did this strange power “think to change times and laws.” Official Christianity became a strange blend of church and state-of psalms and swords. The heavenly power became an earthly power-yet still with the form of the heavenly.

Just as in our time the Roman Catholic Church contends relentlessly for the supremacy of Rome, so it was in those days. The Bishop of Rome had espoused the Athanasian creed. Three of the ten invading nations professed the Arian creed and stood in his way. They must be uprooted. And uprooted they were, by sword and spear and flame. In AD 493 the Heruli were plucked up. In AD 534 the sea-faring Vandals were defeated. In AD 538 the Ostrogoths went down, conquered. So the apostate Christian church, headed by the bishop or pope of Rome, gradually came into power. He loved, like Diotrephes, to have the pre-eminence.

What Great Words!

But if the pope or Papacy is the little horn, did he speak words against the Most High? He surely did! Look at a few of the pope’s self-accepted titles: “Vicegerent of the Son of God,” “Our Lord God, the Pope,” “Another God upon earth,” “King of the world. King of kings and Lord of lords.” Said Pope Nicholas to Emperor Michael, “The Pope, who is called God by Constantine, can never be bound or released by man; for God cannot be judged by man.” [6] Did the Papacy Persecute?

“But did the Roman Catholic Church really wear out the saints of the Most High?” one asks. Let us command in imagination, a resurrection of witnesses, and hear their testimony. If we could raise the dead, what voices we should hear! Listen to the King of France with his nobles and bishops:- “Pope Innocent III commanded us to wreak vengeance on the province of Languedoc, which would not acknowledge his authority. So we captured the city of Beziers and massacred fifty thousand people. “When we took the town of Lavaur, that seat of heresy, we allowed a general massacre, and cut to pieces men, women, and children until there was nothing left to kill, except four hundred of the garrison. Them we burned in a single pile.” [7] Other voices are speaking-voices of other martyrs: “Woe to St. Dominic and his black-cloaked friars with their Inquisition! Through them every land has seen the spectacle of blazing heretics and tortured saints. Woe to the Roman clergy who saw these things with delight!” Let the citizens of Northern Spain testify: “Yes, yes! It was our Ignatius Loyola who founded the Order of the Jesuits. They brought torture and trembling dread to almost every country where their feet trod!” The Waldenses of the Italian Alps call out: “The Papacy wore us out with cruel persecution. Century after century they hounded us down. Us-mountaineers of the primitive apostolic faith!” Urgently the Huguenots of France give witness: “Rome oppressed us, robbed us, tortured and massacred us. Remember the awful night of St. Bartholomew when Paris ran with innocent blood shed by the Papacy.” Yes, truly this “horn” wore out the saints of the Most High.

Bible Arithmetic-How Long Would This Power Continue?

“They shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time,” said the angel interpreter. But what does that mean? This is a curious time prediction hidden by symbols from the casual glance of enemies who might endeavor to throw discredit on it. For 1260 years the Papacy was given power. But these days were shortened and the Bible was illuminated again.

Yet the meaning is fairly simple. These “times” are years. This is shown by the angel’s word, in the fourth chapter of Daniel, where Nebuchadnezzar was to eat grass like a beast until seven “times.” should pass over him. Josephus calls these seven years. [8] But “a year, years, and the dividing of a year”-How many years? And what is a “dividing of a year”? Well, “years” must be at least two years. And if we divide a year into two we have two halves. So, one year, plus two years, plus half a year; that equals three and a half years. Can this be the answer? Yes! When John the revelator is speaking of this very same period he calls it “1260 days.” [9] This is exactly the number of days in three and a half Jewish years of 360 days to the year (they had twelve months of thirty days each).

One thousand two hundred and sixty days. This now seems quite clear. The people of God were to be oppressed by the Roman persecuting power for 1260 days. But just as these four short-lived beasts were symbols of long-lived nations, so the “days” of symbolic prophecy represent long years. This is clearly shown in the symbols of Ezekiel’s prophecy. [10] The “days” in which he was to act the long “siege” were symbols of “years.” “I have given thee each day for a year,” said God. Now if the 1260 years began when the last of the three kingdoms was plucked up before the Papacy in AD 538, then obviously they closed in AD 1798! For, adding 1260 to 538 we get 1798. Did this come to pass?

Yes, wars fell heavily on the Roman Catholic Church as the year 1798 approached. In that very year the pope was taken prisoner by Berthier, the French general, and the Papacy was for the time abolished. His power over “the saints” was gone. God’s way out was to use an atheistic general to give the final blow delivering His people from the power of the Papacy.

How accurately the long-drawn-out prophecy was fulfilled! God knows the way of the nations, and He knows the way for us right through these days to the glad time when the saints shall possess the kingdom for ever and ever.

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1. Matthew 24:15.
2. Leviticus 23: 27, 29.
3. Daniel 8:20,21.
4. Myers' General History, Page 269.
5. Josephus' Wars of the Jews, Page 434 (Every man Edition) 6. Daniel and the Revelation, Page 136.
7. Historical Studies, by Eugene Lawrence, Page 51.
8. Josephus' "Antiquities," Book 10, Chapter 6.
9. Revelation 12:6.
10. Ezekiel 4:4,6.

15. The Battle-The Roll-Call-Home

In the days of identification cards and registration books, you may have been curious to know if God keeps a register of His loyal subjects. This chapter gives clues.

THE jubilant day of eternal peace is fast approaching. The day when men shall live in harmony will soon be here, and nations shall war no more. This assurance gladdened the heart of many a noble Christian young man in the dark days of persecution. It inspired many a young Christian heroine to be loyal and true. "One day the Son of man will set up His kingdom; I will be true to Him. I will uphold His law whatever the cost," they resolved. After the battle comes the roll call, then the march home!

What a battle of right and wrong those 1260 years had seen! At times it must have appeared as though the "saints of God" had been stamped out and the great High Priest's work in heaven eclipsed. With what joy men heard the pure gospel again as the morn of the Reformation broke! How they rejoiced when the battle against persecution was over and the power of the Papacy was broken!

1798! Those were the days of Napoleon's victories and defeats. In that year Nelson won the Battle of the Nile against the French. It was just a little while before Trafalgar. It was the day of George Washington, and just after the time of Benjamin Franklin in the new United States. In England the hum of the new cotton machines of the north was increasing to a roar. It seemed the beginning of an amazing era of progress.

But after the long 1260 years of persecution ended in 1798, the next great divine event, shown in Daniel's vision, is foreshadowed by the words: "The judgment shall sit." Solemn yet joyful thought! "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." But when? When will the Court of Heaven open? Daniel himself may have asked this question, with the thought of the cleansing of the sanctuary on the Hebrew Day of Atonement still in his mind. To us who live after 1798 it is of vital interest.

When shall be the judgment? When shall the roll be called in heaven? What heroes will be found still written in the book as "loyal" when the God of heaven sets up His kingdom? Can we know? When shall the sanctuary in heaven be cleansed? When shall be the great antitypical Day of Atonement? How long shall be the vision? When shall the Eden-kingdom come again? The angel answered Daniel's questions when next he appeared. He explained that the prophecies leading up to the great day should continue "unto two thousand and three hundred days [prophetic years]; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed." [1] "Unto two thousand and three hundred days"! If, as we must, we take these days as symbols of years again, we have the most astonishing prophetic period of the whole Bible. It will point out the year when the judgment will begin in heaven!

After Twenty-three Centuries!

These two thousand three hundred years-when do they begin and when do they end? "None understood it," said Daniel. And so God commanded: "Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision." Gabriel began by explaining that wonderful prophecy of the coming and the death of the Messiah. Of this he said: "Seventy weeks are cut off [determined]." [2] Cut off to finish the work for the Jewish nation. Those seventy weeks (or 490 years) would see the appearance of the Messiah, His ministry and death, and three and a half years more for the special preaching of the gospel to the Jewish nation. For this the seventy weeks were "cut off." But "cut off" from what?

Obviously from the 2300 days of the previous chapter! The seventy weeks were “cut off” from the period of 2300 days. The angel explains the first seventy weeks of the 2300 years and-just what we are looking for-gives the year when they begin. “Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks.” The 2300 years begin with the year of “the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem.” When was this? It was in 457 BC.

God’s commandment to restore and build Jerusalem was given in a train of three decrees through three different Persian kings, Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes. The whole of the triple divine decree finally went into effect in the year 457 BC. As the Bible says: The people “built, and finished it, according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.” Thus wrote the leader Ezra, who was one of the workers. [3] This date marks also the beginning of the 2300 years.

But if there were 457 years before Christ, there would be 1843 years left of the 2300 after Christ: 2300 minus 457 equals 1843. Further, if the beginning should be half-way through 457 BC, leaving only 456½ years BC in reality, then the end would be in the middle of AD 1844. 1844! That is over a hundred years ago. Has the judgment then been in session a hundred years? If so, how near we must be to that time when the God of heaven will set up that kingdom which shall never be destroyed! Let us press forth our names with trustful prayer to be “written in the book” as sons and daughters of the living God.

That will be a solemn day, when the destiny of every man and woman will be decided. If our names are not now “written in the books,” shall we not at once ask of our Father in heaven, “Write down my name, O Lord, as Thy son and Thy faithful servant.” Choose His service today. And if we have once been “enrolled,” but have grown negligent and ceased to confess the Lord Jesus, shall we not acknowledge our sin and return with all our hearts to Him? His heart of love yearns over His erring children with a love that is stronger than death. Let us return to Him.

The gospel message shows that -even a child may have his name written in the book of life. If we say good-bye to sin, and invite the Lord Jesus to dwell in our hearts, we are to believe that He comes in by His Spirit. We are to trust Him to forgive our sins and to constantly cleanse us from all unrighteousness. We are to receive Him into our hearts. This is the “new birth.” This simple act of receiving Jesus into the heart by faith makes us children of God. As John the apostle testifies: “As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name. Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” [4] Being born thus into the family of God, our names are registered in the book of life by the loving Father in heaven. What an honor! With the Apostle John, well may we exclaim: “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.” [5] We can trust Him confiding then. At the close of the judgment Christ will stand up as King, “the great Prince which stands for the children of thy 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 thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.” [6] They shall be delivered. Every loyal Christian man and woman, every boy and girl who has chosen Jesus as Savior and received Him into the heart as Director of the life, shall be delivered.

The loyal laborer, the loyal employer will be there. The loyal mother in the home who has faithfully taught the children, the loyal boy and girl at school. These shall be citizens of the new kingdom of God. Christ will deliver them in that time of tribulation when their loyalty is being tested to the uttermost. While the judgment was in session, said, Daniel, he stared with surprise as he heard the horn again speaking great words. We therefore, standing on the brink of the eternal world, may expect to see a revival of the power of the Papacy. But, says Daniel, “the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame.” “And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.” [7] “Write my name in Thy book, O Lord!” May our hearts say: “Enroll me as one of Thy loyal ones. Come into my heart. I will trust Thee, Lord Jesus. I will serve and obey Thee”-let our hearts respond with courage and faith. What a blessed kingdom that will be! No more shall its people act like cruel lions, ravenous bears, stealthy leopards, or self exalting horns. No more shall cruel wars bring the grief of bereavement to mothers and wives and sweethearts. No more battles like Arbela, Pydna, or Rome. No more Stalingrads, no more Dunkirks. Love of man for man and loyalty to all shall be the ruling forces in that kingdom.

There science shall seek only to bless. It shall go forward in leaps and bounds, and naught but good shall follow. There education shall be without selfish ambition. It shall match that of the angels-and only bring loving service to others. There every human love shall have free exercise, and never shall a cruel deceiving foe spoil love’s glad music. Come quickly, O great kingdom of love!

These Things All Came to Pass This message is true! Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome-these nations appeared on the stage of life exactly as God had shown His servant. Rome fell, and was divided into ten kingdoms, a thousand years after the divine Voice had foretold it. The little horn rose, subdued three kings, changed times and laws, and wore out the saints-just as Daniel heard and portrayed it. The Papacy lost its power in 1798, in exactly the year indicated.

The 2300 years-of this the first events were fulfilled, just at the time pointed out half a millennium before. Christ the Messiah appeared, and after three and a half years was “cut off” for the sins of the people-fulfilling this wonderful prophecy. The rest of the prophecy must be just as true. Therefore we are assured that the great judgment books were opened in 1844. Soon will the Son of man appear in the clouds to set up His kingdom and restore the Eden life again.

Then Can This Astounding Book Be True?

Yes, it is absolutely true. This Book of Daniel carries its proofs within its own covers. Father Time-the great expositor of false theories-has only demonstrated the exact truth of these marvelous predictions. Time has demonstrated that only God could have originated them. Attack after attack has been made on this Book of Daniel. Satan knows it will prepare a people to meet their God. He seeks to destroy faith in its inspired pages. But God Himself has set His seal to its truthfulness.

By the testimony of God Himself, Daniel ranks as an outstanding prophet. Ezekiel twice names him as a great man of God, both wise and righteous, but when the Lord Jesus Christ spoke of him, He said, “Daniel the prophet.” And the Lord Jesus actually quoted Daniel’s very words in His own longest prophecy, saying to His disciples. ‘When you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, then flee into the mountains.” [8] The Lord Jesus urged readers to study Daniel’s prophecy. “Who so reads, let him understand,” He admonished. So the Apostle Matthew put Christ’s commendation down in black and white. So did Mark the Evangelist. And because of this, thousands of the early Christians studied it, remembered it, talked of it, fled to the mountains when Daniel’s sign appeared, and saved their lives by it. They heeded Christ and “Daniel the prophet.” Let us heed likewise!

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2. Daniel 9:24;
3. Ezra 6:14.
4. John 1:12,13.
5. 1 John 3:1.
6. Daniel 12:1.
7. Daniel 7:11, 27.
8. Matthew 24:15, 16.

16. Young King Chooses Way of Pride

Oppressor nations have often seemed to have their captives hopelessly fast. They have seemed to mock at the thought of God’s intervention. But read in this chapter how God’s agents smashed the tyrant’s power in one night.

BELSHAZZAR was’ a real prince of flesh and blood, a wicked, conceited young Oriental ruler. Largely through his blasphemous attitude toward God, the mighty city of Babylon. “The Golden City,” fell in a single night. Five hundred tablets-clay documents-bearing his name, have been dug out of the ruins of Babylon’s ancient stronghold near the River Euphrates. [1] Hundreds, yes, thousands of such tablets tell the story of his times. [2] His mother, the queen, was the clever daughter of Nebuchadnezzar. [3] His father, King Nabonadius, had held an important office of state before being crowned king. [4] Belshazzar had at least two sisters. One was named Inaesagilaremat. The other was probably Ukabu’-shai’-na. There also seem to have been two other younger brothers in the family. [5] Yes, there is plenty of information available regarding this young prince.

One of the old documents even tells us that Belshazzar’s secretary was Nebo-yukin-aklii, who leased a house from Neboakhi-iddin. One can imagine the secretary grumbling to Nebotsabit, the steward, that one and a half pounds of silver was too much to pay for a house which he was forbidden to sub-let. But here he had taken it on a three-year lease (until 551 BC), and had undertaken to keep the house in repair and to plant trees around it. [6] And now we in our day dig up the document and read it for ourselves. Yes, there is plenty of information to be had about Belshazzar. You can even see his rotary seal in the British Museum.

Babylon’s Rulers Were Degenerating If anyone had reminded the youthful Belshazzar that his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed that Babylon would pass away, the young king would probably have laughed and contemptuously said, “Stuff and nonsense” -

or its Babylonian equivalent. [7] Someone of a more thoughtful turn of mind might have answered differently. If Babylon's future power was conditional on its moral strength, it boded ill for the country that its rulers had been so vile and weak since Nebuchadnezzar died. After the old king had gone, his son Evil-Merodach had put on the royal robes. "Evil" by name, and evil by nature, he was such a vicious and profligate ruler that his own relatives killed him after only two years' reign.

One of the conspirators, the dead king's brother-in-law, Neriglissar, thus became king, with one of Nebuchadnezzar's daughters as queen. [8] But two of the most powerful provinces revolted-Media and Persia-and Neriglissar was killed in battle with them after four years' reign. His son succeeded him, but after nine months he too was assassinated by disgusted and angry relatives. It looked ominous! "Nabonadius shall be king," the cry went up. So Nabonadius ascended the throne with another of Nebuchadnezzar's daughters as queen. But he offended the revolted Medes and Persians at the very beginning of his reign by allying himself with fabulously rich Croesus, king of Lydia, their enemy. A serious war faced him. What would the end be?

Father and Son Reign Together Nabonadius organized Babylon to meet the dangers, and when Belshazzar, his son, was yet in his teens, his father appointed him to reign conjointly with himself. And so it came to pass that when the war trumpets sounded in earnest, Belshazzar commanded the troops within the walls of Babylon, while his father led an army to attack these fierce Medes and Persians.

But, alas for Nabonadius! His army suffered defeat within sight of the watchmen on the towers of Babylon. He was put to flight, and hastily retreated to Borsippa, an important city to the south-west. [9] Most of the survivors, however, fled to the shelter of Babylon. "Behind these mighty brick walls we shall surely be safe from this mysteriously victorious army," they thought. They would be safe, too, from that strange figure who led the Medo-Persians. There was something uncanny about that inscrutable general, Cyrus. His constant successes were enough to make any Babylonian fearful and superstitious. Was some mighty Persian god leading him?

No need to be too dejected, however. When Cyrus saw those three-hundred-foot walls surrounding the city he had reason to be thoughtful. Here was a giant mass of brickwork and a deep and wide moat to be passed before he could put a foot within the capital. And inside was a confident and energetic young king defending it, with a wise queen-mother, daughter of the redoubtable Nebuchadnezzar, to advise him.

