

1930

# Evangelistic Sermons

M. O. Daley

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# EVANGELISTIC SERMONS

By M. O. DALEY



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## IT IS TOO FAR TO JERUSALEM

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TEXT: "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem"  
(1 Kings 12:28).

JERUSALEM—"The city of the great king!" Truly a city rich in tradition; honored by historic mention, and blessed by divine selection! But, why bother about going there? God required it. "Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest: but in the place which Jehovah shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee" (Duet. 12:13, 14). "And he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which Jehovah had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel to put his name there" (1 Kings 14:21). To serve God acceptably, they **MUST** come to Jerusalem, regardless of the distance. "And if the way be too long for thee, so that thou are not able to carry it, because the place is too far from thee, which Jehovah thy God shall choose to set his name there, then shalt thou turn it into money, and bind up the money in thy hand, and shalt go unto the place which Jehovah thy God shall choose" Duet. 14:24, 25.

Time passes. Israel possesses the land and has become prosperous. Jerusalem is recognized by all as the place where "men ought to worship God." The House of David had been established. His grandson comes to the throne. And, now, the long smouldering fires of dissatisfaction burst into flame. Ten tribes revolt, and, under Jereboam set up a government of their own, with

different laws, a different capital, and changed the form of worship. Jereboam, fired by seeming success, and with his personal safety in mind, said: "If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of Jehovah at Jerusalem, then will the heart of this people turn again unto their Lord, even unto Rehoboam, king of Judah; and they will kill me, and return to Rehobam king of Judah" (1 Kings 12:27). His success depended on complete and permanent division among the people of God, and to accomplish it, he appeals to the weak spot found in humanity the world around—their convenience. He said: "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem"—too big a journey; too inconvenient, and, therefore, unnecessary. "Behold your gods that brought you up out of Egypt." The very convenient worship provided for them, blinded their eyes to the fact God's worship was being perverted, and his law violated, and that they were incurring guilt. They were made to believe it was "too far to Jerusalem." Hence, they ceased to go there.

#### A LESSON FOR US

Under the Old Dispensation God chose Jerusalem to be the center of all religious activities. Under the New, he chose Jerusalem to be the "beginning" place of all those activities peculiar to the New Testament church. "Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isa. 2:4). "Preach repentance and remission of sins in my name among all Nations beginning at Jerusalem" (Lu. 24:47). "But tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power

from on high." "And they returned to Jerusalem with great joy" (Lu. 24:49, 52). "And as I began to speak the Holy Ghost fell on them as on us at the beginning." (Acts 11:15). "And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, tell the vision to no man until the Son of man be risen from the dead" (Matt. 17:9). "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). This was the beginning of this very important message. "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (V 38). The "beginning" of another very important message to mankind. "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." (V 47). The "beginning" of another new procedure. "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (V 42). All these had their beginning at Jerusalem. Jerusalem was not only the "beginning" place of all church activities, but was also the place of the

### BEGINNING OF THE CHURCH

In A. D. 32, Jesus says "On this rock I WILL BUILD my church" (Matt. 16:18). "Will Build" is future tense, and you can go as far as you will into the future to "build" it without doing violence to this statement. But go one minute behind that date, and you do violence to it. In the year 64 A. D. at the city of Ephesus Paul

told the elders to "feed the church of God" (Acts 20:28). It was in existence then, at that time. Then, between the years "32" and "64," the church was built—during the 32 intervening years. But, let us see if we can narrow the time any. On the night of the betrayal, Jesus said: "I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God shall come" (Lu. 22:18): About 52 days afterward, Luke says: "The Lord added to THE CHURCH daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47). Between these dates (52 days) the church began. We can neither go beyond, nor come this side of them.

Again: "Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone" (Isa. 28:16). "Other foundations can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11). Christ, then is the "tried stone." "And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4). He was a "tried stone" when placed in the foundation, and he was not tried until his resurrection. So this narrows the time still more. But how was he "laid?" Of the church in Corinth, Paul says "I have laid the foundation" (1 Cor. 3:10). How? He "testified that Jesus was Christ" unto them. So, God "laid him in Zion" when he testified that he had "made him both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). Thus, as the "rejected stone" (Matt. 21:42; Acts 4:10) he became the "chief corner stone" (Eph. 2:20), when he was raised from the dead (Mark 8:31).

But again: He was laid "in a foundation of apostle and prophets" (Eph. 2:20). "He set some in the church, first apostles" (1 Cor. 12:28). The apostles were the



first "set" in the church. This is God's arrangement. "Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. And he gave some to be apostles" (Eph. 4:8, 11). Apostles could not be in the foundation until the Apostleship was given to them, and that was done done till Christ "ascended up on high." This narrows the time to a very few days. But, lastly: The Church was "buildded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 2:22). The Spirit came to them on the day of Pentecost while they were in Jerusalem (Acts 2:1-4). All things necessary to constitute a church are "of one accord and in one place"—Jerusalem, and God gives approval and finality by saying "I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies; MY HOUSE SHALL BE BUILT IN IT" (Zech. 1:16). "The House of God is the Church of the living God" (1 Tim. 3:15).

#### NOT TOO FAR TO JERUSALEM

From that time forward, wherever man may be, and have a desire to see the Church in its purity, with its God-given work and worship, to him it is not too far to Jerusalem. But in the course of time, men began to show their disapproval of Divine arrangement by marring its beauty and corrupting its simplicity, until in a very few centuries, "The Man of Sin" did, as Paul said he would, take his seat in the Temple "And exalteth himself above all that is called God, or is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the Temple of God, shewing himself that he is God" (2 Thes. 2:4). And by changing the laws and worship of the Church which God gave,

ushered in the long, long night, known as "the dark ages," by decreeing that "it was too far to Jerusalem." And more modern laws were enacted, and a human head given to the Church that God built and made Christ head of. The untrammelled depravity of man, drunken on powers wine held high carnival, while angel wept and saints died rather than surrender the hope-anchor of the soul, until, through pious protests,

### AN AWAKENING BEGINS

In an earnest effort to find the light, now so long gone out, four men stand out against a background of eager searchers, who risked life, limb, and liberty, in their effort to check the wild revellings of the human head (?) of the Church, and lift their ignorant and duped subjects from the sordid depths of sensual religious commercialism, into a state of sane reasoning, aided by the light of God's revelation. While the world owes them a great debt, I am quite sure it has been over-liberal in the payment of it, by placing them at the head of more or less great religious institutions over their protest. Of the four, Martin Luther, of Saxony, heads the list. He lifts his voice against the corruption harbored in the Roman Catholic Church, of which church he was a member all his life, and which, according to his ideal of church purity, from which it had long since departed, was the greatest institution in the world. Upon the altar of service he consecrated all his splendid abilities, in the effort to reform it. To him, it was good enough, if only it would leave off its corrupt practices and assume a more moral attitude. Its governing and

law-making power, was his ideal. Its immoral conduct was the only arrow that pierced his soul. With him, "it was too far to Jerusalem"—just back a few centuries where a more moral garb was worn, was enough.

Later, and next, came John Calvin, of the same church and with like ideals, as Luther, and with the decrees of God as his weapon, he also tried to reform the Church. He died in the church, conscious of his failure to reform it to his liking. It, to him, with all its imperfections, was preferable to the one of Jerusalem model. Hence, with him, "it was too far to Jerusalem," and he declined to make the journey.

Next to him, was John Wesley of the Church of England—a daughter of the Catholic Church. Because of the cold formality of the religion of his day, he tried to reform the church, which, to him was perfect save this one feature. He, like his illustrious predecessors, tried to reform and preserve their church as men had made them, regardless of the fact that their founders and leaders had pleaded convenience for the worshippers, and to hide the glaring inconsistencies, had urged that it was "too far to Jerusalem."

#### RESTORATION, NOT REFORMATION, NEEDED

All of these great men lived and died in the church they vainly tried to reform. It never occurred to them that the Church was wrong—only some of her practices. They wanted the Church to live on. When "the young man" was sent to cry against Jereboam's factional worship, he did not urge a reform, but a restoration, a RETURN to God's order. When Alexander

Campbell, the fourth and last of the illustrious quartet, began his work, he did not try to reform any of the popular "isms" of the day, but, like the man of God, stood by the apostate altars of the rebels against God's divine order, and cried Back! BACK over the "doctrines and commandments of men." Back to God's divine order. BACK to "the beginning." Back to Jerusalem—IT'S NOT TOO FAR. Back to the Church as established by the Lord. Back to its worship as ordained by him. Back to the gospel in its original power and simplicity. Away from everything of human origin, and to everything Divine. IT IS NOT TOO FAR TO JERUSALEM. Thousands accepted and discarded all human speculations and took their stand on the truth of God, and were made "to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

### JOY AND SORROW

Under the guiding hands of David and Solomon, Israel grew into a happy people. So abundantly did God bless them in store house and field, that they became the Wonder Nation of the world. But soon their joy was turned into sorrow. Division came. The seeds of hate were sown, and brother turned against brother. "What interest have we in the son of Jesse" sounded throughout the length and breadth of the once happy land, and factional fires were burning on every hill-top. Out of them emerged two golden calves, and above the rabble was heard the voice of a new, self-elected leader, saying "Behold thy gods, O Israel, that brought you up out of Egypt"—we are progressing. No longer will it

be necessary for you to go to Jerusalem to worship. You can worship right here. The result was, they degenerated into Samaritanism and were eventually lost to God.

