

The Gospel Witness

PUBLISHED EVERY THURSDAY FOR THE PROPAGATION OF EVANGELICAL PRINCIPLES
AND IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH ONCE FOR ALL DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS.
\$2.00 Per Year, Postpaid, to any address. 5c. Per Single Copy.

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"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ."—Romans 1:16.

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Registered Cable Address: Jarwitsem, Canada.

Vol. 10. No. 49

TORONTO, APRIL 21, 1932

Whole No. 518

The Charge of the Sanctuary

A Lecture by Dr. T. T. Shields.

Delivered in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Thursday Evening, April 14th, 1932.
Twenty-first in a Series of Thursday Evening Lectures on Biblical Theology, which are included in the Curriculum of Toronto Baptist Seminary.

(Stenographically Reported)

Lecture Text: Numbers, chapter 18.

Last week we observed how terrible is the fate of those who set aside the divinely ordained means of approaching God, and presumptuously come into His presence in their own way. The earth opened its mouth and swallowed up those men who thus rejected the divine plan, and who are described as "these sinners against their own souls". This visitation, instead of humbling the people, and bringing them to repentance, had the effect of hardening them, and "on the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, "Ye have killed the people of the Lord." Immediately "the glory of the Lord appeared" over the tabernacle, and God spake to Moses telling him wrath had gone out from the Lord, and that the plague had begun. The plague continued unabated until Aaron "stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed." The Lord then showed His approval of Aaron by causing his rod to bud and blossom, and become fruitful. The people thereby were made to feel something of the dreadfulness of the divine holiness, and they were filled with fear because of the presence of God in the midst of His people. That in itself is a very wholesome and ultimately health-giving emotion. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." It is characteristic of our day, perhaps, to a greater extent than of almost any other day, that there is no fear of God before the eyes of men. You will recall that in apostolic days when the presence and power of the Lord were specially manifested, and particularly when His judgments fell in the death of Ananias and his wife Sapphira, the people were so afraid that it is said, "of the rest durst no man join himself to them". We may well pray for God to manifest Himself in the midst of His congregation in such a way that men will cease to be indifferent in respect to

their obligations to God, but will fear God with a godly fear.

And yet, perhaps, our history, at this point, is illustrative of a common error on the other hand: there are people who regard every manifestation of the divine presence with disfavour; and the religion of Christ is looked upon as something which is destructive of human joy, which casts a gloom upon all who espouse it. It is a very good profession for people who find no comfort whatever in this world! Therefore, religion is a good thing for the poor! It is very useful for those who have passed the summer time of life, and whose days are in the yellow leaf! They, soon, must say, "Good-bye," to the things of this earth, and therefore they may be excused for being religious. But for people who are in the prime of life, and especially in the morning of life, full of health and vigour, probably with years yet before them, the religion of Christ is a something which all healthy minds should avoid.

God answers that conception in the chapter before us this evening. Not that He would allay their fears, or lead them to be presumptuous in respect to the requirements of His holiness: but He would teach them that when God is rightly approached, when His word and way are accepted and obeyed, the tabernacle in the midst of the congregation is not a prison, but a palace; not a series of thunderings and lightnings and a cause of gloom and despair, but a wellspring of delight from which the people of God may be constantly enriched.

This chapter defines certain of the duties of Aaron and his sons and the Levites. You will remember that the offices of the priesthood pertained to Aaron's family, to Aaron and his sons. The Levites rendered service about the tabernacle, and were separated from the rest of the people that they might give themselves entirely to the ser-

vice of the tabernacle in the midst of the congregation. In a later scripture God promises to multiply the Levites.

Believers are a peculiar people, a royal priesthood; we are a kingdom of priests, we are both kings and priests; and we have been chosen "to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Christ Jesus." An Old Testament scripture is brought into the New in the epistle to the Hebrews where our Lord is represented as saying, "Behold, I and the children whom thou has given me". He is like Aaron and his sons before the Lord. We are His spiritual children, and ours is a spiritual ministry. We may find in these special regulations given to Aaron and his sons, and the Levites generally, an illustration at least, if not a type, of that charge which is committed to all believers, and to the church in its collective capacity.

I.