But a nation's real bulwarks are loyalty to the commandments of God, [10] and contentment and happiness among its subjects. Babylon lacked both. What cared Belshazzar about the commandments of God or the contentment of the people Babylon had conquered! Ask the exiled mothers of Judah who mourned their murdered children and pined for their native land. [11] Ask the Medes and Persians. Belshazzar, however, plumed himself that Babylon could never be taken. He felt that he and his lords could rejoice and drink with never a thought of fear. They could celebrate their idolatrous feasts with as much carousing and dancing as ever.

"Is not the feast of Tammuz drawing near? It shall be celebrated with more wine and mirth and abandon than ever," he resolved. "Again we shall celebrate the wedding of our god Tammuz to his lovely bride Ishtar! And we shall laugh at Cyrus and his army!" Strangely enough, outside the city, Cyrus also was thinking: "Is not the feast of Tammuz drawing near? It will be celebrated with mirth and wine and drunken abandon, as ever. It may provide my opportunity to take the City." [12] And the watchers on the walls of Babylon might have noticed that Cyrus was withdrawing some of his non-fighting forces up the river. What was his plan? On the fourteenth day of the month Tammuz, 538 BC, the great feast took place in Belshazzar's palace in Babylon. "The Feast of the Fearless King"-possibly that was what the swaggering young monarch thought it might be called.

A thousand of his lords were invited; the women were present; the young king's wives and concubines were there. There was feasting and dancing. Wine flowed freely and the guests drank without restraint. Men of genius and education, beautiful women, and great statesmen came under the influence of alcohol, and soon the palace was a scene of unbridled license and hilarity. [13] "With reason dethroned through shameless intoxication, and with lower impulses and passions now in the ascendancy, the king himself took the lead in the riotous orgy." [14] The Boastful Blasphemer "Bring us the golden and silver vessels of Judah," he ordered, when the wine had clouded his judgment. "The vessels which my father brought from the temple of God at Jerusalem. We will drink to the gods of Babylon in the vessels of the God of heaven. Mightier far than the God of Judah is Bel, the god of Babylon." Did a shudder pass through some of the guests at the blasphemy? Did the queen-mother tremble as she saw the messengers hurrying across to the treasure-house of Bel's temple to fetch the holy vessels? Did her breath come fearfully as she remembered how Judah's God taught her father Nebuchadnezzar stern lessons which her son Belshazzar had never learned?

Possibly messenger Igubu paused a second with the vessels he was carrying. "Hush! What was that? Was that screaming and shouting from the street near the river?" "No! only more drunken revelers," answered his yawning companion. "The whole city is following the example of the palace this night. There is nothing to fear. See how peacefully the stars of night shine down." The messengers crossed the palace threshold with those sacred vessels of gold and silver-and Belshazzar crossed the line which separates God's patience from His wrath. Babylon was doomed! If only the drunken guards had bolted the river gates before they feasted, the catastrophe might have been averted. Even now, had they but looked into the dark bed of the Euphrates they might have given a shout of alarm which would have roused and saved the city. Had they looked down with their fuddled eyes they might have gasped in bewilderment. "Is it a bad dream? Or has the river really ceased to flow?" "What is that?" they would have gasped. "Are those shadowy forms stealing stealthily

along the river bed? Or is it a nightmare? O Bel, save us! They are dressed like Persian soldiers.” But they did not look-until it was too late. How should they suspect that Cyrus had dug another channel for the Euphrates and diverted its waters so that his soldiers could wade into the city along the river bed?

Up in the palace the arrival of the five thousand gold and silver vessels [15] was probably greeted with sacrilegious laughter, joking, and ribald song. The king and his princes, his wives and his concubines, drank in them. “Drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.” “Great is Bel! Mighty is Tammuz! Lovely is Ishtar!” they declared.

“Spirit of Babylon, hear us call!

Thou shall be young, when we grow old.” Suddenly there was a piercing cry of terror. It was heard above all the boisterous merriment, and was followed by another and another. The king’s face grew pallid as ashes, and those near him saw his body trembling and his knees convulsively knocking together in fright. “See! There, up there! The wall, the hand!” voices gasped.

There, up on the wall was a bloodless hand slowly tracing out letters and words of gleaming fire on the plaster. Strange, terrifying, incomprehensible words. “Letters of judgment and doom!” Came the terrible conviction to the drunken king. “Ah, God! Ah, God!” The hand departed, but the mysterious, fiery, condemning words remained. The terrified guests felt they were in the presence of the great Judge of the earth. “Oh, for a guiltless heart now!” What Do the Fiery Letters Mean?

“Bring in the astrologers!” shouted the king, almost crazy with fear. “Bring in the Chaldeans and the soothsayers. Hasten! Hasten!” Babylon’s wise men were hurried in before the king. Alas, for those who turn to the astrologers and forget the living God! “Whoever shall read this writing and show me the interpretation thereof” - the king tried to steady his trembling voice - “shall be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold around his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.” But none of the wise men could read the gleaming, fearsome characters on the wall. The king was almost distracted. His young face was charged with despair and terror.

In every age, for long years, the hand of God writes with love and compassion on the walls of nations “His compassion fail not.” In the Scriptures, too, He has written a thousand promises to tell of His love and mercy for sinners. “He delights to pardon.” He invites us in tender love through the voices of our fathers and mothers and by His ministers. Let us welcome the hand that writes in love, so that God may never need to write to us in severity and judgment as on that dread night of Belshazzar’s feast.

Could no one read the writing? It was agony, this helpless suspense. Just then the queen-mother remembered Daniel. Daniel! Why had he been forgotten? She hurried to the king. “O king, live for ever!” she exclaimed. “Let not thy thoughts trouble thee. There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father, wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; and Nebuchadnezzar the king, thy grandfather made him master of the magicians.” So spoke the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar to her trembling son.

She continued to extol Daniel: He was just the right man. “An excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and explanations of hard sentences, were found in the same Daniel. Let Daniel be called!” the queen urged confidently, “and he will show the interpretation” of these fiery words on the wall. “Yes, bring Daniel! Let Daniel be called,” commanded the king in answer. And possibly he wished with anguish that it might be said of himself, also, that he was “a man in whom the spirit of the holy gods is.” The Old Prime Minister Before the Young King Daniel came in and stood calmly before the king. His was a grave and solemn figure, now old in years but quiet and calm in the sea of emotion and fear around him. “Art thou Daniel?” the king asked. “I have even heard that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom is found in thee.” “And now the wise men, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing, and make known unto me the interpretation thereof: but they could not show the interpretation of the thing.

“Now if thou can,” the king said earnestly, “thou shall be clothed in scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.” Solemnly the old prophet addressed him. He reminded him that God had given Nebuchadnezzar kingly power over the earth. But that great king became lifted up with pride. He forgot that kings are to be like good shepherds caring for the flock. He forgot that he owed all to God.

“When his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne,” the prophet continued. Nebuchadnezzar’s reason departed. The proud king imagined himself an animal and ate grass like an ox for seven years, until he knew “That the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and that He appoints over it whomsoever He will.” [16] Sternly now the prophet spoke: “And thou his son, O Belshazzar, has not humbled your heart, though thou knew all this; but has lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of His house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them.” “And-” the prophet speaks now with withering scorn and disgust - “thou has 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 thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, has thou not glorified!” “Then was the part of the hand sent from Him” - the great God-“and this writing,” pointing up to the wall, “was written.” Belshazzar listened in conscience-stricken fear. Intent on the prophet’s words he probably scarcely noticed sounds of

commotion outside in the city; took no heed to shouts coming from the palace gate. "This is the writing," said Daniel: "MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN." "This is the interpretation of the thing," he went on, with the solemnity of a judge pronouncing the death sentence: "MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it!" The shouting in the city grows louder and louder. God's executioners are coming.

"TEKEL"-the prophet proceeds, with terrible distinctness. "Thou art weighed in the balances-and found wanting." Messengers are hurrying with terrible news. They say they must see the king at once.

"PERES" - Daniel's voice tolls out the knell of doom. "Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians." "Given to the Medes and Persians! O God! I poured contempt on the God of heaven. O God! And I thought all was safe. Lost! Lost!" fearfully gasps the young king to himself. Then, endeavoring to pull himself together: "Clothe Daniel with scarlet. Hang the gold chain around his neck. Proclaim him third ruler in the kingdom." "Yes, let the messenger come in now," he commands. "Your majesty-save yourself! The Medes and Persians have broken into the city. They are rushing toward the palace!" "What! Medes and Persians in the city-How?" he moaned. "How? O God, the writing on the wall has come true! 'Given to the Medes and Persians.'" There is a noise of battling men at the very door of the palace. Exultant Persians fight against drink-stupefied Babylonian guards. The soldiers of Cyrus have diverted the river; they have waded along its bed. They have found the river gates open and the watchers off guard. They have rushed along the streets and now they are in the palace itself.

"In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Mede took the kingdom." The young king who so wantonly set God at naught a few hours before, lies dead in Babylon's palace.

Over many a country today the divine fingers are writing, "Mene, Mene, Tekel.", The days of every cruel, godless nation and every God-forgetting man are numbered. Nations and individuals are weighed in the balance of the great Judge of the earth. He will intervene and put an end to those who so cruelly ill-treat their fellow men, and spurn the gracious invitations of mercy which come through the mouths of His prophets. But He will save from the tyrant's power every man and woman, every boy and girl, who trusts in His name.

"Babylon shall become heaps." What a daring thing for a prophet to say when Babylon seem-ed so prosperous and secure! But see those heaps-wreckage of Belshazzar's palace and Bel's ancient temple-near the meandering river Euphrates now. "It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation," declared the prophet Isaiah. Probably the Babylonian crowds in Moon-god Street laughed at the words. But Moon-god Street has lain under the desert sands without habitation for many a long century now. The prophecy came true.

"Weighed in the balances"-solemn words to every listener. "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil," and "the wage of sin is death." But "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." [17] When "weighed in the balances," "Jesus our Redeemer was treated as we deserve that we might be treated as He deserves!" He took our nature's penalty that we might have His nature and its reward.

"Behold," He says to you, '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.' [18] Those words are His own. Open your heart's door and believe that He enters. He will gladly do this and give His own nature right now to every man and woman and every boy and girl who sincerely invites Him in. Believe His words, and He will do as He has promised for you. "He that hears My word, and believes on Him that sent Me," says Jesus, "hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." [19] "For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved." [20] "And him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." [21] Oh, what a Savior that He died for me!

From condemnation He bath made me free; "He that believes on the Son," said He, "Hath everlasting life." "Verily, verily, I say unto you"; Verily, verily," message ever new!

He that believes on the Son"- is true!

Has everlasting life!" All my iniquities on Him were laid, All my indebtedness by Him was paid; All who believe on Him, the Lord bath said, "Have everlasting life." Though poor and needy, I can trust my Lord; Though weak and sinful I believe His Word; Oh, glad message! Every child of God "Hath everlasting life." Though all unworthy, yet I will not doubt; For him that comes He will not cast out:

"He that believes Oh the good news shout!

"Hath everlasting life!" From Alexander's Hymns Number 3.

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17. God Spoke-and It Came to Pass

Just as mighty Nineveh had come to an end because of her sin, so God's prophets, looking into the future, saw Babylon in ruins-as it is today, out in the Mesopotamian desert. God's prophets foretold the fall of Babylon when that kingdom was the mightiest on earth and her capital city the most strongly defended. While Babylon was in her prime, the nations which should besiege her were named. God's prophets foretold the drunken feast, the drying up of the Euphrates, the terror of Belshazzar, and the capture of the city "without fighting." Isaiah named the victorious genera a century before he was born!

Read the prophets' stirring utterances:- "Though Babylon should mount up to heaven and though she should fortify the height of her strength, yet from Me shall spoilers come unto her, said the Lord." Jeremiah 51:53.

"For, lo, I will raise and cause to come up against Babylon an assembly of great nations from the north country: and they shall set themselves in array against her; from thence she shall be taken: their arrows shall be as of a mighty expert man. None shall return in vain!" Jeremiah 50:9.

“Behold, a people shall come from the north, and a great nation, and many kings shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth.” Jeremiah 50:41.

“For out of the north there comes up a nation against her which shall make her land desolate, and none shall dwell therein: they shall remove, they shall depart, both man and beast.” Jeremiah 50:3.

“When thou has made an end of reading this book thou shall bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates: and thou shall say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her.” Jeremiah 51:63,64.

“Make bright the arrows; gather the shields: the Lord hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes: for His device is against Babylon, to destroy it; because it is the vengeance of the Lord, the vengeance of His temple.” Jeremiah 51:11.

“A grievous vision is declared unto me: the treacherous dealer deals treacherously, and the spoiler spoiled. Go up, O Elam: Besiege, O Media; all the sighing thereof have I made to cease.” Isaiah 21:2.

“The Lord of hosts hath sworn by Himself, saying, Surely I will fill thee with men ‘ as with caterpillars; and they shall lift up a shout against thee.” Jeremiah 51:14.

“A drought is upon her waters; and they shall be dried up: for it is, the land of graven images, and they are mad upon their idols.” Jeremiah 50:38.

“And I will make drunk her princes, and her wise men, her captains, and her rulers, and her mighty men: and they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, said the King, whose name is the Lord of hosts.” Jeremiah 51:57.

“My heart panted, fearfulness affrighted me: the night of my pleasure hath He turned into fear unto me.” Isaiah 21:4.

“A sword is upon their horses, and upon their chariots, and upon all the mingled people that are in the midst of her; and they shall become as women: a sword is upon her treasures; and they shall be robbed.” Jeremiah 50:37.

“The mighty men of Babylon have forborne to fight, they have remained in their holds: their might hath failed; they became as women: they have burned her dwelling-places; her bars are broken.” Jeremiah 51:30.

“One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to show the king of Babylon that his city is taken at one end.” Jeremiah 51:31.

“And that the passages are stopped, and the reeds they have burned with fire, and the men of war are affrighted.” Jeremiah 51:32.

“The king of Babylon hath heard the report of them, and his hands waxed feeble: anguish took hold of him, and pangs of a woman in travail.” Jeremiah 50:43.

“The voice of them that flee and escape out of the land of Babylon, to declare in Zion the vengeance of the Lord our God, the vengeance of His temple.” Jeremiah 50:28.

“Cyrus, he is My shepherd.” “I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-hinged gates; and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron. I have surnamed thee, though thou has not known Me.” Isaiah 44:28; 45:1-4.

“And, behold, here comes a chariot of men, with a couple of horsemen. And he answered and said, Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground.” Isaiah 21:9.

“As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbor cities thereof, said the Lord; so shall no man abide there, neither shall any son of man dwell therein.” Jeremiah 50:40.

“It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there.” Isaiah 13:20.

“And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces: and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged.” Isaiah 13:22.

“And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees’ excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.”
Isaiah 13:19.

18. The Way Through the Lions’ Den

If you have some great desire in your heart, and your prayers for this do not seem to be answered-or if by chance some great danger looms up before you-read in this chapter how God worked marvelously for a famous Minister of State in like circumstances.

MOST of us would be highly pleased to be proclaimed third ruler of a great kingdom, as Daniel was. It would seem a pleasant experience to be arrayed in the scarlet robe of state, to have the chain of gold linking around one’s neck, and to receive the palace and the salary which went with such an honored position. But if, just as the robing ceremony was closing in those wine-reeking courts, soldiers of the enemy came dashing in, swords all unsheathed to slay the king and all important officials. [1] It would be distinctly embarrassing! Better then to be an ordinary peasant and hope to remain unnoticed.

Yet in all strange places, and at all embarrassing times, the Lord God is able to protect His children. Even when great kingdoms are rising and falling, the weakest believer is safe in the care of the Father in heaven. The most ordinary boy or girl, man or woman, who trusts in God will be safe under His watchful eye.

And so it came to pass that the cruel Persian soldiers did not harm Daniel when they rushed into Babylon’s palace hall and killed Belshazzar and his drunken lords. The fierce Medes left him unscathed. It seems that Daniel’s fame had gone abroad to the Persians at Shushan and the Medes and Eebatana. In fact, Daniel had been in Shushan a few months before Babylon fell, for in a vision of the night given in Belshazzar’s last year, Daniel found himself there. [2] The Persian leaders evidently knew Daniel’s worth. Babylon fell, and the kingdom was given to the Medes and Persians. Darius the Median, or Cyaxares, as the Greeks called him, took the throne for two years, and then, at his death, Cyrus, his nephew, the great Persian general who had taken Babylon, became king. [3] The “New Order” Now Begins One of the first acts of Darius was to appoint one hundred and twenty princes over the various parts of the kingdom. Over these princes he appointed three presidents, of whom Daniel was one. Soon Darius found him to be a capable and energetic man who could be trusted implicitly. Daniel’s long experience of Babylon’s organization and of its revenues was of great value. In the new order the one hundred and twenty princes were to give accounts to the three presidents, and it was not long before the king noticed that Daniel’s work surpassed that of all the others. After a few months, Darius thought to set him over the whole realm.

But in all his loyal and busy life as minister of state, Daniel’s mind was on God. God’s cause and people were dear to him. God’s ruined temple was ever in his thoughts. The broken walls of Jerusalem grieved his spirit. Thoughts of the green hills and flower-scented valleys of the land of Judah were ever before him. When would the captives be allowed to return across the desert to their native land? [4] Great Minister of State Studies Bible Prophecy Today, however, hope was springing up in his heart. He had been reading again in the book of the prophet Jeremiah, and had found once more the inspiring promises which showed that the time was at hand. [5] Was it not almost seventy years since the first band of captives had been brought to Babylon Daniel among them?