Just so with the Church of the living God within almost the memory of some now living. The Church grew, and joy reigned, and prosperity came. Rumbling thunders began to be heard in the distance. Dissatisfaction began to be voiced. "What interest have we in this old foggy method?" We want convenience and popularity. The fires were soon going and the "calves"—two of them, like in the days of old, Organized Missionary Societies and Instrumental Music in the worship—were reared up and the people began to worship them in spite of the tears and entreaties of life-long friends. They had become gods to them, and the Great God and the Living Way were deserted. The Jerusalem worship was departed from, and a new "form" of worship was instituted by man, and God's laws openly defied and changed. A new "nation" had been born. But, alas As with Israel; so with God's Jerusalem built Church. It was rent in twain. A new church was established, and wandered farther and farther from the "Old Paths" till it is fast becoming lost in the wilderness of sectarianism and lost to God and his blessed cause.

Brethren, hear me this once more:

IT IS NOT TOO FAR TO JERUSALEM

## THE GREAT COMMISSION

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“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matt. 28:18, 19).

“And he said unto them, go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15, 16).

“And he said unto them, thus it is written and thus it behooved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Lk. 24:46, 47).

“He breathed on them, and saith unto them, receive ye the Holy Ghost; whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; whosoever sins ye retain they are retained unto them” (Jno. 20:22, 23).

Wonderful statements, these Four thousand years of the world's ebbing and flowing tide has washed the shores of Time, fifteen hundred of which God has used in writing a most wonderful book, in which is found a record of his dealings with man through all the years. And yet, such broad, sweeping statements had never been uttered before; nor had their far-reaching consequences engaged the attentions of men. But, since their pronouncement of Galilee's mountain by the risen Lord,

they have been a veritable storm center in the religious world. To those who regulate their faith and practice by the commandments of men," they are of little importance; but to those who think and act in God-revealed terms, they quicken interest, and bring joy and consolation.

The world had been more or less colored by the distasteful doctrine of Jewish exclusiveness, and racial rivalries had reached its zenith, yet, among Jews and Romans, there was an apprehensive feeling that an upheaval was in the offing. The keen edge of expectancy was being felt everywhere, with rumors flying thick and fast, and mystery's gloom thickening on every hand, as the falling shadows of a dying Age were rapidly lengthening, the "mighty power" of God was moving surely and swiftly to the announcement of the dawning of a newer and better Day. The man, of whose coming, Moses wrote, and for whose coming he had tried to prepare the people, had come; born in "Bethlehem of Judah," as all agreed he would be; causing more concern in Herod's Palace than in the Jewish mind; grew to manhood's estate, and into a degree of popularity that waxed and waned as he touched the popular or unpopular chords of deep-seated human prejudice, in his sayings and doings. Today he is a popular idol because of mercy's service approvingly wrought; tomorrow, "he hath a devil" because he unmasks human hypocrisy, or questions religious customs hoary with age and honorable by patronage. Within his inner circle, a few are gathered, but with mixed emotions, as they hear him ruthlessly sweeping aside the much-loved "traditions of

men," or are lifted to the mountain top of enthusiasm by his matchless wisdom.

Loved and hated, as no other man has ever been, the Man of Mystery walks and talks, lives and loves, suffers and dies. His enemies hail his death with delight, and consider the matter now a closed incident; his friends turn from the horrors of Calvary with disappointment and discouragement, determined to begin life anew. The world sleeps and slumbers, but ceaseless vigil and tireless activity rules the heavenly domain, while human destiny hangs in the balance, as the mighty struggle rages in the hadean world. Hallelujah! God reigns, and Christ triumphs! "Life and immortality is brought to light." Christ arose! "Go and tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee, there ye shall see him as he said unto you" (Mark 16:7). He was with them "forty days speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). They are assembled on earth for the last time. Parting time has come. His devoted followers are literally hanging on his every word. He lifts mystery's curtain and points to a sinful world and says "Go." Their life's work is pointed out to them. For this, he has been training them, and now lays the burden upon their shoulders in the language quoted at the beginning of this sermon. No apology is made for the hugeness of the task; no explanation is offered of laws gone before, or of what the consequences might be. The words were plainly spoken. In solemn silence they receive them, though they had never heard such words before. It was all new to them—new to all the world. The conversation ends,



and out through boundless space, the loving form is fading from view. Mercy in the form of a cloud intervenes. He is gone, and they are alone with the burdens of a life-long task upon them. Whether they then realize the magnitude of it or not, suffice it to say that, in time, they did.

What did the Commission, as a whole, mean to them? They could not, had they so desired, have concluded that this was a repetition of former requirements; for the field is vastly broadened, and the message entirely different. Regardless of what their former instructions were, they accept without question, this commission as the one governing them in their future activities. Other commissions had been set aside by this one, and as for reasons or consequences, they were neither concerned nor responsible. Their Lord and Master had given them these instructions, and their only ambition was to carry them out as the Lord desired. To them they were personal instructions, and did not admit of any sort of revision by them. They received them first hand, that is, they were not dependent on the records of the four Evangelists, as we are. It was all said in a single conversation—not in several, as some would have us believe.

But, since we are dependent on the records for our understanding of them, I ask: What do they mean, and how are we to understand them? Without question, they mean, that in them the Lord addressed to us—to all the world—a message: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Let it be remembered that four men, guided by the Spirit, were, without pre-

vious agreement, writing about the sayings and doings of Christ while on earth, and when they reach this point in their narratives they record this statement, called the Commission. True, they do not all use the same words, and, because of that, various and varied interpretations have been given to the several records. The writers were not giving us their interpretations of the Saviour's statement, but were recording the conversation itself. They were writing, rather than interpreting, history. The same method was employed in recording many of the matters they mention, and there has been found no cause for confusion or lack of understanding. While they do not record identically, it is a noticeable fact that their records are so made that, naturally, they blend, without jar or discord, into an harmonious whole.

Let us study them. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John wrote them, and each record things not recorded by the others. Did any one of them put words in the Saviour's mouth, or say things he did not say? If so, what? Did either of them incorporate in their report matters pertaining to other matters, or conversations on other occasions? No one will so claim. Well, just what did Christ say? He said what the four writers say he said. But their records differ. Then, which one records correctly? If any one of the four tell ALL Christ said, then the others make false reports. Divine Record is a challenge to modern critics to point out the guilty party. Human destiny is suspended upon their record — "whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained unto them, and whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them" (John)

Does Luke contradict Mark or Matthew? Does Matthew contradict John or Luke? No, they record correctly and harmoniously. They—all of them—record the whole conversation. Is this true? Is it acceptable? IT MUST BE. Friend, if we must disagree, it must be at this point; for if we do agree here, there is no possible chance to disagree over the conclusion. Let us study their records item by item. Matthew says "Teach all nations, baptizing them" (and gives the baptismal formula accepted by the religious world, and is the only one to give it); Mark says "Preach the gospel to every creature, he that believeth and is baptized." Any lack of harmony? Anything required by one and, for any reason, forbidden by the other? None, nothing. Luke says: "Preach repentance and remission of sins in my name beginning at Jerusalem."

Is preaching "repentance and remission of sins," and "preaching the gospel" one and the same thing? It is. Does the "beginning at Jerusalem" of Luke interfere, set aside or contradict anything said by the other writers? Is not John's statement of the terms of salvation and condemnation in perfect harmony with the terms stated by Mark? Concerning other matters they mention, we readily understand that where their statements differ, the difference is an addition of facts or information, rather than a contradiction, and, in all fairness, the same rule should maintain here. Then, accordingly, were we to combine the four statements into one, it would read: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel of salvation to every creature, teach them to believe, and to repent, and to be baptized; beginning your

work at Jerusalem." And, this is precisely what Christ said, up to this point. If not, what is it that he did not say? What did Christ have in view when he made these statements? Let him tell us in his own words, and the matter be settled for all time: "SHALL BE SAVED." He leaves no room for argument, unless we wish to take issue with him. To insist, as some do, that christian duties are under consideration as well, is but to insist, not only without warrant; but in the very face of Christ and his word. Nor, will it change the situation in the least to charge that I have not as yet quoted ALL of the Commission. It is true that I have not. But as far as I have quoted, I have quoted ALL (unless it be Mark's condition of condemnation). Allow me to emphasize, please, that in ALL OF THE COMMISSION, FROM BEGINNING TO END, THERE IS NOT ONE SPECIFIC COMMANDMENT TO A CHRISTIAN. Point it out. Name it and cite the proof. The command is, teach them, preach the gospel to them, teach them to believe, to repent, to be baptized, and Jesus says they "SHALL BE SAVED." THEN, when that has been done, "TEACH THEM"—WHO? Saved or unsaved people? Baptized or unbaptized people? If you say, "unbaptized people," then, I have the same right to say "unbelieving people," and by the same method that you make baptism a christian duty, I make faith a christian duty. "Teach them to observe all things whatsoever I command you." Here are the christian duties in the Commission—all of them. But not a single one specified. The people were to be taught and brought to a saved condition—become a christian—then they are

to be taught their christian duties. This view makes of the Commission a sensible, straightforward statement, and leaves no room for confusion or misunderstanding.