Aaron and his sons are told that the tabernacle, the sanctuary, is committed entirely to their charge; they are even to bear the iniquity thereof. They are to be held responsible for it. They are made custodians of the ways of God, for you remember our lesson of last week—let me briefly refer to it—of how Korah, Dathan, and Abiram arrogated to themselves the right; which was not their's by law, to exercise the functions of the priest's office, setting aside Moses and Aaron. For that they suffered a terrible punishment. Then followed the special sign of divine approval by the miraculous budding and blossoming of Aaron's rod. And now God hands over to Aaron and his sons the tabernacle with all that pertained to it, as though He had said, "That is my way by which men may approach the divine holiness. Take good care of it. Let no stranger come near. And as for yourselves, be careful strictly to observe the law, lest ye die; for I shall hold you responsible now for the charge of the sanctuary, and the tabernacle of witness."

Observe, it is "the tabernacle of witness." You will remember that our Lord said to His disciples before He went away: "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth". We read also that we are "allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel." We read in another place of "the faith once for all delivered unto the saints." In our anxiety to escape the errors of Rome, and its false conception of the Church, I am inclined to think that Protestants, and perhaps Baptists in particular, have under-estimated, rather belittled, the place of the church in the divine economy: "Upon this rock I will build my church." God has His tabernacle of witness in the world to-day, and it is "the pillar and ground of the truth." He has always had His witnesses. Even in days of great spiritual darkness "He left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."

The church is a blood-bought company of believers who are members of Christ's elect body. About that there is no hap or chance; they were chosen in Christ Jesus before the world began, and that company of people constitute that spiritual house built upon the one foundation, upon that revelation which is described as "the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone." Here is the temple of truth of which believers are to be the living exemplifications, lively, or living, stones built up a spiritual house

within which that royal priesthood are to offer constantly "spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Christ Jesus". And just as the sanctuary with all that belonged to it was committed to the charge of Aaron and his sons, so the great body of truth of which Jesus Christ is the Centre, the gospel, what Paul calls, "My gospel", is committed to us. Oh, forever! forever, get it out of your minds that there are two gospels, much less four, the gospel of the kingdom, and the gospel of Christ are one and the same. It is a grievous error to suppose that God saves some people by grace and some by works. There is but one gospel, the gospel of salvation, the gospel which is "the power of God unto salvation"; "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" which is to be preached in this day and dispensation of grace, in the "accepted time", in the "day of salvation". That body of truth is committed to saved men and saved women. And we are to contend earnestly for the faith "once for all delivered unto the saints". We are put in trust with the gospel; we are as the steward of the parable to whom the lord committed his goods, and for which we must give an account in the day of His coming. What a solemn thing it is for us as individuals, first of all to know Christ, to have found—I had almost said to have found the way to God—nay, but to have had the way of God revealed to us so that our feet have been set in the path that leadeth unto light, so that that which is hidden from others is known to us.

If there were some man here in this City who somehow had become possessed of a cure for some deadly disease, say cancer, or tuberculosis, or some other terrible scourge, and he had the cure, he knew how people could be cured—if he himself were the proof of its efficacy in that he had been cured of the disease himself, and if there were thousands of others similarly afflicted, who knew nothing at all of that great remedy, what a tremendous responsibility would rest upon him to share his knowledge, that others might receive the healing which he had experienced!

Now my dear friends, it ought not to be necessary for any one to exhort a believer to be a missionary; it ought not to be necessary that we should be cajoled and entreated to make Christ known. If we really know Him, if we are put in charge of the sanctuary, and if we know that by that blood-sprinkled path alone a sinner may come to God, then that dignifies life, it sublimates it to holy altitudes; it makes life worth living, if that be involved in the saying, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant"; but it also makes life a very solemn responsibility to realize we are put in charge of the only way which leadeth unto life.

And I say to you young men and women once again, do not regard your calling lightly! God puts you in charge of His sanctuary; He commits to you the great body of truth by which He has ordained men shall be saved. We must be true to it; we must serve it; we must exemplify it; we must contend for it; we must propagate it; we must preach it to every creature under heaven, because there is no other way of life.

II.

They are reminded, however, that notwithstanding the solemnity of their position, and the grave responsibility that rests upon them, they are partakers of high and holy and happy privileges. The Lord tells them how He has provided for all the offerings of the Lord's house; and

in respect to all these things, He says, "This shall be thine: . . . all the best of the oil, and all the best of the wine, and of the wheat, the firstfruits of them which they shall offer unto the Lord, them have I given thee."