Daniel and his companions had been taken from Jerusalem to Babylon in 606 BC And many others followed them and were dispersed throughout Babylonia. The prophetic scriptures of Jeremiah the seer declared that their captivity should end after seventy years. “Then shall you seek Me, and find Me, when you shall search for Me with all your heart and I will bring you again.” [6] And, behold, these sixty-eight years had gone by, Babylon was conquered by the Medes and Persians, and Darius the Mede now sat on the throne. The time for release was drawing near. “The end of the seventy years is at hand,” thought Daniel joyfully. “We must turn to God with all our hearts.” “You shall call upon Me, and you shall go and pray unto Me, and I will hearken unto you,” he read. God had promised. Would Darius now release the captives whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken? It seemed very unlikely. Why should Darius trouble about the Jews? They were nothing to him. He had many more important things to deal with.

But Daniel believed the voice of prophecy. Had not he himself seen Nebuchadnezzar’s dream fulfilled? The power had gone from Babylon, the golden head of the image, as foretold. The lion of Babylon had lost its wings and now had been vanquished by the bear, Medo-Persia. The authority had come to MedoPersia, “another kingdom inferior to thee,” as the prophecy had declared. And had not Isaiah proclaimed that Cyrus would arrange the return of the captives? [7] Had not four score of Jeremiah’s prophecies been fulfilled in the fall of Babylon? Then surely, his prophecy of the return home would also be fulfilled.

So, as Daniel knelt and prayed three times a day, with his face toward Jerusalem, he pleaded earnestly that God would work in some way to restore His people to their beloved country. Restore their beautiful city and temple again. Let children’s happy voices be heard in those now deserted streets. “Cause Thy face to shine upon Thy sanctuary that is desolate,” he prayed. And doubtless he prayed, as of old, for sound judgment, wisdom, and cheerfulness in his work, that he might bring honor to God’s name.

So even in his old age (for Daniel was now over eighty) it would seem that this great Hebrew could be genial and pleasant while at the same time being competent and accurate in his work. That cheerfulness and intelligence which in his youth had brought him into favor

and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs, now brought him into favor with Darius. His loyalty to God made him attractive above others. As E. G. White has rightly said:- “The religion of Jesus softens whatever is hard and rough in the temper, and smooths whatever is rugged and sharp in the manners. It makes the words gentle and the demeanor winning. Let us learn from Christ how to combine a high sense of purity and integrity with brightness of disposition, A kind, courteous Christian is the most powerful argument that can be produced in favor of Christianity.” The Path of Honor Is Sometimes Thorny But when Darius made known his plan to promote Daniel, the green-eyed demon of jealousy appeared. “This old Hebrew-does the king think we will submit to this man?” the other presidents grumbled angrily to themselves. And soon the spirit of jealousy spread to the princes.

“We shall never be able to help ourselves to a share of the taxes now. This Jew will notice if some man gives us a present to influence our judgments. No chance now to pick up a shekel or two for ourselves out of state contracts!” Thus the princes and the two other presidents probably discussed between themselves. What should they do? “Let us find some fault in his work and then complain about it to Darius,” someone suggested. “A gray haired old man of his age must make some mistakes.” But though the presidents and princes sought diligently for errors in the old statesman’s work, they found not one. A true servant of God throws his whole heart into his work and makes his employer’s interests his own.

And so, when these critical officers met again they had to confess they had failed. “Daniel is loyal to the king,” they had to admit. “We cannot find any error or fault in him. Good work is part of his religion!” “What shall we do?” they asked themselves. “We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except concerning the law of his God,” they had to admit. But wasn’t that the solution? Yes! Forthwith they conceived a diabolical plot to put the old statesman to a death that would seem to us like a haunting nightmare.

But Daniel, oblivious of possible danger, went about his work, and prayed day by day that God would open the way for the captives to return home to Jerusalem. Prayed that he might understand the will of God as revealed by the prophets. And one evening as he prayed there appeared a glorious vision before his astonished eyes. Yet not a vision, but a reality. For the angel Gabriel himself descended in glory into that prayer chamber with a thrilling message from the Most High.

“O Daniel,” he said, as he gently touched the aged prophet. “I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding for thou art greatly beloved.” [8] What courage and comfort came to Daniel’s heart as he heard the assurance of God’s love and felt the angel’s touch! What would we not give to have this blessing as we kneel with our children, or in solitude! Thank God, we may have it! We may have this blessing that will send us forth with smiling, happy faces, with ambitions cleansed of selfishness, and with hands strong to do life’s common tasks. As one author has written:- “We may have no remarkable evidence at the time that the face of our Redeemer is bending over us in compassion and love; but this is even so. We may not feel His visible touch, but His hand is upon us in love and pitying tenderness.” [9] “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them,” the Lord Jesus assures us. So, inspired and blessed by the angel’s visit, Daniel worked and prayed, and slept the sleep of peace as the stars shone down. God would take care of His people.

Wicked Men Will Make Persecuting Laws When the conspirators’ plot had been fully worked out, they assembled before the king in the perfumed court with a new law for him to sign. They would pretend they had a plan to unify the empire. Darius would probably fall into the trap as he saw the flattering part he was to be given. Anyway, he had so many laws to sign that they would probably catch him off guard-so they doubtless reasoned. “King Darius, live for ever!” they saluted.

“All the presidents of the kingdom [monstrous lie], the governors, and the princes, the counselors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions.” “Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which alters not,” they concluded. “Oh,” says the king, smiling carelessly at such a loyal display of respect for the crown. “And what is the purpose of this decree?” “It will turn the attention of all the peoples of far provinces to the crown, and will thus promote unity and loyalty,” reply the conspirators. So the king unsuspectingly signed the flattering statute. Daniel soon heard of the passing of the new law. He probably guessed at once that it was directed at himself. Shall he cease his prayer-life? It would only be for thirty days. He had been accustomed to pray with his windows open toward Jerusalem, as King Solomon had suggested in his prayer when the lovely temple was finished. [10] Should he now seek a secluded spot for prayer? Should he pray in the secret of his heart only?

“No!” His enemies would interpret such a change as disloyalty to God. No-he would go forward boldly-and try not to think of those ferocious beasts in that foul-smelling den. The jealous officials watched his window closely for a whole day. They peered out in the early morning – “Yes, there he is, kneeling with his hands outstretched toward Jerusalem.” They watched when the midday sun was high in the sky “Yes, there he is again!” They turned their gaze to his window as the sun set over the western desert – “Yes, yes! There he is once more. Now we have abundant evidence. Did we not hear him petition the God of his fathers three times?” they exulted to one another.

The King Caught Napping They could scarcely conceal their satisfaction when they appeared at an early hour before Darius next morning. “Has thou not signed a decree, that every man that shall ask a petition of any God or man within thirty days, save of thee, O

king, shall be cast into the den of lions?" they asked. "Yes, that is true," responded the king. "According to the law of the Medes and Persians, which alters not." "It is our duty to bring an unpleasant charge before thee, O Darius." "That Daniel of Judah," they said, endeavoring to appear greatly pained and shocked; "that Daniel regards not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou has signed, but makes his petition three times a day!" "Daniel! But Daniel has always prayed! The law must not apply to him!" exclaimed the king.

"But, your majesty, the law says 'whosoever' shall ask a petition." "Yes, yes! But I never thought of Daniel. Why, he is the most valuable man in the realm. Daniel must not die," expostulated Darius angrily. "We regret this greatly, your majesty." "Daniel must be exempted," declared the king. "We will set aside the law in his case." "That cannot be done, sire. No law of the Medes and Persians can be changed when the king has signed it. Did not your majesty sign this law?" "These scoundrels want to kill Daniel, my best counselor," raged the king inwardly. "And I have been trapped. Trapped into the plot." And he labored till sunset to find some way out of the law.

"No, your majesty, it is painful for us to see the prime minister liable to this death. But the law of the Medes and Persians cannot be changed when- once the king has signed it. And your majesty did affix the royal signature." "These villains have caught me!" Said the king to himself. "Me" Cyaxares the Great, son of Astyages, uncle of Cyrus. Greatest king on earth. [11] Caught! If I ever get out of this tangle they shall suffer. An innocent man is to die an awful death. My good, clever, doomed Daniel." Finally, however, the king had to give the word, and the executioners tramped off to Daniel's house to take him to the den of lions.

Daniel's Prayer-Time Interrupted Again It was evening. Probably Daniel was at prayer as usual-praying that God would open the way for the captives to go back home to Jerusalem. Would he feel the angel's tender touch again tonight, and hear the assurance of God's love once more?

Far from it! What he heard was the tramp of soldiers' feet and then the sentence of a terrible death.

"We are sorry, your Excellency, but by the king's command you are to be thrown into the den of lions. Please come quietly." And so this was all the result of his prayers to God, was it? An old man like Daniel might have died with the shock of it.

Was this the reward for his loyalty to God? Was this the end of his prayers for the captives to return to Jerusalem? The king was at the den, pale and haggard-looking in the light of the soldiers' lanterns. "What a fool I was to sign that law without thinking it might mean this! Now there is only one bare hope for Daniel-a faint, faint hope." "Thy God whom thou serves continually, He will deliver thee," he quavered to Daniel. Possibly the guards cursed ironically under their breath, and thought that Daniel's God was not likely to do what the king could have done himself. Down into the den, where the ravenous lions were pacing feverishly to and fro-down they lowered Daniel among five-score snarling, quarrelling beasts!

Hastily the great stone was rolled against the mouth of the den, the king sealed it with the royal seal, and mournfully turned his steps to the palace. "My poor Daniel-Daniel! What a fool I was to sign that writing. Horrible death! Poor, poor Daniel. Fool, fool, fool that I was!" And thus he raved and chided himself through the long, long night. Music? Food? Sleep? Who could sleep with the horrific specter of lions licking Daniel's wet and broken bones passing before his eyes? The scoundrel plotters had a different night. Probably they laughed with satisfaction now. "The old Jew is out of the way. Gone for ever. Wonder which of us the king will appoint in his place. Possibly he will name the man tomorrow. That was a cunning plot, wasn't it? The king fell right into it. Ha! Ha!" But Daniel-as he was lowered down into the foul-smelling den to face those cruel claws, those gleaming eyes and hungry jaws, there descended with him another presence-the angel who had touched him at the time of the evening sacrifice. The lions ceased their roaring; their cruel mouths closed. The peace of the creatures of Eden fell upon these raging beasts. What a miracle! "A Night with a Hundred Lions!"-Yes, it was. But it was also "A Night with an Angel of God!" No harm came to Daniel. He was at peace with God. His was the best night of all.

The sentence had been carried out. Daniel had been duly "cast into the den of lions." The law had been satisfied. With the first gleams of morning light the king hurried to the den. Was there a chance that Daniel's God had intervened, as He did when the loyal Hebrews were cast into the furnace by Nebuchadnezzar? Ah, impossible! Who ever heard of such a thing? "Daniel! Daniel!" the king half shouted, half lamented down into the den. Daniel! "Is thy God, whom thou serves continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" He listened with quickening pulse and loud-beating heart. "Was that a voice?" the roots of his hair felt a cold thrill. "It is! It is! Daniel is alive! Alive!" Yes, up from the stench and the murk came Daniel's voice, glad and confident as of old: "O king, live for ever. My God hath sent His angel and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me." Darius was half transported with joy. Daniel's God had worked a miracle! An astounding miracle!

"Guards, guards! Take Daniel up out of that den. Daniel is alive! Alive! The living God has delivered him." So Daniel was taken up out of the den. What a welcome he received from the king! Not a scratch or bruise was found on Daniel because he believed in his God. "My loyal Daniel! Innocent of any wrong-yet those fiendish men plotted his death. Diabolical wild beasts they are! They shall go down among the wild beasts, with their kith and kin," exclaimed Darius revengefully.

Fearful sentence! It was carried out at once. Wicked presidents and princes, diabolical plotters and jealous accusers, all were seized by the king's guards, and with their wives and families thrust down as a long-delayed feast to the ravenous beasts in the lions' den. A sanguineous offering to the god of jealousy and lies!

Why Did Daniel Suffer This?

But why did Daniel have to pass through this ordeal? Why do good, loyal men and women have to pass through trying ordeals today? The reason is clear when we see the result of Daniel's terrible experience, a result which even Daniel could scarcely have hoped for. As a result of Daniel's miraculous deliverance, Darius made out a royal decree, "that in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for He is the living God, and steadfast for ever and His dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivers and rescues, and He works signs and wonders who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions." And he wrote this to "all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth." So they doubtless heard the wondrous tale in Babylon. They heard it in Shushan. It was proclaimed in Tyre. They heard it in Samaria, they heard it by the ruins of Jerusalem and away on the border of Armenia. Cyrus the Great heard it, too. "Marvelous deliverance!" he thought. "This is something new. What a mighty God is the God of Daniel! He is a living God, indeed." But a greater surprise was in store for Cyrus. When he came to the throne twelve months after, he found that this God had actually called him by name, nigh on a hundred years before he was born. [12] It was written by the Hebrew prophet Isaiah.

"Cyrus" so ran the prophetic scroll of Isaiah "his right hand have I held to subdue nations before him." ("Ah, there is the secret of my victories," Cyrus must have thought.) Cyrus he "shall perform all My pleasure; saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built, and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid." Cyrus "He shall build My city, and he shall let go My captives." Cyrus For Israel's sake "I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou has not known Me"; said God.

Cyrus Astonished Great was the astonishment of Cyrus as he read these marvelous words in the prophetic roll of Isaiah. His heart was deeply moved, and he determined to fulfil the divine command. He sent forth a proclamation which made the hearts of the exiles sing for joy. [13] "The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and He hath charged me to build Him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah." So ran the decree. "Who is there among you of all His people? His God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem." "Let the men of his place help him with silver, and with and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God." And Cyrus brought out those five thousand sacred vessels of gold and silver which had been used on the night of Belshazzar's last tragic feast, and handed them over to the leaders of the returning exiles.

What a happy time that was! The people laughed and sang for joy. "The Lord hath done great things for us," they cried Daniel's prayers had been answered. It seemed like a dream, almost too good to be true. How all the hearers would listen now when Daniel foretold the coming of a great Deliverer! In such a short, short time, God had changed the whole aspect of things, as He will do in our day for those who trust Him. And that was the reason Daniel was allowed to be thrown into the den of those hungry beasts. The way back to Jerusalem was via the lions' den!

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13. Ezra 1:1-4, 7-11.

19. How the Deliverer Came

If in the happiness of some Christmas morning you have wished to see “peace on earth” remain for ever, with “goodwill toward men,” read in this chapter of the Prince of Peace, who will, ere long, deliver the world from war and strife.

YES, the Deliverer came! It was about the twenty-seventh year of the reign of Chief Tasciovanus, head of the tribes of south-eastern Britain, when Christ, the Messiah, the Deliverer, was born. London was a small village; Manchester was a little settlement on the Irwell; New York was undreamed of; Australia unknown.

The Great Tax Enrolment In Rome, after years of strife had followed the death of Julius Caesar, Augustus came into power. It was about the thirtieth year of his reign that he sent forth the famous decree that all the world should be enrolled for taxation. But no tax was paid by Chief Tasciovanus. Nor by his tribesmen. No, Britain was still free from the Roman yoke. From the pebbled beach of Deal to the towering rocks of Land’s End, Rome had as yet no power.

How Did It Affect the Jews?

But in Palestine it was different. From all parts of the land could be seen groups of men and women travelling to their native town or village to be enrolled for the taxation. The shepherds on the hills of Bethlehem, two thousand feet above the sea, watched them come. And when night fell, and the stars came out, they gathered in a group as usual and discussed these events. How much longer would they suffer this galling Roman yoke? For sixty years they had borne it, since warlike Pompey had taken their beloved Jerusalem, and had dared to enter into the holy apartments of the temple. [1] How sacrilegious!

Later, the Roman general Crassus had done worse. Not only had he profaned the temple by entering its holy rooms, but he had stolen the sacred treasure—two thousand talents of it. [2] Yes, while Caesar was plundering the Britons, Crassus plundered the Jews. Then this same Julius Caesar who had crossed the Thames in Britain—he crossed the Mediterranean and appointed Antipater to rule in Judea. Herod, the son of Antipater, became governor of Galilee. Aye, what a plight the world was in! And Now Herod the Idumean Herod was king over Judea now. He had distinguished himself by honoring the Romans and toadying to them, and was now confirmed in his kingdom under Augustus Caesar, Emperor of Rome, chief ruler of the world. Herod had been a clever, unscrupulous, and energetic ruler. He had cleared the countryside of robbers, he had built temples and towns, cities and harbors. But how cruel he could be both to his subjects and his own relatives! His family affairs had gone from bad to worse. “He has nine wives,” gossiped the country people. “Nine? No, only eight. He killed his favorite wife, Mariamne.” “Oh, yes! And he drowned her seventeen-year-old brother at night, poor lad!” “Yes, and he executed her grandfather!” “But worse than that! He has had her two sons strangled.” “And now Herod himself is in fear of all his kindred. They are all lying accusers, one of another! He fears the poison cup; he believes every false accusation; he tortures his servants and kindred to find out some real or fancied plot. He seems possessed of the devil.” With sad hearts the shepherds, too, discussed the condition of their country. How mercenary were the priests now! How evil-minded the people! How had Israel fallen from God’s ideal! How peaceful and full of promise now seemed the days of the past!

If Only King David Could Return!