The statement so common these days, that "we do not understand the Commission alike," is a very poor excuse, and is at best, a sickly effort at deception. For, be it remembered, the Commission was given to us indirectly. It was given directly to the apostles, and was full and complete instructions to them. It was all they had (except that the Spirit was to guide them) and it was their whole duty to carry them out. Then, the important question is, **HOW DID THEY UNDERSTAND IT?** They were the ones to make known to the world the conditions of salvation, and those conditions are binding on us. If they, being face to face with the Saviour when he gave them the Commission, failed to understand it, then we should not be so severely censured for a like failure, living, as we are, at so great a distance away. But, bad as that might be, it is not the worst, by any means; for had they failed to understand correctly what the Saviour meant, as honest men, they would carry them out as they did understand them, and, with an incorrect understanding of it (if, having such) they would carry them out incorrectly. Worse, still: Christ pledged heaven's ratification of what they do, and the way they do it. If such had occurred, the consequences would have been terrible; but it is exactly what did occur, if modern critics are correct, as we shall see.

But, how did they understand it? Which one has so informed us, and where? Can you call to mind any

effort on the part of any one of them to tell us how they understood their instructions—the Commission? Divine record is silent, and echo answers where? Well, why didn't they? Religious teachers of today are quite busy with the telling of how they understand it; or, why they do not understand it alike. Why, within the lifetime of some now living, no less than five efforts have been made by a single religious body, to tell us how Peter understood his instructions at the very beginning. And, each effort differs from all the other efforts, in all particulars, except in this one. They all claim to be the last word in burial ceremony of "Campbellism." One is made to wonder why it was necessary to make the second, third, etc., effort, if the first was all that was claimed for it? And, too, if the first was found to have fallen short of the mark, what assurance have we that the ones that have followed are better? Again: one's curiosity causes the query: Why the need of so many times burying Campbellism? It occurs to me, that for any well-behaving corpse, one burial is quite enough? But, why have the apostles not favored us with the version of their understanding of the Commission? It is possible that it was because they had neither religious bias to guard; nor denominational interests to conserve. To faithfully carry out their instructions was the sum total of their duty, and the sum total of their instructions was the sum total of the Great Commission, and not once, have they told us how they understood it. Then, how are we to know? Far better than tell us, they have shown us.

Where and how have they shown us? It will be re-

remembered that they were told to "tarry in the city till ye be endued with power", and to "begin preaching repentance and remissions of sins in Jerusalem." They all abide there until that event occurs. They are all there when this "beginning" was made, showing a wonderful unanimity of understanding thus far. They "began" there, and from that time forward, their work was but the carrying out according to their understanding of their instructions—the Commission—and, in spite of the almost super-human effort of the whole sectarian world to make them disregard, violate and prove traitors to them, they have sealed their effort at compliance with the Savior's request with their life blood. As to how well they have succeeded, we have but to follow the record the Holy Spirit gave us in the book called Acts of Apostles. At Pentecost Peter is the spokesman. The only authority he has for preaching is found in the Commission. He preaches about the death, the burial, the resurrection, coronation and law-giving power, of "this same Jesus whom ye have crucified and slain." He is interrupted. As yet he has said nothing about belief, repentance, baptism, or remission of sins. The people cry out "men, and brethren, what shall we do"? "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins." Was he true to his instructions? His answer is almost identical with Luke's statement of the Commission. All the apostles were there. Not a protest is made by any. They must have concurred in what he preached. If so, they all understood it alike. If they all understood it alike, they must have understood it just like it is stated. Then, why

cannot we? Philip preached "the word" to the Samaritans, and when they believed what he preached, they were baptized both men and women (Acts 8). He also preached to the Eunuch, and when he confessed that he believed with all his heart that Jesus was the Christ the Son of God, Philip baptized him. Did he do anything not authorized by the Commission? Paul heard the gospel, was baptized (Acts chaps. 9, 22, 26). Cornelius heard, believed, repented, was baptized (Acts 10:47; 11; 18). Lydia heard, believed and was baptized (Acts 16: 14, 15). The jailor heard, believed and was baptized (Acts 16:32-35). The Corinthians heard, believed and were baptized (Acts 18:8).

Here are conversions of record which occurred under the apostles' and their co-laborer's efforts under the Commission. Are they in keeping with their instructions? Let us sum up, as we did the Commission. The gospel was preached, men and women heard it, believed it, repented and were baptized, then they were taught their Christian duty. Were they saved people? On what terms? The terms set out in the Commission. Do you understand it as they did? Then believe and act as they did. "They went everywhere preaching the word, the Lord working with them."



## A BATTLE OF GIANTS

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Chapters two to eleven, inclusively, of the Roman Letter, is the Spirit's record of the negative side of the greatest religious discussion of the Christian dispensation. The foundation, yea, the very mud-sill of Christianity, is involved in the proposition discussed. It is a fight to the finish — a life and death struggle — with no thought of compromise upon any point. On one side, the affirmative, are the Master minds of the Jewish faith; men who knew Jewish religion, Jewish asperations and prejudices, and who, in all probability, had accepted Christianity at the first, with no other thought than that it was a continuation of the established order of things, and, therefore, exclusively Jewish. But, when it became evident that world equality before God was its goal, they renounce it, and, as champions of everlasting Jewish supremacy, they undertake to overthrow it, by meeting the issue fairly. The issue is clearly stated, and they have all confidence in their ability to sustain it. To do so, means the complete overthrow of Christianity. To them are rallying all devout Jews, which is having its effect on those who had accepted Christianity, and many were returning to the Jewish fold.

On the other side, and against this mighty combine of Jewish talent, was pitted a lone man, also a Jew. A man of "mean and contemptible speech," an apostate from the religion of the fathers, a fugitive from justice (so charged) from more than one city; the former pupil of Gamaliel; but a man of honorable parentage, and un-

failing courage; Paul, the peerless apostle of Jesus Christ. It is one man against the field. In all history, it is the one combat that overshadows David's immortalizing victory over Goliath of Gath. And, perhaps, the nearest approaching rivals, since, are found in Luther's defiance of the Pope, and Campbell's acceptance of Infidelity's challenge to the religious world through Robert Dale Owen.

The field of battle is well chosen. Rome, the Imperial City; the seat of Caesar's government, where Judaism and Christianity are alike (at that time) tolerated, but neither relished. Against the church in that city is hurled crushing charges, based on scripture artfully combined, and aimed with masterly precision. On the church, composed largely, of Jews, it was having its effect. Converted Jews were wavering, falling. It looked like a complete victory would be won. Paul accepts the challenge; accepts the issue, the place of battle—accepts all—without a single note of complaint. The issue is fair, to the point, and is proper. The proof presented is accepted at full value; as the best that can be given. Against it he brings the best that can be brought. He addresses his reply to the people to whom the affirmative arguments had been made, "To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints," and is found in the Roman letter as indicated in the beginning of this sermon.

**The Issue.** It has been said that a one-sided discussion is cowardly—and it is; but this is not a one-sided discussion. The Roman Christians had heard every word said by the affirmative. They were familiar with every argu-

ment made, and were showing a disposition to accept them as final. Paul sets out, in his reply, the very "pith and peth" of their effort. He states them fairly. If they can be sustained by truth, Christianity is overthrown. Not only is the church at Rome to be considered, but the future destiny of the human race is at stake. False issues would be quickly detected. Illogical reasoning could not hide nor blunt the points made. Nothing short of fairly and fully meeting the issue would save the day for Christ. Had he falsely stated any matter, they would have detected it. Then, it can be accepted as final that he did correctly state the matter; and, if they accepted it (and they did) then, we should have no hesitancy in so doing. So, then, we too, have both sides of the controversy. What, then is the issue?

Jewish supremacy based on God's faithfulness is the issue. The Jews reasoned that according to past Revelation, God had favored the Jew above all others, and that before Christianity could be proven to be of Divine origin, it would be necessary to show that this was not true. But, in attempting that, former conditions and former promises, which were judged by them to be insurmountable obstacles, must be explained away. On the other hand, to deny the faithfulness of God, would ruin Christianity's claims. To admit it, would but be admitting the truthfulness of their contention—Jewish supremacy. So they reasoned. Genius is portrayed in the framing of the issue. To their mind, it was a two-horned dilemma, one of whose horns must be taken, and the taking of either meant death to Christianity. The very fact

of God favoring them above all nations, was proof to them of their superiority. It could not be denied that God had separated them from other peoples, had given them a country; even moving other nations out of it so they could possess it. God gave them a law, and to them exclusively. He had manifested himself to them, and his preference for them, in so many ways; had blessed them so often, and so abundantly, above other people; and it was through them only that a knowledge of God had been kept alive. All of which could not (as they thought) be accounted for upon any other hypothesis than that they were a superior people. Coupled with this are such promises as these: "For thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the Nations that are upon the earth" (Deut. 14:2). "He hath sent redemption unto his people; he hath commanded his covenant forever" (Ps. 111:9), and others too numerous to mention.