It is a great responsibility to be a Christian, and especially to be a minister; but it is a very happy privilege too. Ours is to be the finest of the wheat. Let me say this to you ministers, particularly potential ministers, prospective ministers, I could find you many people in this City who are passionately in love with Jesus Christ, and with His gospel, and with His word. I could find you people who will go to work to-morrow morning at an early hour, and work through the day, coming home at night, wearied. They may have other evening duties, and they will come to the word of God a little bit tired from their day's labour; but they will feast upon the good things of the Lord's table as provided in His word. And when the man has had an hour or so with his Bible he will look at the clock, and sigh. He says, "I owe it to my employer to be ready for the morning, and I suppose I must go to bed." But he looks at his Book longingly, and he says, "Oh, that I had a day, a whole day, to spend with that Book!" Sometimes he says, "I wish I had nothing else to do but just to dig in that gold mine, to study that Word." In the morning he will be up a little earlier than is necessary to get to his day's toil, that he may have a half hour with his Book before he goes out to the labour of the day. And again he will close his Book reluctantly. He will say, "I must go, but oh, how I wish I could stay with the Book!"

I once knew a man who always carried his Bible with him to his work, and put it before him on his bench. He could not study it, but there were certain things about his work which became to him—for he was an expert—more or less mechanical, and with his Bible before him he could take in a verse or two, and work away at his work, doing the two things at once, and storing his mind with the word of God.

Shall it ever be said while some people thus long to give all their time to the study of the word of God, that any man who is a Levite, who is relieved of the necessity of tilling the soil, or engaging in secular pursuits, whose life is dedicated to the study of God's word, and the exposition of His gospel—shall it ever be said that that man neglects his Bible, that that man is too indolent to bring forth out of that treasury, as a well instructed scribe, things both new and old? Let us be ashamed, my brethren, ever to have that said of us. Let us resolve that though we be of the tribe of Levi, we will say to every man of every other tribe, "There is not a man living who works harder than I do. I serve the Lord with all my might." And what treasures you will find if thus you apply yourself to the duties of caring for God's sanctuary.

III.

Aaron and his sons and the Levites were reminded that their life was a life of service. They were to minister in the sanctuary; they were servants who were to serve before the Lord. You are not called to be a minister to be admired. Some foolish people will admire you; and you sometimes will be foolish enough to acquiesce in their admiration, and say that it shows they are people of good taste; that they know a good thing when they see it. Be thankful if they do not throw bricks at you! Remember the minister is a servant, and he who would be chief

among men must be servant of all; and the man who is most worthy is the man who most heartily serves God and his fellows. In the study of God's word, in the preaching of His truth, in the teaching of the great verities of the faith, in our labour of prayer—and we ought to labour in prayer—in our life of prayer, in our administration of the affairs of the church, in our use of whatever position we may be called to occupy, we should discharge our duty as servants of God, for the glory of God and the good of His people.

When Moses died, God gave him a great title. He said to Joshua, "Moses, my servant, is dead." What a title, when the Lord God Himself, with all the record of a man's life spread out before His all-seeing eye, described him as "My servant; I depended on him; I gave him a work to do and he did it; he was My servant, and now his day's work is done"! No higher praise can be offered respecting anyone than that, to say that he is a servant.

But the best of everything is ours: "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him."

Sometimes you will feel that you are getting rather left behind in the race, when you become ministers. Sometimes you will have a feeling that you could do about as well as some other people. I have seen people grow rich. I have seen some men grow rich until they could count their wealth, I suppose, to the tune of a million. I am very modest and humble, I do not think I am egotistical, but I know that I could have beaten some of them at their own job without undue exertion. And I have said to myself sometimes: "If that man can make a half million, or a million, I could have done it myself." Somebody will say, "Well, why did you not do it?" The sufficient answer is, I became a minister. But is that what we live for? It is a fearful responsibility to have wealth. Not very many people walk with God when they have it. It requires very special grace for a man to recognize that all his prosperity is from the Lord, and that for that he must give account. Only the grace of God can keep a man with steady head and established heart in the midst of prosperity. Do you not think that Moses and Aaron could have done about as well as anyone in Israel if they had tried? Do you not suppose they were at least equal to others intellectually, in natural force, natural ability of every kind? They were the peers of any of the princes of Israel; but they were given nothing. Do you not suppose there were many of the Levites who would have made just as good farmers as any of the tribe of Reuban, or Naphtali, or Dan, or anyone else? If the others got rich they could have got rich. But they had no inheritance in the land; they did not have a foot of land. They could have sung that old hymn:

"No foot of land do I possess,
No cottage in this wilderness."