“Twelve hundred years ago,” they mused sadly, “in the cornfields over yon, beautiful Ruth gleaned after the reapers of Boaz. She lived in the village here. Here in Bethlehem her maidens—danced at her wedding. She married Boaz and became great grandmother of King David.” [3] “King David!” said one of the shepherds. “Aye me! Would God that David were here with his sling and his stone again. These be his native hills, and Bethlehem his home. There be the brooks with the smooth stones in their bed, such as he used against the giant Goliath.” “Yes, Nathan,” answers his companion, “David would not fear Herod—nor Augustus.” There is a bright hope for us in spite of these things. Out of David’s line shall come a Deliverer, the Messiah, [4] said one of the older men. “And the time is almost here.” “How knows thou, Zachary? Do the prophets tell the time of His appearing?” “Yes, full well they do,” replied Zachary. “Does not Daniel’s book say: ‘From the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and three score and two weeks’?” [5] That is four hundred and eighty-three years. Four hundred and fifty-odd years have already passed; thirty years hence He shall begin His work. He may be a boy—or a babe—in one of these villages now!” “Would to God He were here now!” responds another shepherd’s voice in the darkness.

But What Rumors Are Afloat?

They talked on as they watched. Was it not true that in Jerusalem strange stories had been told in the past few months? Had not old Zacharias, while he burned incense, been visited by an angel of God some months before? Had it not been noised abroad throughout the

rough hill country of Judea that the angel had declared to the venerable priest that he should bear a son in his old age? Moreover, this son had now been born according to the angel's word. He was to be called "John-the Prophet of the Highest," because he was destined to go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways.

Pleasant and heartening as the grapes of Sharon were the angel's words to the listening shepherds.

"And old Zacharias, impelled by the Holy Ghost, had raised his voice, thanking the Most High that through the tender mercy of our God the Day-Spring from on high hath 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!" continues Zachary the shepherd.

"Yea, those be good words," assented one of his hearers. "For we all sit in the shadow of death, and the shadow is getting short for some of us older ones. And Herod shortens the shadow swiftly for many an innocent man." "Said thou this son had now been born to Zacharias and his wife Elisabeth?" asked another. "They be both well stricken in years. In his younger days Zacharias must have seen Julius Caesar, and Pompey, too." "Yes, they be old indeed," replied Zachary. "They are right happy with the child. And it hath been said they have been visited by the one who shall be the Messiah's mother." "Comrades, why should not we pray God to send the Messiah?" proposed one of the men. Yes! The voice of fervent prayer arose on the hillside. But how little they dreamed that it was already answered! They resumed their seats.

Suddenly a brilliant, dazzling light shone round about them. A dog barked and howled in terror. The shepherds tumbled about in confusion and hid their faces from the overpowering brightness. "Fear not! Fear not!" said a gracious, commanding voice out of the radiant light. The shepherds raised their frightened faces as their eyes became accustomed to the strong light. "It is an angel of God," they said to themselves. "An angelic messenger. Perhaps Gabriel-the angel who told Daniel of the Messiah's coming." "Fear not," again called out the angel, drawing closer: "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." And joy and love filled his voice and thrilled their hearts as he spoke. "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord," he announced.

"Christ the Lord! Christ the Lord!" How the hearts of the shepherds leaped as they heard his words. "Has He come to Bethlehem? How did we miss His glorious cortege yesterday?" But, no! There had been no glorious procession. Christ had laid His glory by. "This shall be a sign unto you," the angel directed: "You shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." "Here at Bethlehem?" The shepherds could scarcely speak for joy. "The Messiah has come. The Messiah has come!" The news stirred their souls. Then suddenly the choirs of heaven broke into songs of gladness. The air above seemed filled with multitudes of the heavenly host, singing for very joy. The hills and valleys, each limestone outcrop and rough-built wall, the village above and the flocks below-all were flooded with the light and glory of heaven as the angel host raised their voices in melodious songs of rapture:

"Glory to God! Glory to God in the highest! And on earth peace; On earth peace; Goodwill toward men! Oh, glory to God in the highest!" That celestial music! It seemed as though heaven itself had come down to earth for a little while. Eden seemed very near again. "Ah! leave us not, you messengers of peace and goodwill toward men." But slowly, slowly the light faded away. Then it was gone, and only the stars of old Orion twinkled down on the hillside. Yet a little of heaven was left in the hearts of the shepherds, and a little of heaven-thank God-a heavenly Babe-was left in the manger.

Be of good cheer, you followers of Jesus! Before long the sky shall be radiant with light, and musical with angels' songs again. And the Babe of Bethlehem shall come as King of kings, and heaven shall come to your hearts for ever. Even for ever and ever.

"We Must Go at Once!" "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem," said the shepherds excitedly, "and see this thing which is come to pass, 'Which the Lord hath made known unto us.'" How they stumbled up the hillside and clattered along the village street! They heard a baby's cry-they entered a dimly lighted and lowly room, and found Joseph and Mary there, and the Babe lying in a manger. Glad were their hearts. God from on high had heard the sighing of His creatures. With joyful voices and thankful hearts they worshipped, glorifying and praising God. Then they returned, and over all that region they made known the angel's message concerning the Child. "Good tidings of great joy to all people. Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." Fleece-clad herdsmen, clay-besmeared potters, rough laborers, and chattering market-women passed on the good news: "On earth peace, goodwill toward men." They understood not just how this golden age should come, but they reasoned that the Messiah would make that clear.

At Jerusalem The story of the angels' visit to the shepherds and their wonderful news of the coming Messiah's birth, were heralded far and near. But the rabbis in Jerusalem, proud and ambitious religious teachers of that time, disdained to believe it. "Babble of ignorant countrymen," they sneered. And yet here in the temple itself the wrinkled old prophetess Anna was declaring that the heavenly Babe had been brought already to the temple. She had seen Him herself!

Old Simeon, too-the Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he should not see death until he had seen the Lord's Christ. And, behold, a few days ago he had seen the Babe in the arms of His parents, he said. His soul was full of rejoicing, and he had given utterance to the words which have been sung and said in the Christian church for nineteen centuries. "Lord, now let Thou Thy servant depart in peace,

according to Thy word: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou has prepared before the face of all people. A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel.” [6] But on top of all these stories Jerusalem was suddenly stirred by the news that a party of learned, influential men from the East had reached the city and were inquiring for “a new-born king.” Their camels had come swinging down the slopes of Mount Olivet, up the steeps to the city, and here they were, asking the way.

“Where is He that is born King of the Jews?” they asked. “We have seen His star in the East, and are come to worship Him.” Jerusalem’s priests and people were troubled at the wise men’s questions. What could all this mean? The worship of God had become to many a meaningless form. Most of the priests were seeking political or ecclesiastical advancement. The possibility that God’s Christ had come, aroused no rejoicing in their hearts. Just as the signs of Christ’s second coming are unwelcome to many worldly or misinformed hearts in these days.

But to Herod the king the news was most unwelcome. The Jews had taught that their coming King would crush all nations under His feet. The thought of such a rival for his kingly house filled him with a mad, jealous fear. He summoned the chief priests and the scribes. Hiding his feelings, he demanded: “Where shall the Christ be born?” They found the answer in the Scriptures: “In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah: for out of thee shall come a Governor that shall rule My people Israel.” [7] Herod still hid his evil thoughts, and called the wise men.

“The King of the Jews, whose star you have seen, is to be born in the village of Bethlehem, six miles along the road to the south,” he said. “Go and search diligently for the young child, and when you have found Him bring me word again, that I may go and worship Him also.” The wise men departed, their camel bells tinkling tunefully. The night was falling, but—behold—there was the star again! gleaming high above and before them, leading along the road to the south. They followed eagerly on. That star was not a planet; not Venus, nor Mercury. They knew the planets and stars too well to be mistaken. No! This star was a sign from God. It moved along the Bethlehem road and then remained still, shining out its message of hope and joy over the house where heaven’s Babe—God’s great gift to man—lay cradled. “This is the King!” Complete and full rose the assurance in their hearts now as they entered the room and saw the Babe. With joy they knelt before Him and worshipped. Treasures of gold they laid at His feet, with costly frankincense and myrrh. These were their gifts of gratitude to Him who had left heaven for the love He bore to the children of men. “Our long journey—ah! What a happy ending it has had! Tomorrow we shall return to Jerusalem and tell King Herod,” they decided. “How glad he will be!” “No—Not Back to Herod!” “Return not to Herod,” they were warned in a dream. “He purposes evil against the child.” So they returned to their own country another way which by-passed the city where the scheming king waited and plotted. He heard the bells of their camels no more. Time passed; Herod in Jerusalem still watched for the wise men to return. When at last it seemed obvious they were not coming, he was furious. He peremptorily called an officer.

“Take soldiers to Bethlehem and slay all the infants up to two years of age,” he ordered. “We will make sure this infant King shall not escape,” determined the wicked ruler. But, swiftly as the soldiers moved, Heaven’s messenger had moved swifter. In a dream the angel of God had commanded Joseph: “Arise, take the young Child and His mother and flee into Egypt, for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him.” So, while darkness hung over Bethlehem’s streets, and night birds called to each other, they stole away. Away from the hills of Judea, across the desert land they traveled, until they reached Egypt, country of the Pharaohs. Here they were safe for a little while. The gifts of adoration, presented by the wise men, provided the money they needed for their sustenance, and they had no lack.

Retribution Ends Herod’s Reign But with that mad order to kill the children, Herod had filled up the cup of his iniquity. A strange sickness fell upon him. An intolerable itching seized him! A fever consumed his frame. Parts of his body rotted and bred worms. Pains tormented him, and at last his life ebbed away. [8] Joseph in Egypt heard the news of the tyrant’s death, and was assured in a dream that he might now return. But when he heard that the wicked Archelaus now reigned in his father’s stead, he dared not settle in quiet Bethlehem or turbulent Jerusalem. He took the road north and came back to his home among the hills in Nazareth.

It was well he did so. Three thousand Jews were slain by the sword by this very Archelaus as they offered their sacrifices in Jerusalem about this time. Little mercy would he have shown to any Babe said to be “King of the Jews.” But the shepherds rejoiced, and the wise men cherished a joyful hope. Now Christ the Lord had come! He had left behind the power and might He had in heaven as the Leader of the angelic host, and had come to redeem His own. Heaven had clasped earth to its breast in the embrace of love, and the Babe had been born who should bring heaven to earth and earth to heaven. Far-off Eden’s gates seemed to be open wide again. Well might men and angels sing, “Glory to God in the highest.” “He came unto His own”—the Holy City, its priests, king, and people — “but His own received Him not.” How true Joseph and Mary felt this to be as they trod furtively along the road that led by Jerusalem up to the north!

“But as many as received Him”—shepherds, wise men, and shall it be you and I?” to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” Amid the clamor of war and the strife of men, still shines the light of Bethlehem’s angels on God’s way out of darkness into light. Every heart that opens to God and receives the spirit, of the Babe of Bethlehem shall find heaven within. And from such hearts the light will shine out, bringing peace on earth and goodwill toward men.

REFERENCES:

1. Josephus – Wars (Every man Edition), Page 27.
2. Ibid., Page 31.
3. Ruth 4:13, 18-22.
4. Isaiah 11:1; Psalm 132: 11.
5. Daniel 9: 25.
6. Luke 2: 29-32.
7. Matthew 2: 5, 6; Micah 5:2.
8. Josephus’ “Wars,” Page 114.

20. Jesus Opens the Way of Hope

If you have noticed-many great movements, often sponsored by fine men, are endeavoring to make the world a place of peace and prosperity for all. Read in this chapter of the principles laid down by the very Prince of Peace.

THE village of Nazareth lies in a great basin high on the brow of the most southerly chain of the hills of Galilee, the hills which overlook the great plain of Esdraelon. Probably Mary often went up on the hills with the boy Jesus as He grew older, and gazed out over the great panorama of Bible history displayed there before them-a panorama most of us would give a hundred pounds to see.

What an opportunity for her to impress on His active mind the stories told in the Scriptures! What questions and answers would pass between them! “What a long way we can see from this hill, mother!” “Yes, my Son; that is the Great Plain of Esdraelon. That hill on the right is Mount Carmel.” “Oh, yes, mother! Where Elijah prayed for the fire to come down from heaven.” “Yes, and where he prayed seven times for the rain to come. Look! There is the Great Sea beyond, where arose the little cloud about the size of a man’s hand.” [1] “Oh! I can see a cloud coming out of the sea now, mother.” “Yes, we may have rain before evening. See, between us and Mount Carmel is the place where brave King Josiah was slain in battle with Egypt. And away on the left is Mount Gilboa where King Saul and noble Jonathan fell before their enemies, the Philistines.” [2] “Many kings of the Jews have been slain by their enemies, mother, haven’t they?” “Yes, my Son.” “I can see more hills right in front of us-a long, long way off, mother.” “Yes, those are the hills of Samaria, Jesus. When Thou art twelve Thou shall go with us to Jerusalem to the Passover feast. If we take the short road we must needs go through Samaria. But we like not that way.” “Why?” “Oh, the Samaritans are not good people.” “Why?” “Well-I know not, my Son. But let us be going. See there are Roman soldiers marching through the village.

And there is Thy father taking a new yoke to the plough man’s -house.” Through Boyhood So Jesus grew up in the home of the humble Galilean carpenter. His mother ever remembered His divine mission and instructed Him diligently from the scrolls of the prophets. The Boy, quick in mind and gentle in heart, took great interest also in the things of nature and the varied activities of the people around Him. He worked in the carpenter’s shop, and as He grew to manhood became known as Jesus the carpenter. Though He was the Son of God, yet He spent twenty years at the carpenter’s bench.

“He was not willing to be defective, even in the handling of tools. He was perfect as a workman, as He was perfect in character. By His own example He taught that it is our duty to be industrious, that our work should be performed with exactness and thoroughness, and that such labor is honorable.” [3] When He Began His Public Ministry Years passed, and the time came when Jesus must take up His public ministry. The Emperor Tiberius sat on the throne in far-off sunny Rome. It was about the fourteenth year of Britain. Almost thirty years had passed since the wise men had come to Jerusalem inquiring for the King of the Jews. Thirty years since the angel had declared to the shepherds that the Messiah was born. Suddenly people remembered those events as they heard that a new prophet was preaching by the river Jordan. “His name is John,” they said.

“Repent!” said this prophet. “Repent you: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” [4] “The kingdom of heaven. Then where is the King?” People streamed down to the Jordan to listen to the strange preacher, a man clad in rough camel-hair clothes. He spoke with mighty power, and hundreds came under his influence. “Who art thou?” asked the priests.

“I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’” replied John. [5] The next day excitement became intense when John saw Jesus in the crowd. For, pointing to Him, he said: “Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.” “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him,” declared John. “I had no knowledge who He

was, but He that sent me to baptize said: 'The One on whom you see the Spirit coming down and resting, it is He who gives baptism with the Holy Spirit.' This I saw myself and my witness is that He is the Son of God. [6] Is This the King?

Two of John's disciples followed Jesus. "Was John's conviction right?" they asked themselves eagerly. The prophecy of Daniel had foretold that the Messiah must appear at this time. John the Baptist had testified that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. He declared this Stranger had been marked out by the Spirit of God-so filled with the Spirit that He would actually baptize others with the Holy Spirit. He bore record that this Man was "the Son of God" – "He must be the King!" came the conviction to the two disciples of John. They straightway began to accompany Jesus.

One of them told his brother Simon the great news: "We have found the Messiah." Then Jesus called Philip, of Simon's home town, Bethsaida, and Philip brought Nathanael, one of his friends, to Jesus. "Rabbi," acknowledged Nathanael after hearing the evidence for himself: "Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel." What excitement arose! If this Jesus was the Anointed, the long-desired Messiah-the King-the Son of God-would He set up the kingdom at once? Would He depose Pilate, the Roman governor? Would He drive out the hated Romans'? Would He lead Jewish armies out to conquer surrounding countries? Daniel's prophecy had pointed out that this was the time, the time when the Messiah should appear. Jesus now proclaimed it to the multitudes: "The time is fulfilled!" [7] He preached. "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand," He declared. "Repent you, turn from sin, and believe the good news!" The Kingdom of Heaven - Strange Principles But those who expected Him to take the sword and fight for the kingdom were surprised when He began to explain what kind of people would be subjects of the new kingdom. "Blessed are the poor in spirit," He said, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." [8] "Strange teaching, this!" thought the rabbis. "Blessed are the meek [the gentle, teachable]; for they shall inherit the earth," He continued.

"What a safe kingdom!" the listeners thought. "Gentle people do not inherit the earth at present." "Blessed are the merciful," He said. "A kingdom of merciful people-what a change!" the thought went round. "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God," He proceeded. "A kingdom of peacemakers-that would be like Paradise once more. Wonderful privilege!" the thought arose in many hearts. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God," Jesus went on.

It sounded like the spirit of Eden again. "Oh, make my evil heart pure," went up the silent prayer from many an onlooker. The Messiah pressed home to His hearers these principles of His kingdom: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you. "That you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven. For He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." [9] So He taught them again the law of heaven-the law of Eden -love to God, love to all men. When a lawyer asked Him: "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus replied: "Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment." "And the second is like unto it," He went on: "Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." [10] Clearing Away the Rubbish The Pharisees and scribes - the religious teachers had smothered these principles of love under a host of minute exaction and evasions. The loveliness of the law of God was hidden by intolerable burdens.

"Honor thy father and thy mother," said the commandment of love. "Obey them in youth; succor them in old age or sickness if they have need." But these covetous temple-ministers taught: "If you say your money is 'Corban,' that is, promised to the temple as a sacred gift, then you are released from your obligation to your parents." No wonder Jesus indignantly denounced them. [11] "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy," said the fourth commandment. God planned the day as a blessed day of rest, refreshing, and worship, a glad reminder of creation and its God. "No," said the Pharisees. "It is not lawful to heal on the Sabbath; it is not lawful to carry the tiniest thing; it is not lawful to walk more than two miles all at one time. It is not lawful to pick and hull a few ears of corn if you are hungry; it is not lawful to chase a flea-that is hunting. It is not lawful it is not lawful-" until the Sabbath became an intolerable burden! [12] No wonder Jesus smote off all these barnacles and restored the commandments to their rightful place, bringing blessing to mankind. To those who felt He was breaking the law of God He 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." [13] The prophet had declared of Him, "He will magnify the law, and make it honorable." [14] And so Christ set forth the law of God in its loveliness, showing it worthy of all honor. Christ was a poor carpenter, and could well have used extra money earned by working on the Sabbath had He felt that such labor was right. But no! He would under no circumstance break the commandment of God. "As His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day." He honored the house of God. "Lo, I come I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart," he declared. [15] Did He Really Love Mankind-and God?