In a great measure, public sentiment was with them in their contention. Against both, Paul advances to the attack with a boldness possessed only by those sure of their ground. He affirms, to begin with, a truth, which, up to this time, had never been seriously considered by the Jews: "For there is no respect of persons with God" (Rom. 2:11). And, in a masterly way, sums up the foundation stones of their arguments (see Chapter 2:17; 3:8) and flatly denies their conclusion, viz., Jewish superiority. (See Chap. 3:9). Note, will you, his summing up, and the issue and the arguments made in support of it, are clearly evident: "Behold, thou art

called a Jew (call thyself a Jew. Lard, Bengel, et al) and resteth in the law, and maketh thy boast of God; and knowest his will, and approvest the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law; and art confident that thou art a guide of the blind, a light of them in darkness, and instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast a form of knowledge and of the truth of the law" (Chap. 2:17-20). These are not Paul's words. They are the contentions of the Jews, upon which they rely to prove their superiority over the Gentiles. That, established, they then depend upon God's faithfulness to make their case complete. We now have a clear view of the matter. Paul is quoting their arguments, and accepting the issue as they state it. Then, with the truth of man's equality (Rom. 2:11) for a beginning, he states another truth, heretofore overlooked by the Jews; man's responsibility to God. This state of responsibility includes the Jews, since he gave to them the law, as they correctly claim (see Chap. 3:1). Now note the crushing effect of this shaft of truth so well directed: "Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?" If the law, as you claim, is, and will be, humanity's only guide, and the possession of which, is proof of superiority, then in whatever way, it may effect others, it applies with equal force, and for the same reason, to you. Do you keep it, have you always done so? Their only claim is they have kept the law of circumcisions which was God's distinguishing mark, and, therefore, they must be what they claim. But, not so, "For circumcision verily profiteth **IF THOU KEEP** the law, but if thou break the law, thy circumcision becomes uncircumcision"

(Chap. 2:21, 25). Showing beyond a doubt that their boasted mark of distinction depends for its merit upon keeping the law—that very law on which they depend as proof of their superiority, and shows that God holds them responsible. It shows, too, that if they fail to keep it, and the Gentile does keep it, the Gentile is not only as “good,” but better, than the Jew who fails. Thus does Paul take from them one of their main supports.

He next shows they had as wrongfully applied God’s faithfulness as they had the possession of the law, and had, also, unduly exalted the importance of circumcision. Beyond a doubt, the Jews had so framed their arguments that Paul would be forced to deny God’s faithfulness, or else admit their conclusion—Jewish Supremacy. To their surprise he exclaims “Let God be true” even should it belie every man’s contention. God’s faithfulness is the very foundation of Christianity. But their supposedly vantage ground is lost again; for while boasting of having the law, they admit they have not kept it; but seek to shield themselves by contending that God’s faithfulness (in keeping his promise) does not depend upon their faithfulness (in keeping the law). They do more than that; they contend that God’s faithfulness was made the more certain by reason of their shortcomings; that it must be so, else God is shown to be as fickle as is man. That is, if God breaks his promise because we fail to keep the law, then God is no more dependable than man and, therefore, unworthy of any more respect than man. Am I guessing at this? No. Note this: “What if some did not believe (prove faithful)? Shall their unbelief (lack of fidelity) make the faith

(fidelity) of God of no effect?" This is clearly a statement of the Jews quoted by Paul. Note, again: "If our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God." Here, again, he quotes from them. To their first contention he answers with a positive "No"; to the second, he presents a difficulty for them to solve, in these words: "If our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance?" That is, does he break his promise in taking vengeance? "God forbid; for how then shall God judge the world?" (verses 5, 6). Here is Paul's master stroke; for, according to their whole contention, there was no room, or place in the divine economy for a judgment. They had overlooked the fact that God had promised to both bless and curse—to bless, when they obey; to curse, when they disobey. See this: "Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from Jehovah our God, to go to serve the gods of other nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood; and it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart, to destroy the moist with the dry. Jehovah will not pardon him, but then his anger and his jealousy will smoke against that man, and all the curse that is written in this book shall lie upon him, and Jehovah will blot his name from under heaven" (Deut. 29:18-20). God's promises of this nature were overlooked by them, and only the promises of good were considered. If God does not hold man responsible; if he

will bless whether we serve him or not; if he promises only good, how, then, shall he judge the world? That the Jews had suffered "the righteous judgments of God," was a matter no one knew better than they; that he will "judge the world" cannot be denied.

Having completely disarmed the Jewish assaulters of Christianity on their own chosen ground, Paul proceeds to notice every possible defense that could be made of Judaism, and when he has finished, his part of this wonderful discussion which he does in the eleventh chapter, his work has been so well done, that never since has a Jew attempted an offensive attack on Christianity. They have pursued a defensive policy, purely, to this day. But why spend so much time studying this controversy of centuries ago? I have done so, for two reasons. 1. Paul not only met and refuted every argument the Jews made in behalf of Judaism and against Christianity; but he gave to the world an unparalleled view of "The Eternal Purpose of God," as it was being unfolded all through the ages until "in the fulness of time," it stands forth in all its power and grandeur as the wonderful creation of God, big enough for the human family, and as enduring as time. 2. It affords us a correct view of "the Jews' Religion," as it was in Paul's day. God did not make it that way. Tradition had become enthroned and "Judaism" was now useless. It had delegated to itself an importance far beyond what God had intended. It was claiming for itself the fulness of divine effort, and an everlasting habitat, when, in fact, God had designed it to be only the scaffolding used in the building of the real structure — Christianity. Notwithstanding Paul's



crushing defeat of over-ambitious Judaism, the art of ignoring certain truths, and over-emphasizing others far beyond their intended meaning, making them mean the opposite from divine intention, was so well developed that it has continued to this day, and has given birth to, and mothered almost every divisive and delusive doctrine of the present time, some of which I now call to your attention, and it was for this purpose that I have been laboring.

**Future Jewish Favors.** Upon the sandy foundation of "Jewish Supremacy" is built all the fanciful future kingdom, and Jewish restoration theories. During the law age, Jewish supremacy was largely imaginary; to-day it is purely fanciful. During that time, the Jews were custodians of "The Oracles of God," which gave them an advantage, but made them no better; nor, the Gentiles, worse. It increased their responsibilities without releasing them from any. It cast no new obstacles in the way of the Gentiles, nor did it relieve them from responsibility to God. Before the Jews became custodians of the law, they and the Gentiles were upon an equality; after it ended, they were so. During the existence of it, God held both responsible for their conduct (Rom. 3:9-23).

Why, then, all this feverish effort to fasten Jewish Supremacy on the world today? It is the same old effort to make Christianity a mere adjunct to Judaism, and thus strip it of its power. The effort now is being made by Gentiles, strange as it may appear. Paul shows us that if the Jewish effort succeeds, it will damn the world; it will do no less now, notwithstanding the asseverations of

many to the contrary. There is no excuse for such agitation. The ending of Jewish advantage is plainly foretold in their own scriptures. "And thou shalt say unto them, thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel; drink ye, and be drunken, and spew, and fall, and rise no more because of the sword which I will send among you, and it shall be, if they refuse to take the cup at thy hand to drink, then shalt thou say unto them, thus saith Jehovah of hosts; ye shall surely drink (Jer. 25:27, 28). This has come upon them. They are down, and God says they "shall rise no more." There can be no "restoration" for God here declares it. Again: "Then thou shalt break the bottle in the sight of the men that go with thee, and shalt say unto them, thus saith Jehovah of hosts; even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again" (Jer. 19:10). If there is to be a Jewish restoration, then the "vessel" is made whole. God says "cannot be." But, again: "Unto them will I give in my house and within my walls a memorial and a name better than that of sons and daughters; I will give an everlasting name that shall not be cut off" (Isaiah 56:5). "And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen; for the Lord God shall slay thee and call his servants by another name" (Isa. 65:15). The name "Jew" is cut off forever—killed. God killed it—"The Lord shall slay thee." "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek" (Gal. 3:27, 28). God knows neither as such; but as Christians, he knows all. Then, as Jews they cannot be restored; after their conversion, they

are not Jews. Without a Jewish restoration, a future kingdom claim is utterly empty. If Paul refuted the jew-Judaizers of his day—and he did—then, his same arguments will refute the gentile—Judaizers of this day, for they are based upon the same baseless claim.

Universal and unconditional salvation. "Jewish Supremacy," "Universal salvation" and "unconditional salvation" all are of common parentage. God's faithfulness is by a peculiar twist of ignoring and over-emphasizing, made to mean "unconditional faithfulness," thus converting the truth into a lie, and upon this "lie" is based all three doctrines just mentioned. The opponents of Paul affirmed God's unconditional acceptance of the Jew. The Universalist affirms God's unconditional acceptance of all. The Calvinist affirms God's unconditional acceptance of the elect. For proof, they refer us to the promise of God, and care is exercised to point to these promises where conditions are not named, and declare the blessing to be unconditional; for God promised and he cannot but fulfill and be God. While the conclusions differ, the principle upon which they build is the same. It is only a matter as to whose "ox is gored." They overlook the fact that God has made two kinds of promises—to bless and to curse. Because he does not mention penalties and conditions every time he refers to his promise is no proof at all that such are absent, or not binding. Because he did not name any conditions when he promised Abraham he would bless the world through Christ, does not prohibit him from naming both conditions and penalties at the proper time, which he does in the Commission. Gentlemen, before I can consider your claims,

answer Paul's question: "How then shall God judge the world?"

The saved cannot be lost. Here, too, Judaizing tactics are employed. God has promised to save, ultimately, the Christian; but not in disobedience. He holds the Christian responsible for his conduct, in the same manner, and for the same reason he has so held man in all ages. To the Christian, he has made two-fold promises—to bless, if obedient; to punish, if disobedient. "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasure up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God who will render to every man according to his deeds. To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil" (Rom. 2:8-10). For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten he was purged from his old sins" (1 Peter 1:8, 9). Here both kinds of promises are stated, and to ignore one of them is but to do as the Judaizers were doing, and of whom Paul crushed with a single question: "How then shall God judge the world?" To this day Paul's opponents found no answer to his question, nor can the advocates of this theory answer it. God cannot judge the world if any of these theories be true. But he will "judge the quick and dead." Then, these

theories, which make no provision for a judgment, and even deny God's right to judge, cannot be of God, but this must suffice.

You will observe that I have made no mention of Paul's inspiration. While his effort was an inspired one, he, himself makes no mention of it. I have been satisfied to let them appear as upon equal footing in this wonderful battle of giant minds, in which truth has prevailed, and God has been honored, and error exposed. Truly, it was a battle of giants.