They did not own anything. But were they poor? Not by any means.

It is true enough that if we go anywhere where Christians may legitimately go we shall probably have to buy the cheapest tickets, and travel third class, and all that kind of thing. The Levites did not own a foot of land. But let me tell you what they had. Here it is in the twentieth verse of the eighteenth chapter, "And the Lord spake unto Aaron, Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them: I am thy part and thine inheritance among the

children of Israel. And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation." Believers are not of this world, and if we follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, we are very likely to have but a small stake in this world. There may be here and there some people to whom God in His wisdom gives special grace, and whom He knows He can trust. Here and there you will find a godly man who walks humbly with God, whom God makes His steward, and whom the Lord will honour. But the majority of us cannot be trusted, and if we are going to follow the principles of God's Book we shall not have much in this world. If we are spiritual Levites indeed, and serve the sanctuary, and spend our lives in witnessing for God, we shall probably be like these Levites, and have no real inheritance in the land. But the Lord says, "I am thy part and thine inheritance." Our inheritance as believers is in Christ: in Him we are multimillionaires: we are rich in Him.

It is really a glorious and profitable thing in the spiritual sense to be a Christian: we are blessed "with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." We have everything in Christ: He is our portion.

Time will not permit us to go further this evening, but let me say this to you ministers, you who are going to be pastors of churches:

In the beginning of your ministry—and perhaps in some cases even to the end—most of your congregations will be very small, and probably the people who constitute the church will for the most part be very poor. As the blessing of the Lord comes upon your ministry, you will sit down some day to wonder how you are going to make progress. You begin to count up your assets, your resources, and say, "What can we do?" In some cases perhaps you will be without a building, or if you have a building perhaps there will be a mortgage on it. Or, if there is not a mortgage on it, possibly there will not be shingles either, and you will need a new roof. It may be small or outworn. You will need money, for you will require many things, and you will ask yourself why you were not born rich, and why the Lord does not give you some rich people. "Oh, if I just had one or two men in my congregation who could give a thousand dollars or so, how proud I should be, and what a relief it would be! But here they are: Mr. So-and-So, and So-and-So, and So-and-So, they are all poor folks. What is the use of trying to do anything with a lot of poor people like that?" I cannot tell you how many ministers have talked to me in that strain. But remember this word, the twentieth verse of the eighteenth chapter of Numbers, "Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them: I am thy part and thine inheritance." If you have the Lord you will be very rich.

The men whom God used in time past invariably have themselves been poor men, surrounded by poor men. Moody had no money; Spurgeon had no money. I was just dipping into Spurgeon's autobiography again to-day. He had many interests, the alms houses, the college, the colporteur association, the tabernacle, and all the rest of it. There was one rich man who was his friend, and he had written to Mr. Spurgeon promising him that as long

as he lived he might depend upon his liberal support in his work. As long as he lived! Then came the downgrade controversy, and Mr. Spurgeon took his stand for the faith, but he was so broken by the attacks that were made upon him at one period, combined with the effects of the London fog, that he had to go away to the south of France, to Mentone, to recuperate. (Mentone was his favourite resort). While there his wife received a letter from this man of wealth explaining that because of Mr. Spurgeon's stand in respect to the Baptist Union, and so on, and so on, he would have to withdraw his support, and he was not to count on any further contributions from him. This was the man who said, "You may depend on me as long as I live."

When Mrs. Spurgeon got that letter, first of all she wondered what she should do. There was just a tinge of gloom came over her mind, but she remembered what Hezekiah did when he received an unwelcome letter; and so she went to her room and fell on her knees and literally spread this letter from the rich man before the Lord. Writing to her husband she told him the Lord so came to her with His comfort and assurance that she laughed aloud—as though a rich man getting up the miff tree could hinder God's work. When she got the victory she forwarded the letter to her husband, and with it a letter explaining how she had spread it before the Lord, and what a blessed time she had had with Him. I read the letter which came back from Mr. Spurgeon, saying, "What a woman you are! I, too, spread the letter before the Lord, and I laughed with you, for the Lord is our portion", or words to that effect.