As the people followed Him day by day, in crowded city thoroughfares or among the crooked streets and alleys of the Eastern villages, they saw these principles lived out in His own life. Love for man and love for God were clearly seen in His every action. He mingled with fishermen and carpenters, tax-gatherers and Pharisees, donkey-drivers, idlers, and beggars-and in His love endeavored to help them all.

Never in the days of youth had He worked any miracle, though wherever there was a need, He was there to assist and cheer. All His life He was like a bubbling spring of joy and happiness. Thus He teaches that we may be doing fully the will of God even if our daily life is unattended by any miraculous happenings.

But now His teaching was pressed home by signs and wonders which astonished the people. Miracle followed miracle until the whole nation was stirred. This, to the open heart, was mighty, incontrovertible evidence that Christ's teaching was of God. His first miracle was performed at the village of Cana, [16] five miles across the hills from His home at Nazareth. With His mother He had been invited to a wedding. The wine ran out, and it looked as though the happiness of the feast was going to be marred.

But Jesus asked that the big water-pots should be filled with water, and, behold! When it was tasted, it had miraculously become the best of wines. A lovely thoughtfulness it was, for the happy bride and bridegroom. May we imitate that spirit of thoughtfulness in all such seasons of rejoicing.

What Happiness He brought!

Wherever He went He took the spirit of Eden. When blind Bartimaeus of Jericho came to Him, Jesus spoke life to his dead optic nerves. His blindness disappeared, and joy beyond expression came with the beautiful light to the afflicted man. How Bartimaeus danced for joy! What a heaven entered his poor breast! "Oh, thank God! I can see! I can see! The dark has all gone. Blessed be the name of God!" Yes, He gave light to them that sat in darkness and in the shadow of death. And the leper-loathing himself, shuddering at his own uncleanness, hopeless at its incurableness -he came before Him with his rotting flesh and his ulcers. Would this Man turn away with disgust and fear-like the others? No-this Man had kind, sympathetic eyes. He stretched forth His hands. "Be clean!" He said, gently, authoritatively. The man glanced at his flesh-could it be possible! "They've gone! The scales have gone!" he shouts. "The sores have gone!" "The lumps have gone!" "Oh-h-h! Look at my flesh! Clean as a little child's! O God! Thank God! Thank God!" And the leper falls to worship Him who has brought this heaven of perfect health again. Thus He taught also that the leprosy of sin can be fully cleansed away. In one moment, by believing His Word, we can be cleansed as if we had never once sinned. Jesus came to those who were suffering the agonies and madness of devil-possession-poor, unfortunate beings who had tampered with spiritualism until life had the semblance of hell. At His command the devils were cast out, and a heaven of relief and calm entered the poor distressed and tormented minds.

Yes, Jesus can bring the calm and joy of Eden into every distressed, spirit-tormented heart that calls upon Him. And if you who read these lines have learned to trust in Jesus and to walk in His way, remember that your Savior loves you, and that you are safe in the hollow of His hand.

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2. 2 Kings 23:29; 1 Samuel 31:2-6.
3. Desire of Ages, Page 72.
4. Matthew 3:2.
5. John 1:19, 23.
6. John 1:33, 34 (Basic English).
7. Mark 1:15.
8. Matthew 5:3-9.
9. Matthew 5:44-45.
10. Matthew 22:36-40.
11. Mark 7:10-12.
12. Matthew 12:2-10; John 5:10.
13. Matthew 5:17,18.

14. Isaiah 42:21.

15. Psalm 40:7, 8.

16. John 2:11.

21. Into a Glad New Nature

Perhaps you have sometimes wished that everyone could be given a kind and helpful nature-like the Lord Jesus had. Read in this chapter how natures can be changed the key to a great happiness!

ONE of the most startling events of Christ's ministry took place down below Nazareth, on the Plain of Esdraelon, in a village called Nain. Jesus visited this place with His disciples one day, and as they came to the gates, a funeral procession came out with a large number of mourners. [1] It was the funeral of a young man-an only son-and, alas! He had been the sole supporter of his loving mother. She was there, the tears falling down her cheeks in her intense grief and loneliness as she thought of the dear one torn from her by the cruel hand of death. Aye, what sadness death brings!

But see! Jesus steps forward to the bier. The procession stops. The mother lifts her weary head-what official is this who rudely intrudes on her grief with some triviality? thinks she. But they are kind, compassionate eyes that meet hers. "Weep not," says a gentle voice. Her dumb sorrow and hopelessness are suddenly broken. What! What is this Stranger saying to her dead boy? No! Can it be possible? "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise!" "Arise?" - there is a sudden scream of joy from the mother. The dead man is sitting up! Oh! Now she has thrown her arms about him and is raining down tears of joy on that hateful shroud and on the bewildered face of her risen son. "My son! Oh, my son! He's alive again! My son! My son! Alive again!" What excited shouts rose from the people! Everyone came crushing forward to see the man who had been raised from the dead. How they rejoiced with the mother! How they stared at the Man of God who could bring heaven to earth like this! Raised from the dead! This miracle was repeated in other towns. The streets of Bethany were riotous with joy when Lazarus was brought back from the grave. [2] Other towns buzzed with the news that the daughter of Jairus, one of the rulers, had been brought back to life.

A Token of Infinitely Greater Things By raising up these from the dead, Jesus demonstrates-oh, here is the great revelation-that He can raise up all the multitudes of earth from the dead! "Yes," He says, "the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." [3] Yes, Jesus showed that He actually had the keys of the grave and death. He will break open that Hall of Silence into which men have gone since the day when Abel died. He can conquer Giant Death. Every vestige of the poor body may have disappeared, but He will give them a new body, so that in their flesh they shall see God. [4] The dead know not anything. [5] No, but He will awaken the powers to glad understanding again. Their love, their feelings are gone. Yes, but He will awaken their emotions with the flowing current of life again. Till then, good or wicked, the dead sleep-a peaceful sleep which shall not be broken until the resurrection day. [6] Who Teaches Like Him?

What a prince of teachers was Jesus! Has there ever been His like? Those who have endeavored to teach in the open air know how difficult it is to keep the attention of the hearers. Flowers distract, birds whistle and take the children's attention. Workmen pass, babies take the eyes of mothers. But Jesus taught the greatest of His lessons in the open field, on the green hillside, or by the Sea of Galilee. If the birds appeared, He called the people to watch them. "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much better than they?" [7] If the flowers attract some listeners, He says: "Consider the lilies of the field, Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If God so clothe the grass of the field, shall He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?" If a farm laborer appears, sowing the seed, Jesus says, "Behold!" and tells the forcible parable: "A sower went forth to sow." So all distractions were used by the great Teacher to enforce His teaching. He taught much by telling stories-parables. These aroused the interest and challenged the curiosity of His hearers till they understood deep truths they would never otherwise have attempted to comprehend.

Friend of All Mothers Mothers, burdened with the ordinary, everyday cares of home and children, heard of this Prophet who seemed to understand everybody's need. They gathered their children one day and went in a group to ask Jesus to bless them. "No, He is too busy to see children," the disciples protested. "You must not trouble Him." But Jesus had caught sight of the anxious group, and He who understands every mother's longings and perplexities, will not turn anyone away. Not even the least promising. He will not turn our children away, even if there should be discouraging traits of character only too evident in them.

No, "Forbid them not!" He said to His disciples. Let the little children come unto Me-and forbid them not, "for of such is the kingdom of heaven." And He took the children in His arms and blessed them. No wonder the mothers returned home with happy smiles and

laughter, repeating His words as they went! "He is the mother's Christ"-every woman may sing. "And He is the children's Jesus!" Let every boy and girl sing it aloud.

Great Multitudes Follow Him No wonder "the common people heard Him gladly." [8] Friend of all, they followed Him eagerly and talked of Him incessantly: "It's that Man with the kind face," says a little girl. "Yes, He put His hand on my head when He was preaching," responds a small boy.

"Think! He blessed my restless little Peter," says a grateful mother, looking down at her infant.

"He gave me my sight -bless Him!" says old Bartimaeus.

"Bless His name! He brought my son back from the dead," says the widow from Nain.

"O thank God, thank God!" a young woman from Magdala whispers; "He has wiped out the past. Now life opens before me again, pure and fresh as morning on the hills." He was the living exponent of love to God and love to one's neighbors-the principles of the kingdom of heaven and Eden. He showed the people that these virtues would bring peace and happiness into their own lives, into their families, and into the nations. Then could there be "Peace on earth; goodwill toward men." If they accepted His teaching and did what He taught, they would be like a wise man who built his house on a rock. They would live in a renewed Eden for ever. But if they listened-and even approved-but did not do these things, their house would be overwhelmed by floods. [9] Eternal death would be their lot.

Death or life? Which shall be our choice? Solemn question!

We Need a New Nature to Do This "Oh, if only I had a different nature! I would love to live the life of peace and goodwill." Such was the desire that went up from scores of hearts, as Christ taught them. Such is the desire of thousands of hearts today. "If only I had Christ's nature! If only I had a current of His life, instead of my own unlovely impulses!" If this is your desire, recognize it as the voice of God to your soul. His Spirit has given you this longing and will give you just this very thing-a new nature, the life of Christ. He will give it to you today.

Say good-bye to sin for ever-this is repentance. Turn your back on it for ever. Come to God with humble confidence. "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out," [10] Jesus assures us. Every man and woman; every boy and girl is welcome.

Then-listen-"Verily, verily," Jesus proclaims: "He that hears My Word, and believes on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." [11] And again, He declared: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believes on Me hath everlasting life." [12] This is one of those "exceeding great and precious promises" by which men may "be partakers of the divine nature," as the Apostle Peter declared. You ask Him for this precious gift of life-His own nature. Take courage; He will give it to you. Believe that you receive it, now, as the gift of God. Believe Him, and receive this priceless gift just now. In giving you His own nature He adopts you into His family. You are counted now as a son of God-this very day. Rejoice in this.

Rejoice with the Apostle John, and say: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: Beloved, now are we the sons of God." [13] "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that you may know that you have eternal life," says His closest friend, John the apostle.

And remember that these priceless gifts; forgiveness and cleansing from every sin, adoption into His family, the gift of His own nature, His Spirit-which will bring immortality and a part in Eden restored-are all given freely to you. Not because of anything you have done, but as free gifts of the grace of God -because He loves you. A free gift to you this very day, dear mother, dear fellow man, dear boy and girl. Turn from sin, and joyfully accept God's great gift.

How Christ Pictured God All this Jesus explained in His most loved parable. [14] The son of a wealthy farmer grew tired of the fancied restraints of home, asked his father for all the money which would normally be given to him to start in life, and took his journey into a far country. There, in sin, he wasted his substance in riotous living.

But when all his money was gone, and there arose a mighty famine in that land, he began to be in want. To earn a few pence he took employment as a swineherd. So small were his wages, and the price of the food so high, that he went hungry every day. His clothes were soiled through contact with the animals. Filthy, ragged, hungry-his thoughts turned to his father. "Even the hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare," he burst out. "And I-I perish with hunger." "My father-" Even the thought of him brought a ray of hope. "I will arise and go to my father. I will be one of his hired servants. He will not turn me away-I know that. I will say to him: "Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants." He turned away from the pigs, the riotous living, the far country, and bent his steps toward his father's house. "But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him," overflowing with emotion. The son stammers out the words: "Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called

thy son. Make me as one of thy hired servants.” But the father’s heart, overflowing with-love for the son, would hear no more. He called his servants to bring the best clothes; to bring shoes for his feet; a ring betokening son ship for his hand. That is how God loves you and me, my brother man. “Let us eat, and be merry,” the father commanded. “For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.” Thus Jesus taught that all heaven rejoices as we turn to the Father’s home and receive His love. Let us bend our feet homeward now, and rejoice.

Is This Right?

“But this is not justice,” says Rabbi Hardface. “Simply forgetting a man’s sins and misdeeds is not justice. If sin is not punished, then the law is a farce. People will sin without restraint if no penalty is exacted from law-breakers. The sinner should pay.” Yes, that is true. But if someone pays my fine for me at the court, then the law has still been upheld-but I am free. And if someone gives me the nature of the most law-abiding citizen in the land, then I shall never willingly break that law again. Isn’t that true, Rabbi Hardface?

By our sins we have come under the death penalty of God’s law. But Jesus suffered death on Calvary for us. He has paid the penalty-enough to cover the sins of the whole world. The money is immediately available to everyone who turns from sin and trusts in Jesus. In other words, available to everyone who chooses to take it. To you and me-this day. What condemnation will fall on us if we refuse God’s great free gift and remain in sin!

Yes, Jesus died on the cross to atone for Eve’s sin and Adam’s sin. For David’s sin and Peter’s sin. For my sin and your sin. As we trust in this sacrifice we are forgiven. And at the same time He gives us His own loyal and loving nature.

This Is Part of the Restoration Never for a moment did Christ forget God’s original plan for mankind. Always before Him was God’s Way of Happiness as shown in the garden of Eden. It was His great work to restore that which had been lost as a result of sin. Men had come to look on God as “a harsh and exacting creditor.” Christ showed them by His life how tenderly God loves the children of men. They had lost sight of the principles of Eden-of the kingdom of God. He taught these again: Love to God and love to one another.

They had come to regard sin lightly. Christ showed that it led to eternal death. Solemnly He pressed this home. They were in bondage to sinful habits. He showed that they could have His own sinless nature, or life, through trust in His Word. He taught them He would die in their place. He would be treated as we deserve, so that we might live for ever on an Edenic new earth, and be treated as He deserves.

He told them that when this good news had been made known to all nations, He would come from heaven again, would raise from the dead His sleeping children, would change the living saints, and lead all of them to heaven-His Father’s house. [15] He taught them that this earth would then be recreated [16] and the children of God would live in it for ever. Like a merchant offering precious pearls, so Christ stood before the people offering God’s great gifts. Multitudes believed Him, and accepted Him into their hearts with unspeakable joy. But another multitude took Him and put Him to death on the cross. Which course shall we take? The chief priests and rulers became jealous of Christ’s popularity. They became angry when He discredited their lifeless teaching. They finally conspired to put Him to death.

He was given a mock trial by the priests, found guilty of blasphemy, and then brought before Pilate, the Roman governor. “This Man hath done nothing amiss. I find no fault in Him,” [17] Pilate protested. But finally his objections were overruled and he delivered Jesus up to death on the cross. “The King of the Jews,” was the inscription over Him. There are two hills of old Jerusalem-Mount Moriah and Calvary. To each of these, in his time, came a father with his son. Abraham, his heart wrung by sorrowful apprehension, brought his son to Mount Moriah as a sacrifice. To Calvary God came with His well-beloved Son as a sacrifice for a fallen world.

Abraham was delivered at the last moment-and he and his son were spared the anguish of death. God came up to Calvary with His Son-and went right through with it for you and me-right through the agony of separation and death. “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that Whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” It was a wonderful thing that God’s own Son should come from heaven to die for you and me. He felt the torture of the cruel nails as the weight of His dear body sagged forward on them. He felt the pain of the crown of thorns and the burning shame of a criminal’s death.

But most of all He felt what you and I would otherwise have suffered-the darkness of separation from the Father’s face as others went into life eternal. You and I, at the great day of judgment, would otherwise have had the anguish of going out into eternal darkness and death, while at the same time glimpsing others going into the surpassing glory of restored Eden.

But now, through Him – “He that hears My word, and believes on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” He opens wide before us the door to a new life here, and everlasting life in the hereafter. “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do,” prayed Jesus for those who rejected Him. He died - it was a cruel death - and was buried. But grave-clothes and gravestones could never hold the Prince of Life. On the morning of the third day, before the sparrows began to twitter in the olive trees, the sepulchre garden shook and trembled as with an earthquake. A mighty angel came down, and Christ arose from the dead. [18] What consternation and terror to the soldiers and priests! What joy for His disciples! They

could scarcely believe their eyes. But He appeared to them over and over again. He ate with them. He told them He was going to heaven, but He would surely return for them. After instructing, comforting, and blessing His disciples for the space of almost six weeks, He led them out one day to the Mount of Olives. Here at His birth had come the wise men following the star. Ah, yes, the star!

But now there was a gleaming white cloud overhead! A cloud -waiting! Was it heaven calling? With feelings of wonder the disciples saw that this earth's gravity had lost its power over their risen Lord. Slowly, with infinite grace and majesty, Jesus ascended from among them. Higher and yet higher He rose-His hands outstretched to bless them-higher, until that cloud-that white cloud-received Him out of their sight. [19] When will He come again?

REFERENCES:

1. Luke 7:11-17.
2. John 11.
3. John 5:28, 29.
4. Job 19:25, 26.
5. Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6-10.
6. Job 14: 12, 14, 15.
7. Matthew 6:26, 28-30.
8. Mark 12:37.
9. Matthew 7:24-27.
10. John 6:37.
11. John 5:24.
12. John 6:47.
13. 1 John 3:1, 2.
14. Luke 15:11-32.
15. Matthew 24.
16. Matthew 19:28.
17. Luke 23:4.
18. Matthew 28:2.
19. Luke 24:50,51; Acts 1:9-11.