**SPOTTED SPIRITUALITY**

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TEXT: "That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5.27).

Christ's love for the church, which finds expression in his "giving himself for it," does not end with the building of it, but, as clearly set forth in the text, loses none of its fervor as it sails the uncharted seas of human management, while Time's day stretches away toward the setting sun. I take it that no issue will be formed when I say that the "presentation" time indicated in the text will be at the end of the journey—not at the beginning. To conclude otherwise would be to question the ability of the Christ to "build" perfectly.

The text suggests to me the title of this discourse—"Spotted Spirituality"—and, while it does it, I would not have you think that I wish to assume the role of a chronic fault-finder; nor would I have you think I see nothing but bad in the world of men and women of today. I am proud to say, from observation, the greatest efforts at the accomplishment of good is being put forth and is attended with more commendable degrees of success than, perhaps, at any other time in the world's history. And, no wonder; for never before has humanity had an aggregation of implements, so varied in quality, and so great in quantity, to aid in the undertaking. Every space-obliterating device, seemingly, is right at our elbow, constituting, as it does, an imposing array of ma-

chinery, all of which is calculated to deal death to ignorance wherever found—I say it is no wonder success is being attained. And, yet, we may be only standing in the dazzling splendor of the sunrise of Invention's Day—who can tell? Notwithstanding the vantage ground now occupied, and equipped as we are, and strengthened, if not supplemented, by the very extravagant promises of the future, "spots" are painfully noticeable in the great multi-colored garment now on exhibition for the world's inspection—called THE CHURCH.

If the popular contention of today be the true one—that ALL the churches compose THE CHURCH—then, Christ attempted the impossible. His desire, and attempt, is to present to himself a church without "spot or wrinkle," and each "sister" church is so unmistakably of a different "complexion" from every other "sister" church, that, when set together, would out-rival, for "spottedness," any crazy quilt ever placed on exhibition. And, frankly, I see no possibility of removing the "blemish" by the present-day namby-pamby, milk and cider policy being pursued by practically all of us. The yearning desire to compromise—to seek a common level — and, thus, to popularize churchanity instead of CHRISTIANITY; to popularize ALL the churches instead of THE CHURCH, will NEVER remove a single "spot." It increases them. But why should I insult your intelligence by attempting to disprove that that nobody believes? The claim—that all the churches instead of THE CHURCH, will NEVER remove a single dress-parade occasions only. There isn't a man, woman

or child on God's green earth, outside an insane asylum, that believes it! IT'S THE SHAM OF SHAMS.

The demands of this present time make it difficult for the preacher who is determined not to "know anything save Jesus Christ and him crucified" to make much headway, as we now count progress. Let him preach a sermon or two on "There is one body," and the rumbling of disapproval, at first, faintly heard in the distance, will soon break in in thunder tones about his devoted head. Even our own people are looking for preachers who can draw great crowds from "our religious neighbors," and the plain gospel preacher is given a back seat. We are told that we must have great audiences in order that we may have a great ingathering. And so drunken have we become on the wine of statistics, spiked with the opiate of Growth, be it of the mushroom variety, if a better one cannot be had, that we are showing tendencies of "leaning toward the point of least resistance." The result is, "we, as a people," are not living up to the reputation we once had, as being a Bible-reading people. Instead of "contending earnestly for the faith," everywhere, and all the time, we are more inclined to do as the song suggests in the following: "On the streets of glory let me lift my voice." Better lift your voice on the shores of time, brother. There is where the warnings are most needed.

Let us study this question for a moment: WHY DID THE LORD BUILD A CHURCH? When he said "On this rock I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18) it was not an announcement to a world void of religion, nor of religious organizations. Neither was the announcement



made to a people who were unfamiliar to both. He puts the world on notice that he is, at some future time, and the sequel shows that it was the near future, going to establish an institution which he calls "My church," which is to be his organization in the world—his government.

But, why add another to the long list already in existence? Why contribute further to the confusion caused by a multiplicity of religious organization? There must have been a reason for it. Did he build his so as to be like some one of those already in existence? Like all of them? If so, I fail to see any good reason for so doing. Why not use one of them, or all of them, then in existence? If he built one that was like those then existing, why not use them? If the present-day contention that one church is as good as another, carries any weight, the same contention would be as weighty then. Had he delayed his coming to the world till now, and should he do as he then declared he was going to do, he would be branded as a disturber, an intruder, and a divider of churches. But he did do exactly that, at the time he came into the world. And he was so called by the heads of the existing religious orders. But, the question is still unanswered—WHY DID HE BUILD A CHURCH; There can be but this ONE answer: THERE WAS NO CHURCH IN EXISTENCE THAT HE COULD USE. So he was put to the necessity of building one that he could use.

"Association begets similarity." This is true of people and organizations. It seems natural for us to become like those we associate with. The church at Corinth and

also the church at Laodicea are notable examples. They had patterned after their associates to the extent that the one had almost become unfitted for the Lord's use; the other wholly so. If a departure from the Divine model would cause the Lord to "spew you out of his mouth," then, certainly, he would not form an alliance with those he could not use to begin with. The man-made churches of New Testament times were factional and partisan. They thrived on division. Their energy was spent when the boundaries of their own party was reached. In this, they are not unlike the partyism of today. If, because of this, the Lord could not use them then, for the same reason he cannot use them now. It was (and is) the desire of the Lord to unite in one body those he could influence, and those he could not influence he left to their own devices. Popularity of the New Testament proved its ruin, and brought on the "Dark Ages." It will do no less today. Brethren, remember: the haven of popularity, into which we seem so determined to land the Church, is guarded by a chain of hidden rocks, marked only by the battered remains of churches in the past which attempted to make that haven. The Church, at the first, stood out in bold relief against a background of the sum total of human organization, and must forever so stand.

Let's now dismiss all man-made institutions, and have in mind God's church, the one that Christ "built," which is composed of "living stones," composed of men and women who have been redeemed; who have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" by obedience to the gospel. These con-

stitute the church. To them God has given the privilege, and upon them has placed the responsibility of moulding a church influence that will win from sin, and to God and his Church. All will admit this to be the Divine intention as set forth in the text. That is not the present-day contention, even the casual observer is forced to concede. Instead, the world is setting the pace, and is moulding the influence that controls the church and her activities. This should not be true, but, since it is true, it brings to light the "spotted spiritual" condition of the church and forces us into court to answer indictments hurled at us by observant sinners the world over, a few of which I shall call to your attention, and, permit me to preface the mentioning by saying, it will be a poor defense to plead "not guilty."

The first indictment is: Our present-day treatment of the Lord's day — Sunday. On that day happened practically everything that makes THE CHURCH the outstanding institution of time. On that day — "the first day of the week"—victory's banner was planted on the ruins of the fortress of death. Christ arose from the dead, and made it possible to establish the church—the "gates of hell" had failed to prevail. On that day occurred the blessed visitations which served to revive the wavering trust of the disciples, and, also, to brand as false the scoffings of an unbelieving world "that his disciples stole him away while he slept." On that day, the church itself was established. On that day the Holy Spirit took up its abode in the "one body." On that day, the first gospel sermon was preached, and that by divine appointment. On that day, the Lord's Supper was ob-

served by all New Testament churches, and on that day occurs the last appearance of our Lord to men that is of record. It is the only day of the entire seven that is set apart for worship, but we are using it for most everything else. There is no day so good for a picnic (so it seems). It is the only day in the whole week that we can spend the entire day in reading the paper. The fact that the paper is larger on that day only commends the generosity of the publisher in giving us what we want. The same can be said of the railroad managers, who give excursion rates to centers of worldly attraction on that day. The "double-header" at the ball park on Sundays comes under the same head.

Can these customs be changed? They can. Not so long ago a delegation of religious people waited on the Governor of a certain State and began to chide him for his lax enforcement of the prohibition laws. He said: "If the church people of this State will leave off the use of intoxicants, I can rid the State of these violations in twenty-four hours." How humiliating it must have been! What a mighty uncovering of our "spotted spirituality"! We can gain an acquittal by observing the Governor's suggestion.

SECOND—Our present-day Educational Tendencies: We are at great pains to store our minds with the most modern worldly learning. We make expensive effort to know and to train the physical man. We are trained in all the arts of worldly gain, and are setting up as a standard of success, worldly accumulation. There was a time when Christian teachers occupied the high places, in the home, in the church, in society, in the schools, and

taught Christianity. We may not have changed teachers, but we have changed textbooks, and the world is paying the price in a mighty toll of human destiny. Even our criminal courts are feeling the pulsations of a worldly-controlled heart in unexplainable crime. Instead of the world becoming Christianized, the church is becoming secularized. The emphasis is no longer on spiritual equipment.

THIRD—We are coming more and more to emphasize solely the physical needs of man. The churches are impoverishing themselves in aiding the many “drives” which have only the physical end in view, until they have no vitality left for spiritual effort. Let’s not allow ourselves to become confused, nor try to hide from the facts. The physical wants of man should be supplied. Feeding and clothing the hungry and naked body of man is a duty we cannot shirk. Jesus commends it by setting the example. But it was the needs of the soul, rather than the body, that brought the Saviour to this earth. Looking after both body and soul is necessary. But the warning is: DO NOT GET THEIR NEEDS TRANSPOSED.