22. God's Way for Our Own Lives

If you are wondering what your life-work shall be, or how you can best help others to choose aright, this chapter may give specially helpful suggestions.

THE Lord Jesus had gone up to heaven to prepare a place for them. He was going to come again to earth.

What tumultuous thoughts of joy and wonder filled the disciples' hearts! Heaven-ah, now that far-away place of glory seemed very near-so different. They had a friend there. By the throne of the eternal Father in those glorious courts above, they had a Friend, the Lord Jesus. Yes, Jesus, our Friend and Elder Brother, stands by the eternal throne. He loves us still, He loves our children. He brought heaven

to human hearts on earth. He has taken earth in His loving heart to heaven. Our names are graven on His hand in those nail-sears. He ever lives to make intercession for us. Soon He will come again for us.

As the disciples watched Jesus ascend, suddenly they noticed two white-clad strangers were with them—heavenly visitants, who said: “You men of Galilee, why stand you gazing up into heaven? 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.” [1] He will come again. They must hasten and tell the story of His love to the world. “Preach the good news make disciples,” Jesus had said. “Teach them.” Such are the words which set forth our hopes and our work, “till He come.” What a challenge is this for every disciple of Christ in these days! Many a bold Christian young man, many a noble-spirited girl and woman is inquiring, “What shall my life-work be? How can I best serve God and my fellow men ‘till Jesus come’?” “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” [2] is the natural question that arises to their lips. “What is God’s life-work for me?” Christ’s last words on earth gave direction in regard to this very subject, so important in the eyes of every young Christian man and woman. As the disciples gathered around Him on the green slopes of Mount Olivet that last day, He gave them counsel and instruction which will guide us to make the right choice in these nineteen fifties. “Go you into all the world,” He said, “and declare the good news to every creature,” [3] “Make disciples of all nations teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” [4] This, then, is our life-work.

“The Master Calls for Thee” To many will come the direct call to preach the gospel across the seas to those who have never known its sweetness. What a noble work this can be! And if this foreign mission work is accompanied by medical work—healing of the body—gladness and song will be heard from many a land now oppressed with pain and disease. The lepers will be cleansed; the sick will be healed; the poor will have the gospel preached to them. The nightmare of life will become a vision of heaven. “Doctor, you save my people!” cried an old African chief after the missionary doctor had removed a tumor weighing fifty-one pounds from a native patient. “You save my people.” “Doctor, my people will not know me now that I am well and have within me the joy and peace of the gospel,” rejoiced another native. “I have killed six men during my life, and had even planned to kill the mission school teacher,” confessed a transformed Amazon Indian. “But now I rejoice in the light of the gospel.” “On this trip we have treated 5,280 sufferers,” writes L. B. Halliwell, a missionary who runs a river launch on the Amazon and its tributaries. “We admitted 1,152 in-patients,” writes the doctor in charge of a mission hospital in East Africa, “and there were about 27,000; attendances at the out-patient department and the two dispensaries. Two hundred operations were performed. A hundred and seventy babies were born in the maternity ward.” Out in an African village the native drums began beating out a message that stirred the people with incredulous excitement: “Dr-r-r-um, dr-r-r-um, dr-r-r-um! ‘The chief’s uncle is returning, a well man! The chief’s uncle is no more a leper!’ Yes, it was true. ‘His face—look at his face,’ the natives whisper. ‘Where are the leprous spots?’ ‘Where is the rough, scaly skin now?’ ‘Where are the ulcers? His skin is the skin of a healthy man. Look at his eyes! They smile again!’” [5] Yes, smiles are coming to faces where smiles have long been foreigners. The lepers are being cured. Clean bodies and clean hearts are appearing where filth and sin were only too manifest. This is the work which God is accomplishing through men and women who have given their lives to preach the gospel in all the world.

The Doctor in the Homeland Many young men have seen the opportunity for Christian service in the work of the physician in the homeland. What an influence he has! What pain and suffering he can banish! One Christian doctor lightly sums up his record thus:—“In thirty years I have felt over one million pulses, looked at a similar number of tongues, and prescribed treatment for over one million persons. During the same time I introduced about two thousand new arrivals into the world and attended the departing of about six hundred. I have signed about one hundred and fifty thousand medical certificates of various kinds, examined one hundred thousand children under sixteen for work in factories, conducted two nursing homes, helped support a church school, acted on a church board, preached hundreds of sermons, given hundreds of temperance and health addresses, and taught over one thousand times in Sabbath-school classes.

“In my spare time I do carpentry and decorating, and have assisted several lads to obtain a working knowledge of these trades.” Those who know this good doctor realize that beside all this he has a record of practical sympathetic helpfulness which has brought happiness and inspiration to many a struggling man and woman. Yes, the work of the physician offers wide opportunity to “declare the good news,” till Christ shall come.

The Gospel Colporteur Other consecrated young men have given their lives to the work of gospel colportage—selling Bibles and other books which teach the principles of the Christian life. Through this quiet door-to-door work, thousands of men, women, and children have come to know the Lord Jesus and have reached up to higher heights of happy Christian living.

One colporteur, George True, let us call him, has in ten years placed in the homes about 13,000 copies of a life of Christ. Thousands of boys and girls must have been influenced for good as a result. “I owe many of my highest ideals of Christian life to that book,” testified a reader.

Another colporteur, who might well be called Arthur Strong, has specialized in selling books of children’s stories, full of practical gospel principles. In ten years he has placed one hundred thousand little books in the homes. Another colporteur has specialized in selling larger volumes of Christian teaching. Who can measure the result, in the hearts of the parents, children, and youth?

Other young men have volunteered for colporteur work in the Far East and in other lands abroad. Mighty transformations have come about in human hearts as a result. The testimony of one active missionary society is: "Half our converts in these countries have come in as a result of the purchase of these Christian books and magazines." Many great foreign mission workers began their service as the result of the influence of a colporteur or the literature he sold.

F. A. Stahl, for instance a great modern pioneer of Christian work among the Indians of Peru, Bolivia, and the Upper Amazon. Through the work of Stahl and his successors, thousands of Indians have been given a great hope which has brightened and transformed their once sordid lives. "Oh, my people," cried an Indian chief who had listened to Stahl's preaching: "This is heaven come down upon earth." Stahl was a polisher and electroplater when, in his early twenties, a colporteur came to his home and sold him a book called "Patriarchs and Prophets." This was the book that changed his life plans, and sent him thousands of miles to the high Andes to carry the gospel to the Indians. You would almost expect the colporteur to celebrate the anniversary of that day, wouldn't you?

Then there was G. F. Jones, the little seafaring man with a big heart, who was used of God to do such a mighty work in the South Pacific islands. He began his course when he picked up a torn page of a Christian magazine. Multitudes of once vicious, cruel, degraded natives are now clean, sober, practical, diligent, and gentle in their lives, as a result of the work of Jones and his successors.

Ministers, teachers, college principals, doctors-how many of these date the beginnings of their Christian work from the day they purchased a book from a colporteur who knocked at the door! If you take up this work with holy energy, perhaps your knock may arouse many a one to give his life in loving service for the homeland, Africa, India, or other lands beyond the seas. What a life purpose that would be! "The Master is come-and calls for thee." The-School-Teacher's Work What an influence for good a Christian school-teacher can exert on the impressionable minds of boys and girls, "till He come!" The teacher's words have great weight with children, and the whole life of over a thousand coming men and women may be affected by the words and example of the one who guides the class. Says one successful teacher: "The name of every child or youth I ever taught is here in this book which I call my 'Book of Remembrance.' It is greatly worn from much use. There are 1,300 names in this book-yes, I have 1,300 children. They are all mine, mine now and mine for ever." And sometimes the teacher sees the result after many years. "There is a ring at the door, and there stands a man. It is one of your boys. "And he speaks: 'Yes, I have returned from my mission field, where I labored long among the unfortunate who do not know Jesus, and I taught them the lessons you taught me.'" "Then you are lonely no longer, and you say life is sweet. You forget the heartaches, the disappointments, the trials, and tears. You remember only that the harvest is good from the seed sown so long ago." [6] Perhaps as a Nurse A Christian girl may have no hope of becoming a qualified doctor. But if she becomes a nurse she may ease ten thousand aching bodies in twenty years' service. She may restore many a sick child to its mother's arms, well and happy again. She may bring gratitude to a multitude of hearts.

The Dentist's Opportunities A Christian dentist-what untold agony he can relieve! He may by his skill prevent or cure ten thousand excruciating toothaches. If he goes to the dark corners of the earth as a missionary, he will often receive for his work's sake a welcome so grateful that he will have ample opportunity to tell of the Great Healer of sinful men.

The Sabbath School May Call You You may not be a preacher or a foreign missionary, but you can perhaps teach a class of children in a Sabbath school or a Sunday school. If you give one day a week to such Christian work, you will in twenty-five years have given three and a half years' service. That is as much time as the Lord Jesus Himself gave to His public ministry.

Or the Gospel Ministry But there is a great call for strong, well-educated young men to give their whole lives to the gospel ministry. Among all the professions in the world the greatest need is for men who can persuade others to forsake sin and serve Christ as citizens of His kingdom. Scientists have their place, but Christless science may teach men how to make death-dealing, maiming bombs. It may show how to make blister-gas, flame-throwers, and torpedoes, to burn, crush, mangle, torture, drown, and suffocate others.

The minister, preaching the gospel of Christ, can make cruel men kind. He can make selfish men generous. He can make drunken men sober. He can bring happiness into sad eyes, and songs to the lips where sadness has been. Said Keir Hardie, the great Scottish Socialist, disappointed and crushed by the tragedy of the first Great War: "If I were to live my life again, I would devote it to the advocacy of the gospel of Christ." Oh, yes! The work of the true gospel minister builds concrete like foundations for the home and society. If you are a young man, earnestly consider this. Write for counsel to the principal of some good training college. If you are a father or mother, encourage your Christian sons to think of the gospel ministry.

If You Are in Business The Christian business man or manufacturer can bring the principles of true Christianity into his relations with his employees. Many are doing this with heart and soul. They make it their plan to have happy, well-fed, well-housed, well-paid people. Some have flower-boxes in the workrooms. They have courses of instruction for both factory workers and salesmen. They provide a concert hall, a playing-field, or a free library.

No wonder such factories are filled with kindly co-operation and friendship. The Christian business man, like John Wanamaker, will make all his advertising truthful. He will buy his goods without squeezing all the profit out of the producer. He will endeavor to serve his customers well at a fair profit to his business. As one of the world's greatest merchants, Wanamaker is said to have conducted the

largest Sunday school in the world. "He played no tricks and sold no trash." He was like a father to his employees. His business was built up by truth and kindness as well as by enterprise and sagacity. [7] Not every business man will be able, like the Cadbury brothers, to set up a great pipe-organ in the works dining-room, nor build 1,000 cottages for workers, nor pretty little homes for old workers who have no money for rent. But he will find many ways in which he can make life bright for the workers. He can give seeds and bulbs to his workers, and encourage them to plant flowers around the factory. He can teach them to abhor laziness, unpunctuality; and selfish ambition, and encourage them to help one another.

The small tradesman can imitate George Blank, a Christian shoe-repairer who gathered his workers around him every morning, to sing a hymn, read a scripture, and offer a short prayer. He taught them efficient methods of work, instructed them how to obtain orders and please customers with good workmanship and prompt delivery.

If You Are an Employee The Christian employee will do all he can to prosper the business of his employer. There will be cheerful diligence and contentment even when things go wrong. There will be watchfulness and inventive thought for improvement, together with kindly helpfulness toward fellow workers and beginners. The non-union man will not victimize the union worker, and the union member will give all respect to the non-union man.

If Your Title Is "Mother"-the Master Calls for You But Christian mothers-what an influence they can wield! Though sometimes it is felt that the work of the mother in the home is commonplace and uninspiring, yet when the curtain is drawn it is seen that the hand that leads the child is the hand that leads the world and shapes its destiny. What a multitude of great men attribute their success to the mother in the home! "A kiss from my mother made me a great painter," said Benjamin West.

"My mother," said Edison, inventor of a thousand marvels, "-if it had not been for her appreciation and her faith in me, I should very likely never have become an inventor. The good effects of her early training I can never lose. Her firmness, her sweetness, her goodness, were potent powers to keep me in the right path. The memory of her will always be a blessing to me." [8] Cyrus Hamlin's mother taught him to deny himself and place gifts in the missionary box for the sake of unfortunate people in heathen lands. What a reward she had when he grew up to become a devoted missionary to the Moslems of Turkey! "He always said it was through the influence of that missionary box that he decided to give his life to the service of Christ." [9] "My mother; my mother," repeated Samuel Chadwick, president of the Wesleyan Conference, once a poor mill-boy of Burnley. "I never knew my mother send the poor empty away." "My mother was a queen in compassion." "She was regal in her works of mercy." "She was capable without fussiness, witty without venom, merry without being frivolous." How glad she would have been had she known the power of her influence and lived to see the scores of broken men whom he led to a new life of goodness and happiness! [10] At the age of fifteen, young Hudson Taylor began to drift, and was being influenced by skeptical companions. But through his loving mother's prayers he turned wholeheartedly to God and gave his life to help the Chinese to know Him. Scores of mission stations and thousands of happy converts resulted from his work. And in all this mother-work, done with willing hands for the sake of Him who loved us, there often comes a joy that is like heaven upon earth. There are "more heavens than one." Heaven often comes through the laughing eyes of little three-year-old Joan. Heaven comes within the four walls of an-ordinary home when the mother takes Joan and baby Betty as a precious gift from a loving Father in heaven, and seeks to train them up for Him.

The Father, Too And for a father-what a heaven to feel soft arms around his neck, a small soft cheek pressed lovingly against his face, and warm moist lips against his. A soft hand trustfully clasping his. "Games with father"-oh, yes! There are "more heavens than one" for the Christian father and mother. God does not reserve all the sweetness of heaven for the life to come. "For after all, there is no paradise like that made by loving hearts." Not to the convent or the monastery does God call His sons and daughters to witness for Him, but in the common duties of the home, in helpful Christian contact with children, neighbors, and tradesmen. In the office, by the lathe, the bench or the machine, by the linotype or the loom, and in loyal participation in the services of His house-here is that God calls most of us to witness for-Him - "till He come." Yes, this is God's way for His children to preach the gospel, "till He come."

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23. When the Great Way-Maker Comes

Perhaps you have often wondered if the world will continue to go on as at present for ever. Will peace ever come to stay? Will sickness ever disappear? Is eternal youth possible? This chapter tells startling good news.

TILL He come. And Jesus will come again-have no doubt about that! He promised His disciples He would return, and He will keep His word. "I go to prepare a place for you," He said to them. "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." [1] This promise the angels repeated to the disciples as they stood watching their Lord mount up to heaven on that memorable ascension day. "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," they declared. [2] Yes, it will be "this same Jesus," friend of sinners, healer of the sick, helper of mothers, lover of children, companion of men in the ordinary walks of life, our Elder Brother-He will come from heaven, again.

The Early Church Remembered It How this promise cheered the early disciples! "Behold, He comes with clouds," rejoiced John, who had watched the cloud receive Him out of their sight. [3] "You turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven," said Paul to the believers on the mountain-girt shores of Greece, the men of Thessalonica. [4] "We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is," John assured the early Christians. [5] What a glad, glad event this is to be! It is the most spectacular piece in the restoration of man's lost glory. It will bring restoration of physical strength and beauty. Restitution of health and immunity from death.

Heaven received Jesus into its courts on that now far-off day of ascension, "until the times of restitution of all things." [6] All things that were lost when sin entered the garden of Eden are soon to be restored through Jesus. For the "times of restitution" are now right upon us. The first act in the restoration of that Eden kingdom is to restore God's image in the hearts of men. "Behold, the kingdom of God is within you," [7] Jesus proclaimed. The kingdom of God in the heart will bring the kingdom of God on earth in His appointed time.

This restoration of God's image in the heart is to take place before Christ comes again. Thank God, it is taking place in thousands of human hearts now. Thousands of ordinary men and women have been forgiven all sin and have received the nature of Jesus Christ into their hearts. But all the universe is looking forward to that glad day when Jesus shall appear in the clouds. He who was born "King of the Jews," shall come as "King of kings and Lord of lords." He will end the reign of sin, and will restore the body to its Eden strength and beauty.

David the psalmist saw that day in vision, and cried: "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 [to govern] the earth: He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth." [8] Patriarchs Longed for the Time This has been the great hope of the people of God in every age since man left the garden of Eden. Adam himself looked forward to the time when Christ, the offspring of Eve, should "crush the serpent's head." Enoch, in the evil days before the Flood, saw this coming of Christ in prophetic vision. "Behold!" he said, "the Lord comes with ten thousands of His holy ones." [9] Of Abraham, the noble and unselfish man of faith, it is declared, "He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." [10] Moses, for this hope, turned his back on the shouting applause of Pharaoh's soldiers, and the royal throne of mighty Egypt with its treasures, "for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." [11] He might have become king of Egypt himself; he could have dwelt among the music of its pillared palaces, courted and flattered by princes and princesses, priests and kings. But the glorious vision of Christ's coming kingdom faded out these worldly hopes as the glory of the rising sun fades out the stars.

The patriarch Job voiced this glad hope when he sat in his sickness and misery and pain. "I know that my Redeemer lives," he declared. "And that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." [12] David Sang of It Over and over, this vision of Christ's coming was granted to the psalmist, who declared: "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 heaven from above, and to the earth. Gather My saints together unto Me; those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice." [13] "He comes to govern the earth." And what solemn yet gracious words Isaiah the prophet spoke: "The Lord God will come. His reward is with 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." [14] "He will swallow up death in victory; and will wipe away tears from off all faces." "Thy dead men shall live," Isaiah declared; "together with my dead body shall they arise." [15] There Would Be Signs When It Was Near

Nebuchadnezzar's dream showed forth the approach of the time of the coming of the King: "In the days of these kings [of Western Europe] shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed." [16] And to Daniel himself, as we have seen, it was shown that the "roll" would be made up after 1844. Then the Papacy would again speak great words, but "the kingdom shall be given to the saints of the Most High." Jesus Himself said very simply and clearly, "I will come again." He explained that first there would be given signs to show that His coming was near. But, "then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." [17] "What shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?" asked the disciples. Jesus replied: "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for -a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." [18] That time has almost come. It is even at the door. In almost every country on earth the gospel message has been preached. Jesus will come again-and that right soon.

In Almost Every Country They Are Expecting It The black and brown men of Africa have listened to this message. "Jesus soon will come!" they repeat.

Then men of India and Burma and Malaya-they have heard it, too. Solemnly they say, "Jesus is coming soon." You can hear the message spoken on the Yellow River's banks and in the towns on the Yangtse-Kiang now. It has stirred the hearts of dusky Indians of Bolivia and Peru; it has been echoed by Indians of the wide Amazon and the deserts of New Mexico.

Up in Alaska and down in Tierra del Fuego, in New Guinea and the Solomon Islands and Japan; in every country in Europe, and in every state and province of North America-oh, yes, the gospel is being preached in almost all the world for a witness now. Jesus is coming right soon. Let us be ready for Him. Sad would it be if we or our loved ones were on the enemy's side in that day.

But When He Comes Yes, soon He will come! While men are engaged in war and battle, while other men are working to alleviate the suffering of the world, while the mother performs the loving duties of the home, while others, careless of the future, are trampling God's commandments under foot-Jesus will come again. False science may declare it impossible, false preachers may deride the idea, persecution may arise for those who proclaim God's truth, but-Jesus is coming again.

How blest that hour, Lord Jesus! "He comes with clouds, and every eye shall see Him." He "shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him." [19] Yes, one day we shall look upward and see the firmament filled with the radiant army of the angels of heaven-Jesus with all the glorious heavenly host. It will be the most solemn and majestic sight this old earth has seen since its creation. But when that great day comes! Music of trumpets? Hear those notes, louder and louder swelling, as the cloud in the sky draws nearer! Sweeter and more majestic than mortal ears have ever yet heard-all in divine harmony.

Beat of drums? Hear the thunder roll and roll and roll again as the Lord draws near the earth. That radiant host of celestial beings! This is the mighty host of heaven. Seraphim and cherubim, princes of the army of God, captains of the Lord's host, mighty angels, rank upon rank, in exact, orderly formation. Army after army, army after army, with leaders that excel in strength! The sky seems full to overflowing. What glorious harmony of song! What rhythm in that heavenly music! What purity and strength in those dazzling radiant forms! What might is theirs!

See the radiant splendor of the Leader of this heavenly army! God-like in His dazzling glory-yet strangely like the Man of Galilee whom we have loved to know. It is He! It is "this same Jesus," whom the disciples saw ascend up to heaven. It is the same Jesus who lived in Nazareth as a carpenter's boy. It is He whose gentle voice stilled the tears of the mourners, and brought new health and hope to the sick and dying.

To Him, His angels gather all those who have imbibed His own loving helpful nature. But those who have rejected His loving entreaties call now in anguish of spirit for the rocks and mountains to fall upon them. They are destroyed by the brightness of His appearing. In flaming fire the Lord takes vengeance on the cruel, the lying, the adulterous, the evil men who have rejected Him and brought misery on their fellows. Vengeance falls upon all those who have forgotten God. Let none deceive themselves. Every unforgiven sin shall be punished!

"Before Him shall be gathered all nations." Wicked, cruel rulers will be there, together with wise and kindly kings and queens. Unjust magistrates and incorruptible judges will be present. Ruthless and arrogant captains and mighty men will stand by the side of the chivalrous and noble-hearted. All shall be gathered before Him with the nations they have been leading. And "He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats." Solemn and fearful indeed is God's retribution on those who have despised His grace and chosen the service of His enemy. But oh! what gladness He has in store for those who, in all ages, have accepted His great gift and have been loyal to Him in the simple duties of life!

Even the Dead Hear His Voice "Gather My saints together," He commands His angels. And with a voice that shakes the earth He calls: "Awake, you dead! Arise! Arise!" Oh, the widow of Nain has heard that command before. The sisters of Lazarus have heard that call to the dead. The heart of ruler Jairus has leaped before at the sound of that command. And, lo, they come! The dead are coming up through the crumbling, cracking earth at that command. From the dust of the Libyan desert, from the snows of the frozen North, they come!

The great sea tosses, and, behold! Its believing dead arise at the command of the Lord Jesus. A shout of joy goes up from the angels. A mighty chorus of shouts of joy is heard from the redeemed. These great deeps shall yield up the Christian heroes sleeping there. Lo He has come, the Lord of ocean! His trumpet sounds o'er waves' commotion: And these great deeps now hear Him calling: 'Rise, rise, you dead! His voice enthralling. And lo, they came, in heaven's perfection, Hail, hail, you winds, their resurrection, Blow, winds, blow!

"Sing this, you winds, to heroes sleeping Beneath the waves in God's good keeping; Lo! at this song the waves are dancing, They lift and leap like horses prancing; For very joy the gulls are screaming; The sailor's wife smiles in her dreaming. Blow, winds, blow! Blow, winds, blow!" A Glad, Glad Gathering At the command of Jesus, angels gather together His redeemed from the four corners of the earth. How the risen ones shall rejoice as the angels clasp their hands and hasten them to their loved ones! Babes are restored to their mothers' arms. Joyful task! Task greatly to be coveted. How our tender mothers and sympathizing wives would love it! "Let me help in this, Lord Jesus," you can hear them urging. "Oh, let me help the angels restore the loved ones to the bereaved." But how changed are all these who are raised from the dead! How changed are the living righteous, too! How noble and strong! How beautiful they are! What triumphant songs come from their lips! What heavenly music! At the sound of the trumpet call, the living children of God "shall all be changed." [20] They will not become vaporous, nebulous beings-no! But the body which has been subject to disease and death is suddenly made immune from sickness, and made "non dying." It is infused with life-youth-power-beauty, and music-as it was in Eden. The glow of perfect health lights every face. For this is the Second Act in the restoration of all things.

What a Transformation!

Here is fulfilled the young man's dream of surpassing strength of body and limb. Here is accomplished the maiden's desire for physical beauty in face and form. At last! At last! Beauty beyond our dreams is in those forms. One writer, as though tasting beforehand the anticipated joys of eternity, graphically pictures his reunion with his wife thus:- "And there she was, my dear wife. But how transformed and beautiful now! The lines of care had gone; every trace of weariness had disappeared. A smooth youthful countenance was hers now, beautiful in its profile, full of the joy and love and energy of abounding life, while at the same time radiating a sense of the quick understanding and the experience of a millennium.

"When she spoke, there was love, energy, vivacity, gaiety in her voice. A captivating laugh, swift decisiveness-no wonder my heart leaped with joy as I embraced her again and pressed my lips to hers. "There was a little one again-fullness of joy! Was it the same loved child of past years-or was it another? I could not say. But my cup of joy was overflowing as I thought: 'And this is for ever. And for ever.'" Now the garment of light is restored. Now "the righteous shine forth as the sun," [21] "as the brightness of the firmament," "as the stars, for ever and ever." And Jesus? He sees with joy the fruit of His toil and suffering. "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." [22] Thus at Christ's coming is completed the second great change -the long-sought change of the human body. But the third great change-the change of the earth, is not yet. Now the great Victor and Life-giver leads His people up to heaven, the Father's house, for His great triumph-day. The wicked perish by the sword of the Lord-the breath of His mouth. Desolate and uninhabited, save by the devil and his angels, our earth shall lie fallow for a thousand years.

Then shall come the Third Act of the great drama, and the earth itself shall be restored.

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19. Matthew 25:31.
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21. Matthew 13:43.
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24. Mysteries of the Way Made Clear

You may have a host of questions. “Is heaven real? Where is it? How can God’s people inherit the earth if they are in heaven? Why has God permitted evil men to continue? Why do the innocent suffer?” This chapter gives some striking answers.

THE radiant hosts of the redeemed, with the innumerable army of the angels of God, rise swiftly and joyously toward heaven. Slowly the earth recedes into the distance. Soon it seems like the moon in size, then a little later it appears only as a faint star in the distance. But lo! before long there appears above them a star which shines with heavenly glory as they approach. Its radiant beauty surpasses anything earth has ever seen. It is heaven! Heaven itself Thrilling, thrilling moment! Unspeakable joy! Here at last is that radiant realm of light and glory which has been the theme of Christian thought and song for centuries. Heaven itself! With what unutterable joy the redeemed of earth enter that glorious place! What songs of triumph come from their once pale lips! At last! At last! With what joyous anticipation mothers now press their children to their side! “Here is the place where the heavenly Father dwells. See the wonderful lofty walls and buildings! See the glorious, glorious throne of God! Oh, at last!” How great is the joy on the face of the Lord Jesus, too! These, the redeemed of earth, are infinitely precious in His sight. How joyfully He presents them before the eternal Father on His throne! Though the saved have passed through experiences of disappointment, and have suffered the fascination and hardship of the enemy’s temptations, Christ has shown Himself able to keep them from falling. Now, with exceeding joy, He presents them faultless before the presence of His glory! [1] You and I shall be there if we remain loyal to Him here.

For a full thousand years the redeemed are to dwell in heaven. They are to reign “with Christ a thousand years.” [2] They enter into the music and gladness of the celestial host, that glorious melody of song that the shepherds heard on the hills of Bethlehem. They sit down to “the marriage supper of the Lamb.” Here the princes of other unfallen planets gather. [3] The redeemed listen to the stories of other strange worlds, and in turn they tell of the wonders of God’s redeeming love to our earth.

Heaven Is No Myth When Jesus stood before the people in His earthly life, He taught them that heaven was a real place. It is not simply a happy frame of mind. No! “I go to prepare a place for you,” He assured His disciples. [4] Now the redeemed see it with their own eyes. Jesus taught His disciples that heaven was real. It was the dwelling-place of God. He urged them to pray: “Our Father which art in heaven.” [5] And the endearing words, “My Father in heaven,” “Your Father which is in heaven,” were the names He seemed to delight to use.

But just where is heaven? It has been suggested that heaven lies beyond the gigantic open space or dark patch of the nebula of Orion, that wonderful group of stars we see rising in the eastern sky in early summer. Be that as it may, it is a curious fact that this part of the sky was almost above Jesus on that ascension day when He rose up through the air to the heavenly courts beyond. Jesus wanted His disciples to know how real heaven was that there were homes there, dwelling-places, mansions for them “In MY Father’s house are many mansions: I go to prepare a place for you.” The New Jerusalem is there. It is an immense wide-spreading city, built of beautiful

and precious stones. It stands four-square and measures three hundred and seventy-five miles each side. It is large enough to take within its walls all England, Scotland, and Wales. These walls, great and high, tower up a hundred and forty cubits-about two hundred feet. [6] Not only the dimensions, but the materials employed in its building are carefully described. Jasper and gold are there. The foundations are beautiful with twelve different precious stones. The very streets are of gold.

It Is a Real City One could draw a plan of the city, or even construct a model, from the information given. Three gates on the north, three on the south. The same on the east and on the west. Even the inscriptions on the stones are given-the names of the apostles of the Lamb. [7] No, there is nothing shadowy or vaporous or unreal about the city of God in heaven, to which the Lord Jesus shall lead His redeemed. Some have thought it seemed a fanciful, almost a childish, thing to think of a city floating above the clouds. But now the simplest knowledge of astronomy makes such a city a certainty, thank God! A fact-well known to us all. London, Paris and Melbourne, Cape Town and New York, are "cities floating in the air." On any moonlit night we can see rocky mountain ranges floating in the sky. For in the Moon which glides above us, there are towering mountains 20,000 feet high. A small telescope reveals on its surface precipitous heights, rocks, valleys, plains, craters, and lofty ranges-all of them floating through the air or rather rushing along at 2,000 miles an hour.

Our Earth's Course Through Space And we ourselves, on our great globe-our houses, gardens, factories, palaces, and cities are all floating through the sky. Our mountains, forests, oceans, and rivers-the whole planet is gliding through space as the Queen Mary glides across the ocean. All the other planets and suns do likewise. You can see them floating. Six months ago we were floating ninety million miles on the other side of the sun. Right now we are going there again.

If a journalist could visit the planet Mars and watch the earth through a huge telescope, what a story he could write about our "Cities and Gardens that Float Through the Sky"! "The City of London Flies Toward Me at 60,000 Miles an Hour." So let us banish the old idea that heaven is a spiritual vagueness of which we can only form the haziest idea. Heaven is more substantial and real than earth. Our beloved Christian dead are not vaporous spirits. They sleep in the grave until Christ's second coming. [8] Our Lord Jesus then raises them and gives them a new body. [9] A real human body, but made anew, glorious like that of Adam and Eve in Eden.

Are There Real Precious Metals?

"But do you really believe there are streets of gold-real gold in heaven, floating in the sky?" someone asks. Well, why not? Through that instrument called the spectroscope our men of science have analyzed the contents of the sun, that place of light and glory in the heavens above us. And they discover it is composed of iron, nickel, silver, lead, tin, zinc, aluminum, sodium, calcium, oxygen, hydrogen, helium-and at least fifty other elements. [10] It is believed there may also be gold and quicksilver in the lower depths of that glowing ball. So if our sun contains thousands of tons of silver, it is easy enough to believe that heaven itself displays all the gold which God has described.

In Heaven-For How Long?

Yet heaven is not to be the permanent dwelling-place of the redeemed. There is yet a great joy to come to them. Heaven will be their home for one thousand years, and then the completion of God's loving purpose will be manifested for them. He will re-create the earth in its wondrous beauty as of old, and bring about "the restitution of all things," [11] by making this their eternal dwelling-place. Then "the meek shall inherit the earth," [12] as Jesus promised.

Why, then, this thousand years in heaven? The answer is simple: It is the time of the Great Court, where the history of God's government is made clear, and when God will be justified before His creatures for-ever, so that sin will never, never rise again.

Oftentimes on earth, God's plans and purposes have seemed shrouded in mystery. Often there seems cause to doubt His love and wisdom. "Why does God permit wars and calamities to come? Why does He not destroy those who originate evil?" the heart questions. "Why do the innocent have to suffer?" O sympathetic heart-we know not the answer in full. We simply trust God. In giving His only Son for us He has given abundant evidence of His loving-kindness. We leave the future to explain.

Judgment-The Jury-The Evidence The Judge But while the redeemed are in heaven, the record books of earth's checkered history are opened before them and every mystery is made clear. The great "Drama of the Universe" is presented before them from the records of heaven. What a moving picture that will be!

To the saved is presented this series of pictures of the past so that they will understand God's dealings with mankind. They shall judge if He has been just or unjust. With Christ they shall decide if the unsaved have been treated rightly. With Christ, the merciful Judge, they shall also decide the measure of the punishment yet to be meted out to the brutal, the heartless, the cruel, the wicked, and selfish who have cursed their fellow men and despised the mercy of God.

“The saints shall judge the world,” declared the Apostle Paul. “We shall judge angels,” [13] he-told the Christians of Corinth. “I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them”-thus speak the sacred writers. This is not a work for the angels-nor for the inhabitants of unfallen worlds. They have never known want or misery or fear, or the fascination of sin. How can they know the strength of temptation?

No, the Magna Charta of heaven demands that a man shall be judged by his peers-his equals. So God the merciful has ordained that the punishment of the wicked shall be decided by men of like passions, who can understand the temptations that have caused men to sin. The extent of their punishment will be determined by a jury of men of like passions, who, however, have absorbed their Redeemer’s nature of love and mercy. And the Son of man, Christ Jesus, will be the Judge. [14] Here in heaven’s judgment hall the record of each wicked man or woman is laid open. The great film of their lives is, as it were, thrown on the screen. They have cast away their opportunities of eternal life. Justice demands that every sin shall receive its due punishment. But what a difference it makes as we see the motives which prompted wrong actions and when we know all the facts! [15] Listen to Their Evidence A voice calls out: “Here is the record of a man who gave his life’s energies toward destroying the Christian faith. Through him many chose the paths of sin and were lost. What shall be his punishment?” the question is asked. Hear the reply: “His offence is a terrible one. If he caused a score to perish then common justice demands that he should feel the pain of a score of souls doomed to death for their wickedness.” “Yes,” says the voice of Mercy, “but there is another side. He was of tender heart in his youth. He was wrongly taught that God roasted evil-doers in flames for thousands of years, and would not let them die. His anger was stirred and his sense of justice outraged, and he determined he would oppose the teaching of such a God. Yet he built a hospital and helped the poor. What shall be done unto him?” “Show him mercy,” voices call. “Let his punishment be shorter. His was the sin of ignorance.” “Here is a thief. He stole the hard-earned wages of poor working people. What shall be done with him?” “What a despicable sin!” says one of the jury. “Did he not care that the working people’s children went short of food, and the mother was denied badly needed shoes?” “Yes,” says Mercy. “But on his life’s film it is shown that his father was a thief and started him in the wrong way.” “What shall be done to him?” the question comes.

Husky voices of his fellow men say: “Show him mercy. He did not have as many opportunities as others. Let there be some shortening of the punishment that comes before oblivion.” “Here is the record of a man who was respected by many. He never stole, lied, or used profane language. But he never troubled to help others. He declined all invitations to assist in the church or in the Sabbath school; he cared not whether the work of God prospered or not.” “No,” says another voice. “No widows or orphans, or lame or blind or hungry received gifts or help from him. True, he gave a penny a week to the Red Cross, but spent scores of pounds a year on harmful self-indulgences.” “What shall be his lot?” Sorrowfully his fellow men say: “Selfishness can have no part in the Eden of God! He who knew his Lord’s will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.” So the record of human lives passes before the merciful Judge and the merciful jury.