FOURTH—Desire for wealth, and the supposed pleasure it brings: We want wealth because of the prestige it gives us, and the pleasure we think we may buy with it. With it, we think we are immune from the censure of man, and to be able to buy the favor of God. So, we tip the beggar on the street with a dime and endow some worldly institution of learning with a million. Becoming irreligious? Oh, no. We are not likely to follow our signature to a check, or on the hotel register, with the

word ATHEIST, nor are we likely to go upon the street, before friend or stranger, and declare we disbelieve the Bible. But the great danger is in selling Christ out of our lives. Judas sold him for "thirty pieces of silver," and I fear many of us are offering him as cheap. Desire for wealth! How great is the influence upon us! Look, brother, see what it is doing for us! It becomes the "ball and chain" to feet climbing "up the golden stairs." IT PUTS RELIGION IN SECOND PLACE. Lord, give us grace and strength to apply heaven's "spot" remover to our "spirituality"!

LASTLY — The airplane gave to the world a new word—"air-pocket"—which is described as a spot in the air where there is vacuum. No, we don't understand how it could be, but the pilot finds them and, when the plane comes into them, it loses altitude, side-slips, nose-dives. Serious accidents often happen. They are like the spots in the air of the world we too frequently choose to live in. We glide into them, and "fall," and "slip," and sometimes take a nose-dive from our lofty position. A "smash" is the result. We choose a highway for life's journey which appears to be perfect, but, alas! The wrecked remains along the way bear mute evidence to the fact that it had soft "spots." We choose a world to live in, surrounded by the kind of "air" we desire, but the same evidence bears silent testimony that it had "air-pockets," and the accident is explained by so saying, and the world moves on, heedless of the warning.

Let us remember that "the highway of holiness" has no "soft spots," neither has the God-given atmosphere

of the church any "air-pockets." May the good Lord help us to "keep ourselves unspotted from the world." Then, we may hope to appear before the "righteous judgment of God," in garments of white, "spotless." Then will the Christ be enabled to present to himself the church as he desired—"a glorious church not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." Then, it can be said, the world was made better by the church having been in it.

AMEN.

### THE DANGER OF DRIFTING

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TEXT: "Therefore, we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them" (Heb. 2:1).

MY YOUNG CHRISTIAN FRIEND: The aging of the tree should not deprive it of the joys of an occasional return to the Spring-time of Youth. Because it has progressed to the more serious problems of fruit-bearing is a very poor excuse for it to frown upon blossoms' arrival. Just so with the adult child of God. He should, like the elderly sheep, gambol with lambs, as opportunity fittingly affords; for it encourages greater activity by the "lambs," and preserves a contact helpful to all. Then, in the spirit of the prayer of the Age to the fairy god of Time: "Backward, turn backward, O time in your flight; make me a child again, just for tonight"—I dare to intrude myself into "your world," and beg that you study with me this very important lesson.

DRIFTING! What is it? We know, better than we can define. As the shadows begin to fall, steal away to yonder house, and peep through the partially closed window, an old man and an old woman are seated side by side, gazing into the fire. Everything is silent. They are thinking, but no sound is heard. Had you gone some years earlier, youthful voices and youthful tumult would greet you instead of silence. Tonight, they sit in silence. Out yonder in the big, big world, somewhere, are the



children of whom they are thinking and wondering when they will be home again. My young friend, that was your home; it isn't now. Why? You "drifted" away, you say, and add, "but that is the decree of human destiny." Maybe so; but we get a living, breathing definition of "drifting," just the same. Standing upon the threshold of life's activities, impulsive youth is impatiently awaiting the word to be off. Varied, indeed, is the equipment supplied for the journey, but through clinched teeth is fairly hissed the one word, "SUCCESS," by all.

"Drifting." Out of the word comes the vision of a journey, and a journey in prospect brings a thrill. And what would Youth be without a thrill? My young friend, you are on a journey and "it doth not yet appear what we shall be," but out before you is the sky-line of yonder's mountain, with its glittering peaks of high attainment. You feel that there are heights of attainment upon which your feet have not trod, and the determination to make them the footstool of your feet thrills you into making the effort. You start. "GO" is ringing in your very soul. You are GOING. That is the thought I am trying to get over to you — going, going, GOING SOMEWHERE, regardless of the direction. Go, you must; stay, you cannot. You may change your course, but to halt the momentum is a growing difficulty. Hence, the "danger of drifting." You are going out to build your tomorrow's world. As yet, it hardly appears just what it will be; but you are determined that IT SHALL BE. You have dreamed of it—you are dreaming still. Bigger and more realistic grow your dreams, as your world seems to be flying toward you. Sometimes we

older ones try to disillusion you, I know, by saying, "It is only a youthful dream," but the world takes off its hat to the dreamer who can make his dream come true. And that, too, is a part of your dream.

Yesteryear, you saw the "class" just ahead of you, off. You cheered them. Quickly, you stepped into the tracks just vacated, and eagerly grasp "Elijah's mantle" as it settles toward you. Up yon mountain's side you see them going. They are succeeding—some are nearly to the top! True, the line has thinned, but you don't notice it; neither do you notice the dark valley that lies between your today's mound and the mountain of your tomorrow's world. Down in that valley, are, some frantically dashing hither and yon, in search of the "way"; some, "going down the valley," with seeming content. They "drifted" from the way. They are no longer in the "running." Much depends on your equipment; as much more depends upon your objective. The mere matter of "going" does not determine the value of the "way" in which you are traveling, nor the soul-satisfying nature of your objective. There are two "ways" in which people travel. They have different endings. Little, if anything, depends on equipment for the one; everything depends upon the equipment for the other. In a shocking train wreck, some years ago, in which numbers lost their lives, among the number was a beautiful girl. It was noticed that about her neck was a tiny gold chain, and attached thereto was a costly locket. It gave rise to comment. Curiosity was aroused among the rescuers regarding the appearance of the fortunate young man who had won her affection. They opened the locket

—and sure enough, there was a picture of a young man—of the Christ. An imaginary one, of course. Across it were written these words, "I AM THE WAY." She had fallen "in love" with him—had equipped her life for the journey by enthroning the Christ in her life. I tell you, young people, no one ever fell in love with a higher ideal. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock," says he. Take him into your life, and he will bountifully supply your needs all along the way. Not only that, but he points out into the sweet after-awhile to a goal of eternal bliss, and bids you be careful "lest you drift" from the "way."

I call to mind an incident related to me by a dear good friend. It was when he was a mere boy, and one of the number employed to guard the range by a great ranch. Far out into the hills, and away from all save his lone companion, they made their winter home. Late one afternoon the angry clouds began to roll down from the North, giving warning that a blizzard was approaching. Such preparation as could be made was made, and night settled down; the raging storm soon beat down upon them in all its fury. Just as it came, a knock at the door and an appeal from two—a man and a woman—to be taken in. It was granted. Immediately it was seen that the woman was ill, and soon her suffering became intense. She appealed to her husband to go for a doctor. But the distance was too great and the storm too severe. She appealed to the older of the ranchmen; he, too, said it would be folly to undertake the journey. Daylight, at least, must come before it could be done. Her suffering became more severe, and her appeals more insistent.

The young man said, "I'll go." He was told it meant possible death to him, and was rather scolded. But he said "I'll go," and out into the face of the raging storm, with the wind biting, and the snow blinding him. But straight for the goal—the town where the doctor lived—he set his course. Hour after hour he battled on, holding to his course as best he could. Morning came; still he fought steadily on. A rift came in the clouds, the winds ceased to blow, through the rifted clouds came the shining rays of the morning sun. His vision cleared and, looking down into the valley, there was the little town where the doctor lived. He had held to his course, and had won the fight; for, back over the snow raced the doctor in a sleigh, and the woman's life was saved. Much depended on his determination to not "drift"—his own life, and the woman's as well. More than that depends on your holding to the course "set before you." "Therefore, we ought to give the more earnest heed, lest haply we drift away." "Be thou faithful till death and I will give you a crown of life."

Yes, your tomorrow's world is beckoning to you to come, and make it according to "the pattern shewed thee in the mount" of youthful enthusiasm — to make your "dreams" come true. You feel sure of yourself. being, as you are, "encompassed about by so great a cloud of witnesses." Moses, when a young man, killed the Egyptian; Samson slayed his lion, and David gained undying fame by killing a giant. They were making their tomorrow's world, as you mean to make yours. You are the world's hope, and the mainstay of the Church. You are the "form" makers, in which the society of to-

morrow will be moulded. While you may not be the "watchman on the wall," you are the guardian of the "gate" and the "skirmish line" in life's great battle. We believe in you—YOU—and depend on you; we believe in your tomorrow land. But, keep in mind that the test says, "lest, haply, we drift away." Haply—"by hap or accident"; "possible"; "not on purpose." The "young men" sent to "cry" against Jereboam's altar failed to slay the lion he met, but, instead, was slain by it, because he had "haply drifted" from God's instructions. He did not mean to do so; he had set his heart on making his tomorrow's world; so much so, that he scorned the thought of "tainted money" filling its coffers. Had he given "the more earnest heed to the things he had heard," he would not have "drifted away from them," haply or otherwise. Keep in mind, too, that this warning, though anciently given, was not meant to have an ancient application only. In this twentieth century the danger of drifting is no less, to say the least, than it was then. In this day of science and great learning, in this day when so much persuasive teaching is being done to set aside Christian Ideals, and to overthrow the claims of Jesus Christ of his Son-ship, and that his resurrection is, at best, mythical, and needs to be revised in order to meet the approval of many of our great institutions of learning, reminds us that the danger is not past. We still need to "give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest, haply, we drift away from them."