But the film astonishes everyone. Picture after picture shows that God has poured His blessings upon the wicked to induce them to turn to Him. His love has come to them like a flood-tide. He has sent His human servants to bless them. He has spoken to them through the love of little children. By His angels He has often warned them of danger and saved them from harm.

He actually gave His well-beloved Son to die for them-only to be rejected of them!

“We will not have this Man to reign over us,” their lives have declared. Thus, if they have rejected the Prince of Peace, could they be happy under His rule in the restored earth? Can we hope to enter that goodly land if now we neglect and ignore the Lord Jesus? The voice of Justice says, “No!” Slowly, deliberately, the voice of Reason says, “No!” “No!”-sadly comes the voice of Love. “No!” Evil Angels Are Judged, Too But the redeemed “shall judge angels” also-fallen angels. They shall have a voice in deciding the fate of the Prince of evil angels-Satan, the adversary-Lucifer as he was once called, and the angels who followed his leading.

According to the Scriptures, Lucifer, in the days before this earth began its course, was an archangel in heaven. He was chief of the heavenly choir, he was glorious in appearance and honored of God with great talents. He was one of the two cherubim nearest to the throne of God. [16] But how often beauty and talent bring pride and self exaltation! Pride and ambition entered into the heart of Lucifer, and he planned to exalt himself to the height of God. “I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will be like the Most High,” he determined. [17] Lucifer was jealous of the honor bestowed upon Christ, the Son of God, and began to sow the seeds of distrust among the other angels, and to cast doubt upon the wisdom and love of God. God in His love and mercy bore long with Lucifer. Christ and the high angels pleaded with him. But he obstinately refused to listen, and continued his evil work against the government of God. Finally it became necessary to cast him out of heaven. [18] God could have destroyed Satan at that time. But neither the loyal angels nor the inhabitants of the other worlds understood then the nature of sin. It was a new thing, disrupting the harmony of heaven. Had God destroyed Satan and his followers, then many would have felt that God was harsh and arbitrary, that He demanded obedience without understanding. Rebellion would have been crushed, but a million seeds of future rebellions would have been planted. [19] So it was necessary to let Satan take his course.

Was Satan’s Accusation True?

If Satan's way was right, time would show. If he was wrong, the whole universe would be convinced that God was just and righteous in His actions. They would know if His laws brought happiness to His creatures, or if happiness came in following Satan in selfish ambition and disobedience to God's law of love. Already we know! We of the twentieth century know full well that the breaking of God's law brings misery and heartbreaking sorrow.

But, in that heavenly court, as never before, the members of God's great jury understand as they see the panorama of Satan's history. What do the records show? What does the great film reveal? The film of the past reveals that God made the earth a beautiful place and filled it with everything that would make His creatures happy. But Satan induced men to disobey God and brought in a flood of violence and terror on the earth.

God strove through the patriarchs and prophets to implant love, generosity, and gratitude in the hearts of men. Satan strove to turn the people away from honesty, kindness, and purity. Through Pharaohs and Sennacheribs and Herods he used violence, torture, banishment, cruelty, and death to bring misery on earth.

God sent His Son to bring healing of mind and body, blessing and peace to the world. And gave Him, His only begotten Son, that we should not perish in our sins, but have everlasting life. Satan, on the other hand, tempted Christ to the uttermost, raised up priests and rulers against Him, urged them on to spit on Him, lash Him, crush a crown of thorns into His forehead, and finally nail Him on the cross. Lash Him who had given His life in loving service!

God, since that time, has sent His servants to bring purity, freedom, peace, and prosperity to mankind. Satan has brought the horrors of war, family unhappiness, envy, hatred, falsehood, misery, and persecutions. He has worked through popes and priests, with the rack, the thumbscrew, and the fire. He has worked through dictators and rulers, with bombs and concentration camps until all parts of the world have been drenched with blood and tears. We of the twentieth century know!

God's Way Declared The great film also reveals that which we did not know. It reveals that God has poured out His blessings upon the unjust as well as on the just. Through His servants He has followed sinners with love and tender solicitude. "How shall I give thee up?" pleads He over every sinner. As the film draws to its close, the great jury of the redeemed cry out with one accord: "Great and marvelous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways!" "Thou art righteous, O Lord!" "True and righteous are Thy judgments!" [20] This is their verdict-the unanimous verdict.

The mysteries of God's dealings are now made clear. The dark chapters of life shine out now with the radiance of God's loving purpose. Satan's deceptions are laid bare. The reason of suffering is unfolded. No longer are God's plans shrouded in mystery. All is made clear! Now they understand! And the song goes up from millions of voices: "Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints." "Thou art holy." "Righteous are Thy judgments." "Thy judgments are made manifest." Are they now content that God should reign as Ruler of the universe? Are they assured of His goodness?

A great thundering Niagara of voices rises on the air: "Alleluia! Alleluia! The Lord God omnipotent reigns." "God is good! God is just! God has always done the loving and right thing! Joy-that He reigns!" Where Is Satan?

At the first resurrection when Jesus comes, the Christian dead arise-they become alive and reign with Christ a thousand years. This is "the resurrection of the just" - "the resurrection of life" of which Christ spoke. But the rest of the dead-the wicked and unbelieving-do not live again until the close of the thousand years.

During this millennium, Satan is bound. He cannot tempt the children of God-they are in heaven. He cannot tempt the wicked and unbelieving-they are dead on the earth. Thank God, a mighty Angel, our Lord Jesus, has laid hold on him and his angels and bound them this thousand years! Here they shall gaze upon the result of their wicked labor. They shall wander among earth's desolate, ghost-like, silent cities, and view their handiwork for a thousand years.

They survey the frowning ruins of the cities of Europe; they see the stony skeletons of the great towns of the West. Mysterious and awesome, silent and dead, are the shattered streets of the great ports of the East. And ever they think: "What might have been!" But now there is no way out for Satan and his angels.

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25. The Way Back Home

If you have sometimes wished that the vagueness of the future could be dispelled, read in this chapter what God has prepared for them that love Him.

GOING back home! What a thrill comes to our hearts when, after long absence, we come within sight of home! When, after crossing the Tasman, we see the long coastline of Australia and draw near to the rocky ramparts of the Heads; later as we sail into lovely Sydney Harbor, and pick out the dear familiar landmarks-the Harbor Bridge, Fort Denison, and many another.

Or when, crossing the Tasman the other way, we catch the first glimpse of the Three Kings, and know that New Zealand's coastline will loom out to southward any moment. And when, after sailing down two hundred miles of coast we enter Auckland Harbour and see Rangitoto Island, with its double crater-what a surge of emotion that is at once pride, and pain, and sheer happiness sweeps over us! Home!

This is why even heaven itself is not to be the permanent dwelling-place of the redeemed from earth. They will come back here again. At the end of the thousand years there are great preparations in heaven. The children of earth are going back home! [1] Back to earth. But what a glorified world it is to be!

The great, garden-city metropolis, the New Jerusalem, once the garden of Eden, is going too. With its jasper walls, its pure gold buildings, its gates of pearl, and its jeweled foundations. With its tree of life that bears twelve manner of fruits. And God Himself is going with them. Henceforth His dwelling-place will be the earth. "They shall see His face." The tabernacle of God shall be with man. [2] The earth, the great theatre of the universe, where has been enacted the Great Drama of Right and Wrong-where God's beloved Son died for mankind-this henceforth shall be the center of the universe, the habitation of the great King and Father of all. How eyes will strain as the glorious multitude of the redeemed, after a marvelous journey through space, catch sight again of this familiar planet-home. Like a star in the distance it first appears, then waxing large as the moon, then stretching out wide below them, a gigantic circle.

In that glorious city, the New Jerusalem, with Christ their loved Leader at their head, they come nearer and nearer until a great plain opens before them-probably where the Mount of Olives once stood, [3] in sight of Calvary, the thrilling memorial of their Redeemer's love for mankind. Home, but here still roams the devil and his angels. Shall they remain?

The End of Satan and His Subjects What a drama now takes place! Again is heard the thrilling voice of Christ calling:- "Awake, you dead! Arise!" "Awake, you dead! Awake! Awake!" And behold! the wicked dead arise from their dusty beds. An innumerable multitude!

This-this is "the resurrection of the unjust." [4] Here they are-mighty Pharaohs; cruel Assyrians, ambitious Babylonians, fiendish Herods, ruthless Romans, wicked priests, proud popes, diabolical torturers, deceiving witch-doctors, selfish men and vain women of all ages, idolaters, careless, frivolous, despisers and neglecters of God's Christ-there they rise, a mighty multitude.

They see the city of God in its glory. They see within its walls the transformed people of God with their glorious Leader. Will they change now? Will they seek purity of heart and a place with the redeemed?

No, no sign of change of heart is there. No, they listen as of old to the voice of the great deceiver. Now-can it be possible? Satan is urging them to assault the Holy City! [5] And they actually consent!

Shall the earth once more be troubled by these scandalmongers, these thieves, these murderers, adulterers, and deceivers? Shall homes of the new earth be spoiled by ill-temper, selfishness, jealousy, vanity, and unfaithfulness? No, that could never be!

Have Any a Desire for Better Things?

See, there is no repentance in this multitude. Here they come to fight against God Himself. Can these be granted eternal life? "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 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." Incredible, that men should fight against God!

"And fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them." The earth becomes a vast sea of fierce-rising, roaring flame in which every evil thing is burned up. [6] Every evil man and woman; every evil spirit. Every thorn and thistle. Every trace of the curse.

Just retribution comes upon the wicked. God will mete out punishment (as He metes out rewards) to every man according as his work shall be. To some it is a swift-drawn breath of fire -and the eternal loss of sweet life. But the cruel torturers and war-mongers of our own and every other age shall suffer a duration of pain as they have caused others to suffer.

"Vengeance is Mine: I will repay," God warns the evil ruler as well as his evil followers. Let none think they shall escape the pain and penalty of their sins. The universe demands justice. But at last every evil thing has been consumed. Root and branch have burnt up. [7] Evil shall not rise a second time thank God!

He Makes All Things New "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth." [8] The seething lake of fire cools, and, behold! a new and beautiful earth is created before the eyes of the redeemed. Perhaps they remember that in the past men had scoffed at the Scripture record of the creation of light on the earth before the sun. But here is the city, so radiant with the light of the glory of God that the sun's glory is eclipsed.

Men had scoffed at the story of "creation in six days." But here the earth is swiftly created again in full view of God's children. Here come the flowers; here come the trees. The fish glide to and fro in the sea. Here are the animals of all kinds again. A glorious seven-day panorama once more, perchance.

What a stupendous drama! Instead of his convict prison on rocky Patmos, the Apostle John sees a new earth-a new planet. He looks up to the sky where he has so often watched the sun and the moon (and behold, the sun is seven times greater! The moon shines like the sun.) How different the stars seem! Why! this is a new heaven! And with God Himself dwelling with the redeemed, earth becomes the new heaven. Heaven henceforth is on the earth.

In this resplendent glory, how beautiful the new earth appears! How green the grass! How lovely the flowers! The veil of sin and darkness has gone for ever. [10] Wonders of a New World With what delight the redeemed explore the new earth! They wander by its peaceful streams, they gather its flowers. All is infinitely more beautiful than anything ever seen on the old earth of former days. With friends and dear ones of the long ago they walk by the rivers, through the flower-scented glades, and up the lovely hills of God where the invigorating breezes blow. The garden of Eden is restored-what a delight for the children of men! And over all the fair earth will be found many a beauty spot that will thrill the heart and mind. Many a lovely garden; many a leaf-scented lane, a bird-haunted copse.

There, eyes, shall behold shady woods traversed by musical flowing streams. There, perchance, will be babbling brooks reminding of those that sparkle and pour amid the heather of the Scottish moors. Here a spot like the coast of Devon; here a lovely scene like some beautiful valley amid the Australian hills or those near the Cape of Good Hope.

No longer shall the animals of earth hurt and destroy the weaker ones. No, "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid," says the voice of God. "The calf, and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them." Again shall be heard the joyful, welcoming bark of the dog, and the eager whinny of the noble horse, animals made for the service and companionship of man. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain," says God. "For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." [11] We Shall Know Each Other Better When the Mists have Rolled Away.

Shall we know our friends then? Without the slightest doubt. He who gave Eve to Adam, and Adam to Eve, is the originator of human love. He will bring together again those who love one another. He who planned that little children should come to brighten our homes, will restore them to loving parents' arms. [12] "We shall know as we are known." The individuality and the "recognizability" will be there for ever. "Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face." [13] Our powers of sight and hearing will be keener, not duller. There will be full scope for loving hearts, for only loving hearts will reach that fair land. Love "shall there find truest and sweetest exercise." New Life and Energy What a glorious morn will dawn as the new creation is completed! This is the Land of Eternal Youth, of buoyant young life again. Here is overflowing energy for all, in the soft exhilarating breezes of that delightful land.

"Behold, I make all things new," says the voice of God. Here is the exuberance of youth, restored as men drink of the water of life, and eat of the fruit of the tree of life. Here God will reopen the fountains of life and health-for you-never to close them again.

Here is no deafness, no blindness, no deformity, no weakness, no pain. No, gone for ever are these evils! No infirmity or old age! Never again the air-raid siren! Never the sound of battle or war! Gone are the slums for ever. And death? No; death itself is gone-for ever! For ever! [14] Gone!

"There shall be no more death!" This is the proclamation of God Himself!

"Neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." These are the words of God.

What active, happy occupations await the redeemed! "They shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them." [15] And what beautiful materials shall be available for their building-when over a thousand miles of city wall is built of jasper! [16] What scope for artistic planning! And what gardens these homes shall have! Gardens fragrant with roses and orange blossoms, and gracious with the perfumes of scores of other flowers. Gardens which never shall know withering drought, killing frost, or destroying blight. Music? What boundless opportunity will there be for music, when the teachers may be leaders of the angelic choir! What harmony there will be when every voice has the capacity of a Melba or a super soprano-and more!

Boundless Opportunities for Travel!

Travel? What eager hearts there will be among those who "follow the Lamb whither so ever He goes." [17] When Christ Jesus, Creator of the multitudinous suns and worlds of the mighty universe, [18] leads His followers out to visit the planets afar, what wonders will astonish their eyes! "Unfettered by mortality, they wing their tireless flight to worlds afar-worlds which thrilled with sorrow at the spectacle of human woe, and rang with gladness at the tidings of a ransomed soul." [19] What an education it will be to talk with the dwellers on other worlds-beings with matchless minds, who have studied the marvels of the universe for millenniums. How wonderful it will be to talk with beings who can reveal the mysteries of the changing lines on Mars; who can show the secrets of the bands of Jupiter, who rejoice to accompany them to the rings of Saturn. Then with what stories will the dwellers of the new earth return to their friends and kindred in their own beautiful home where freedom and happiness reign. Yes, then the barbarous days of old shall be gone for ever. Gone the days of war and bloodshed; of fear and terror. Gone the suspicion, the jealousy, and the envy of the past. Here is peace and gladness of heart for ever.

Who Could Be King Over the Whole World?

But who is he whose reign shall bring this happiness? Who is worthy to be the ruler of this fair new planet? Who will be the ruler over its nations-over the millions of the redeemed? Great must be his qualifications.

In that new earth there will be Christians from all the five continents of the old earth: the British, American, Russian, German, Scandinavian; French, Spanish, Italian, Brazilian, Argentine; Chinese, Japanese, men of all classes from India, dusky sons and daughters of all the nations of Africa and the islands of the Pacific. In the past, national prejudices have created suspicion and war, and never has it been possible to create a United Empire of the World with all the advantages that might accrue from such a union. To whom could all give loyal allegiance?

Could there be found a man of large heart, one who had shown a loving, unselfish interest in every nation. And who combined this love with infinite wisdom so that men of all nations loved and trusted him implicitly. And, if, further, he had succeeded in changing the hearts of all men, so that the strong helped the weak and the weak helped the strong. And all men became loving and loyal to one another. Ah, yes! Then there would be hope. But where could one find such a man? “We have found Him. It is Christ Jesus, our Lord.” He Is Found Already “We know Him! We know Him! We have found Him!” comes a tumultuous shout from these redeemed. “It is Christ Jesus, our Lord!” “Christ Jesus” we ask.

“Yes! Yes! He left all the riches of heaven for our sake. He sought us-of all nations-and died for us! He showed us God’s way out. He loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood!” “Christ Jesus?” “Yes! Yes! He has filled our hearts with love for all men. He has been one of us as He walked in old Palestine. He understands every human thought and desire. He is our Man. The Lord Jesus!” “Christ Jesus!” “Yes! Yes! King of kings, Lord of lords, Man of Galilee, Friend of men and mothers and boys and girls. All-wise Creator of a thousand worlds; Designer and Maker of this new earth in all its beauty! Christ Jesus our Lord! Crown Him Lord of all!” Oh, listen! They are singing! They break forth in exquisite harmony. A great song of adoration of Him! An old, old song they used to sing in the long ago:- “All hail the power of Jesus’ name; Let angels prostrate fall; Bring forth the royal diadem, And crown Him Lord of all! And crown Him, crown Him, Crown Him Lord of all!

“Let every kindred, every tribe, On this terrestrial ball, To Him all majesty ascribe, And crown Him Lord of all!
And crown Him, crown Him, Crown Him Lord of all!” And our own hearts cry out the longing response:
“Oh, that with yonder sacred throng We at His feet may fall! Join in the everlasting song, And crown Him Lord of all!”

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