You hold in your hand the throttle of your tomorrow world. Speed does not determine your success; neither does it insure the safety of your chosen Highway; nor

the goal at the other end of it. The value of your enthusiastic effort is not in what it brings to you; but in what direction it moves your life. Allow me, please, to give you a rule which has no exception: You become like the thing you desire. You are what you are today because of what has ruled in your life. Character, Christian character, is not determined by a high rate of speed, the statefulness of your mansion, nor the size of your bank account; but by a whole-hearted determination to hold to the course. Maybe you haven't been exactly fair to God Almighty in your idea and interpretation of what it means to be a Christian. You may have been a bit selfish—a little too much so. When God saved you and made you to "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory," it was not merely to make YOU good; it will do that, though. When he saved you, it was not merely to make YOU happy, but it does that, and more. It makes contact for you with the only happiness worth having and the only life worth living. Then, "take heed, lest you drift" from them, and may God bless and protect you in your world you are going out to build, and may you make it meet for the Master's use.

"Lest, haply, you drift." Far out in the mighty ocean, somewhere, there are strong currents that are tremendous things. The great ocean liners, passing that way, sail out into these currents and can so easily drift and drift, with them. "Yes, but what of it?" **LIKE THIS IS LIFE!** I want to tell you that out in the mighty ocean of life's realities there are treacherous currents that must be crossed and, like the ships that pass that way, you must have a goal to reach, and a compass in

hand. Men do not go to heaven by accident; they may, and many do, drift by accident. They go to heaven on purpose. No one, who in the great after-awhile finds himself in that happy clime, will be able to say he just drifted there. Some would have you think that life is like a beautiful lake hidden away among rugged mountains, which protect it from the storms that rage about their topmost peaks; that though the storms rage, the lake is calm and undisturbed. That is not true. Life has currents through it that are strong in their appeal, and as dangerous as strong. I am persuaded that if you would see life as it really is — the life of youth — you would not go to this placid lake; but, rather, to the mighty rapids just below Niagara, and see the foaming waters as they break and beat and dash against the rugged boulders that lie in the way.

Our text was not addressed to those who wilfully and purposely depart from the right way. Such are probably beyond Divine appeal. But it was for those who would “haply drift away.” It is easy to fall into the conventionalities of the hour; it is easy to drift with the current of custom. To drift unthoughtedly—haply drift; but drifting surely. Just drift, and drift—it’s so easy to do—drifting on and on, finally becoming driftwood. What is driftwood? Driftwood is torn bits of what may have once been a majestic vessel. I have in mind a young man upon whom fortune smiled; upon whom Divine favor was bestowed, to the extent that he became Israel’s first king, Saul by name. Never had a young man a finer opportunity to build his world than he. He failed to give “heed to the things spoken,” and

“drifted away from them” — “haply,” no doubt, at first, but he drifted and became “driftwood.” Once, he was “a majestic vessel.” When Balaam of Old Testament fame was brought face to face with his life as it was, and what it might have been, he looked away from the giver of bribes, and to the golden sunset of a righteous life, and, seeing Israel, whom he had tried to curse for hire, exclaimed, “O that my last end might be like his.” A great character, honored by men, and trusted of God; but now, worse than worthless, he was “driftwood,” because he had failed “to give heed to” God’s word.

The united voice of the driftwood of all ages adds its emphasis to the warning of our text. Hear the soul-searching appeal to those who are drifting, by Solomon, who sounds back from a ripe old age a warning born of bitter experience: “Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the evil days come, and the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them \* \* \* before the silver cord is loosed, or golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern, and the dust returneth to the earth as it was, and the spirit returneth unto God who gave it. Vanity of vanities, said the preacher; all is vanity” (Ecl. 12:1-8). Thomas Marshall of our own beloved land, and but a little before our day, once a much-beloved son, and one of the country’s most gifted orators, lay, dying in a dingy room over a Kentucky saloon, and his comrades thought to soothe his conscience, now full of remorse and regret, by having him repeat one of his famous stories. After administering a scathing



rebuke to them, he sounds back to drifting youth this: "Tomorrow I am to be buried in a friendless grave, and in a borrowed suit of clothes, while respect and dignity hangs its head in shame."

My young friend, enthrone Jesus Christ and his religion in your young life, and make his favors your goal, and your tomorrow land will be a land of perpetual bliss, and your tomorrow's world will be acceptable to God. Many of you are even now leaving the never-to-be-forgotten scenes of a quiet country home, and are going into the city to feed yourselves into the whirl of the restless, pleasure-seeking mass of humanity. If I could know your life for the next six months as I could know an open book, I could almost tell you what the end will be. I could almost tell you now whether you will cross the currents and claim at life's end that blissful home of the soul; or whether you will take your place in the graveyard of failure, and be eternally separated from God. I tell you, my young friends, in this day, when hours bring us what years could not bring a century ago; when weeks subject us to tasks which a whole lifetime could not, fifty years ago, we need a steady hand to hold and an unerring counsel to love and live in our hearts. We need a complete gospel from a complete Bible to be taught us as in the Christ-ordained way. We need among our youth a people whose God is the Lord, and in whose hearts is the Bright and Morning Star.

"THEREFORE, we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest, haply, we drift away from them."

**“THE-FIRST RESURRECTION”**

TEXT: “This is the first resurrection” (Rev. 20:5).

As age creeps upon me, making me recognize the fact that I must soon, at best, make the journey decreed to all, I discover that my love for this subject grows. As the strip of land that lies between me and the silent sea grows narrower day by day, I become more and more interested in the story of the shining strand that lies beyond the farthest shore. So much so, that it affords me untold pleasure to have you, dear reader, study it with me, and may I indulge the hope that in doing so it will enthuse you as it does me? It is an inspired pen-picture of the state of the righteous dead, and given to us as a faith-strengthenener. While Paul was not permitted to repeat to us their conversations heard by him in Paradise, John was permitted to give us a glimpse of them. This pen-picture can be of no benefit to the dead; but was intended for, and is, a most wonderful lesson to the living.

Great is the pity that such a much-needed lesson has been so covered with the rubbish of speculation that it is almost lost to us. I am wholly unconcerned about the endless list of speculative theories that have taken refuge in this chapter. No other chapter in the Bible has, by designing men, been made to mother so many theories, and which, if true, would neither add luster to the dead nor encouragement to the living. It should be remembered that the book of “Revelations” is a book of facts set out in symbols and embellished in highly figurative

language—just such language, I grant you, as tends to lend wings to the imagination and invites flights into the dream realms of speculation. But, let it be also remembered, that it is a history of facts written far in advance of the facts described and, as such, is in keeping with divine custom in all preceding ages.

Of the theories alluded to, take, for instance, the “binding of Satan” and “the thousand years,” mentioned in the chapter, both of which are construed in the light of present-day mention and computation. And hence, are thought of in no other way than that the “thousand years” must be exactly a thousand of our years, during which time, Satan being “bound,” is powerless and Christ is reigning, with his resurrected saints, on the earth. With this as a foundation, many fanciful theories are built, and in their defense it is pointed out that the definiteness of inspiration must be binding on us. A “thousand years” is just that many years and cannot be anything else, and when it says “Satan is bound” it must mean “bucked and gagged” — can’t mean anything else. But when the same book says the “two witnesses,” after being killed, shall lay unburied three days and a half (Rev. 11:9-11), they have no trouble in “figuring” out that it means twelve hundred and sixty years! How true the proverb, “Circumstances alter cases.” If “a thousand years” is neither more nor less than a thousand years, why not three and a half days be just that, neither more nor less?

To me it appears reasonable that we should allow the Lord as much liberty as we take. When I say “a thousand years hence” conditions will be so and so, you

have no trouble over the time I mention. You understand me to mean a long period of time, an indefinite period specified by a definite numeration. This, to me, appears the Spirit's use of a "thousand years." It was to be a long time—length, instead of an exact number, was the thing emphasized. As proof that this is correct, note this: "And I saw the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as worshipped not the beast, neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (v. 4). Does anyone suppose John saw only those beheaded on a certain day? If so, then, if there were others beheaded on some other day, and if they, to, reign a thousand years (exact), then the time with some will end before the time of others, and the ending of the "thousand years" will depend on the time they were "beheaded." This makes the ending of the thousand years too indefinite for serious consideration. When the "reign" ends, it ends with all, and, regardless of the time each individual begins to "reign with Christ," when that time expires designated as a thousand years all will have "lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."

While the manner of mention signifies a long period, rather than a definite one, it does signify an ending of this time—a definite ending. The very language itself forces us to that conclusion. Then, there are other events mentioned which strengthen this conclusion. Note some of them. This "reigning with Christ" begins after death (see text). It ends before the judgment

(Chap. 20:12). It not only ends before the judgment, it ends before the general resurrection: "The hour is coming and now is, when all they that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth. They that have done good to the resurrection of life; they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation." (John 5:28-29; see also Rev. 20:13). It ends before the destruction of this world: "And they went up on the breadth of the earth \* \* \* and fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them" (Rev. 20:9). "But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men" (2 Pet. 3:7). It ends before the coming of Christ to this earth: "And to you that are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints" (2 Thess. 1:7-10; see also Rev. 20:11). These passages forever set aside the idea of this "reign" being on this earth, because it ends BEFORE he comes to it. This "reigning" must take place while Christ is "reigning," and his reign covers the period of time between his seating on David's throne shortly after his resurrection (Acts 2:30-37), and his second coming (I Cor. 15:24-29). At that time Christ ceases to reign and becomes subject to the Father. The "reigning," then, must be in this Dispensation—MUST

BE GOING ON NOW. In fact, Paul says certain ones are reigning with him now. "If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him." When shall we live with him? After the resurrection? If so, then we are dead till the resurrection and the Soul-Sleeper is right. Paul also says "he longed to depart and be with Christ"—to be with him, dead? No. "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." Hence, when the Christian is "dead," he is alive with Christ, and that is what he says. But, note the next verse: "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him" (II Tim. 2:11-12). Paul says plainly, if we live with him we reign with him—living and reigning at the same time. That that Paul said the Christian would do after death, John saw them doing — "living and reigning with Christ." Both are talking about the same thing—reigning with Christ NOW.

Just here I am reminded that the above position cannot be correct, because during the time of this reign "Satan is bound." Well, what of it? Does not John plainly say as much? "Yes, but Satan is not bound now." Who said so? John didn't. It is your guess, and upon your guess you deny the truth of the passages quoted above and seek to make plain statements of Inspiration conform to your guess. The false reasoner stakes everything on his guess and, usually, he guesses as poorly as he reasons—unquestionably so here. When Christ told John he had the "keys of hell and of death" (Rev. 1:18), how do you suppose he got them? Borrowed them? Christ came "to destroy him who had power over death, that is the revil" (Heb. 2:14). Did he just effect a compromise with the devil? No; there was not a symptom of this modern-day conservatism

found in the work of Christ. He came as an invader of Satan's domain, and did invade it, and emerged therefrom a conqueror, and held in his hand the keys of it, and declared "All power in heaven and on earth is given into my hands." Was it true? Then, Satan is "bound" NOW. But against this an objection is filed: "Satan is loosed out of his prison for a little season," says John. But he does not mention it as an objection to the truths he has just uttered. Then, why should they be used as such now? But, it is urged, if he is bound now (no "if" about it; he is bound now), and the world so full of wickedness, what will be when he is loosed? The world is frightfully wicked, I know; but in spite of the fact that Satan has minions of helpers doing his bidding, yet, with them all he cannot hold closed the doors of death, nor capture a single son or daughter of Adam's race by sheer force. They must enter his service by choice to be his servants. We often hear it said, "If he is bound now, the Lord help us when he is loosed." Well, that is exactly what the Lord will do, and John is trying to tell us so. God rains fire on him and his army. "Satan is loosed for a little season." A "little season." How long is that? I don't know. For our encouragement, we are told that the time will be short. But, whether long or short, we should not become so alarmed that we lose sight of the lesson. Similar things have happened before. When Pharaoh ordered Moses, on pain of death, to not come into his presence again, Moses said "ye shall see my face no more." This was to be his last effort, and Pharaoh's last chance. The door of mercy was now closed against him; but he had "a little season" in

which to gather his army and pursue after departing Israel. And more, he continued the pursuit until God intervened. When Noah had preached his last sermon, and had entered into the Ark, and the door closed, the door of mercy was at the same time closed against the wicked; but they had "a little season" left them. It rained for forty days and forty nights; during some, or all, of that time, they lived: and died only when God intervened. "As in the days of Noah, so shall it be at the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, and knew not till the day Noah entered the Ark, and they knew not till the flood came (there is the "little season"), and took them all away; so shall it be at the coming of the Son of Man" (Mat, 1; :37-39).

Thus was their sad ending. The door of mercy was closed, and they perished; but "a little season" was evident in each case. Just so, in this Dispensation. When the door of mercy is closed, and gospel effort has ended, "Satan will be loosed out of his prison for a little season." He must now accomplish his purpose, or not at all. In sheer desperation he hastens to his hellish task. He has failed before; this he knows. At best, he has only partially succeeded in past ages. Divine warning, and golden opportunity, had prevented. But now, "the summer is past, and the harvest ended"; if he is ever to succeed fully, it is now. Hence, the haste. But fire from heaven ends for all time his possibilities in the earth. "The heavens being on fire, and the elements melt with



fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (II Pet. 3:10).

Feeling that some of the rubbish has been cleared away, we come now to notice a matter or two which is vitally connected with the lesson, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; for on such the second death hath no power" (v. 6). Whatever the "first resurrection" is, it shields us from the second death. What, then, is the "second death"? John, in speaking of the final disposition of the wicked, says: "This is the second death." Being cast into endless torment is called a second death; but, as we count death, they do not die—they live, and suffer, on and on. But divine wisdom called it a death, and from God's viewpoint they died. John says so, and we are not left to guess. "THIS IS THE SECOND DEATH." Now, note the text: "THIS IS THE FIRST RESURRECTION." "THIS"—what? What is the first resurrection? We had no trouble in ascertaining what the second death was. John tells us what it is. True, what he calls "death" is different from what we call "death," but we accept his statement as true and look at this death from his viewpoint. But just as surely as he tells us what the "second death" is, just that sure does he tell us what "the first resurrection" is. Here it is; read it for yourself: "And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years, \* \* \* THIS is the first resurrection." "Living and reigning with Christ" is the "first resurrection." John says so. True, it is not according to our conception of a resurrection, any more than the second death is according to our conception of death.

But God calls the one a "death," and the other a "resurrection"—and they must be such. To us, these people died—John said they had. On this side, they were dead; on the other, they were alive, and inspiration, so that we could grasp his meaning, fills the gap for us by saying there had been a resurrection. Although, from inspiration's standpoint, there had been no death. From ours, there had been no resurrection—but there had, for God said so. It is called "the first resurrection," because it all happens before that resurrection we think we can know something about as a coming to life after death. Nor is this blessing intended for a very few, as many suppose, but it is for all who will live as God directs; for all who do so live, will have no fears of the judgment—there is no danger of them being cast into the "lake of fire, which is the second death." Read verses 4 and 5 in the revised version.

But, where is the lesson to the living in all this? Here it is: The five-fold statement of Jesus, that "ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake," was now being verified. The hand of oppression was being felt by these early Christians, and was causing panicky apprehension among them. Peter had long before assured them they would "suffer as a Christian," and now the suffering was growing intense. Many were being put to death. There was no evidence that it would cease. It was coming to mean something to be a Christian, and for no other sin they were subjected to every form of punishment that depraved hearts could devise. It was having its effect. Christians were wavering, hesitating, falling. Their present plight is a gloomy one, indeed, and as far as they could see the future promised them no

relief. Christianity's victory, which at the first seemed swift and sure, is fading from their tear-bedimmed view. Christianity had been launched on its journey through Time; its laws, regulations and requirements had all been given. Its inspired leaders had dwindled to a mere handful, and none were being raised up to succeed them. It was being buffeted by the raging storms of persecution, and an ever-reddening stream marking its, now coming to be, zigzag course.

At this juncture comes John, as the "finger of God," to write the future history of the Church, and, when finished, it is one continuous narrative of the long, long struggle with the powers of darkness, in which Christians are subjected to every form of persecution imaginable. They are driven, like criminals, into the outskirts of the world, and are slaughtered like sheep, being branded as too mean to live. John is nearing the end of his harrowing story (Chap. 20). What a dismal picture he has painted. How depressing it must have been on the faith of his readers of that age; many of whom had seen brethren die, clinging to their hope rather than live without it, and from present indications, coupled with John's narrative of the future, were actually feeling the deepening gloom. It is true, John was trying to forearm them by forewarning them, for it is the unexpected obstacle that is hardest to surmount; the unheard-of trial that oftenest "shipwrecks" faith. Onward, ever onward, is the decree, and much of the journey must be through "flood and flame," always with "trials sore," till death ends it all. The weary soul cries out: "What's

the use, why suffer longer? We have to die at last, and lose all."

Even to John it must have been trying; knowing, as he must have, how it would affect his brethren, whom he loved and whose faith was already sorely tested, and by far the worst yet to come. Methinks I hear him say: Lord, let me say something that will strengthen their faith; for who is able to stand it? Let me say something that will encourage them; they are my brethren, they are human, and human strength has its limitations. Again I think I can hear a loving Father say: "John, look into the glory world and tell them what you see; tell them to struggle on in faith just a little while." Hear the quivering emphasis of a man whose soul is on fire for the wavering child of God. "I SAW"—O, God, help us all "to see"—"I SAW the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus"—who had endured all, who had suffered more than the living—"I SAW THEM," says John. "Where did you see them, John? They are dead; they died because they could suffer no more; they are gone." Yet he repeats: "I SAW THEM LIVING AND REIGNING WITH CHRIST" — yonder they are, happy, free from pain, never to suffer more, for "the second death hath no power over them."

"Safe in the arms of Jesus,  
Safe on his gentle breast,"

is the song he is trying to teach us, and the meaning of which we can now appreciate as never before. If that is the blessedness of those who have suffered all and "held fast to the hope firm unto the end," it encourages

me to endure and never cease to "own his name." Brother, when faith seems weak, study this lesson. It's heaven's "Fountain of Youth" for faith.

The most fortunate of us are often depressed by the burdens our faith is called upon to bear. Even the Saviour himself felt the need of encouragement, for while staggering under a load of care he hies away to "the garden" and prays for strength. An Angel is dispatched from the shining Throne to aid him to suffer more. Peter's faith needed strengthening. A maid's accusation caused it to fail; the cock's crowing proved a strengthener. Gentle words, and kindly deeds, and loving memories, helps the weary traveler out on the desert night of despair, when faith is almost gone. Brother, rush to the rescue; tell them what John "saw."

"Living and reigning with Christ. This is the first resurrection." Lord, help us to keep our eyes on the blessed picture, that our faith may be able to stand the storms.

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