Just a few days after that, and before Mrs. Spurgeon could send the next letter, a lady called to see her, and said she was from Australia; and she had been blessed by Mr. Spurgeon's ministry in that far-off land, and had been concerned about his institutions, and she felt a desire to see him. She went off to the south of France. She did not ask where he was staying. She had heard that he usually went to Mentone, and so she went there too with her lady companion. When she arrived, she cast about to see at what hotel she should stay, and selected a certain hotel. She asked the clerk if he knew where Mr. Spurgeon was staying in Mentone, and discovered to her delight that he was staying in that hotel. She joined them at family worship, and then the next day sent him a cheque for a hundred pounds, which was just the amount this rich man was accustomed to send at a time. Mr. Spurgeon thanked her. He did not tell her anything about the other letter, he just thanked her for her gift. He said he made up his mind that he would just tell the Lord about it. And within a day or so the same woman sent him another letter saying the Lord had so troubled her that she had to send him another one hundred pounds. He lost one rich friend, and got another one who sent him twice as much. The Lord is our portion. Be true to Him, stake everything upon loyalty to God and His truth, no matter what comes look after the sanctuary; resolve that you will be true there, then God will see to it that you get the best oil, and the best wine—of the right sort, you know!—and the finest of the wheat, and the first ripe figs, and ultimately will bring you into the land. We serve the Lord Christ. It is a glorious thing to be in His service. May the Lord bless you every one.

The Jarvis Street Pulpit

THE LORD'S RETURN.

A Sermon by the Pastor, Dr. T. T. Shields.

(Third in a Series of What the Bible Teaches About the Second Coming of Christ)

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, April 17th, 1932.

(Stenographically Reported)

"Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall every man have praise of God."

I Corinthians 4:5.

Prayer by Rev. W. Gordon Brown.

Most holy Lord, before Whom we must at last stand in that day, we come to-night that we may worship Thee, and that we may do so in holy array. We plead no merit of our own. No right have we in Thy presence but as we are covered by the righteousness of Jesus Christ. We approach Thee to present ourselves as Thy sons through faith in Him. Make us consciousness of our sonship. We would be willing slaves of Thyself.

As we come to Thee, we beseech Thee to grant us Thy joy. Some hearts are sad; many are distressed. Thou art the happy God. Christ came that our joy might be full. We bless Thee for the joy that we have in Him. But oh, for that fullness of joy, that abundant life! Teach us to rejoice in the Lord when we can rejoice in no one and in nothing else. Though the fig tree may not blossom, though there may be no calves in the stall, teach us to walk on our high places, and to be abundantly happy in our access to Thee.

We ask Thee also to give us peace; quiet our hearts before Thee. Adjust us to the divine will. Tribulation have we in the world, tumult on every hand, the sea and the waves roaring. We would seek refuge in Thee, our Father. Do Thou, Who art the God of peace, give us peace always. Do Thou, Christ, who hast left us peace, even Thy peace, guard our hearts and minds thereby to Thy glory.

We pray, our Saviour, for those who do not know anything of Thy joy and peace, that they may be brought to terms of peace with Thee, that they may accept Christ as their peace with God, that they may take as their own that peace He made by His blood, and stand on redemption ground, rejoicing in sins forgiven. Make it so in this place to-night to many hearts. So wilt Thou follow everywhere the ministry of Thy word. May the word be with power, demonstrated by the Holy Spirit.

To Thee we shall give the glory since we ask it for our Redeemer's sake, Amen.

I have already received several communications respecting our discussion of this subject of the Lord's return. I received a kindly letter from a minister in the United States who, with his wife, journeyed a long distance in order to spend a Sunday in Jarvis Street. He tells me that they worshipped with us, and had a very happy and profitable day. He said that as they were leaving Toronto his wife remarked, it had been well worth while driving so far to have a Sunday in Jarvis Street. Having kindly expressed his belief that I desire to be scriptural, and having quoted one scripture which he thinks should be sufficiently convincing to settle the mind of any "true Bible believer", he says:

"Please permit me to write this, and believe me I smile with you as I write, and if I thought that you would not take it, without offence, I would not write it. In Nova Scotia there is a saying, 'Pig-headed Englishman'. I would hate very much indeed to have any person refer to you under any such designation, because I do not believe that you are simply stubborn, and I do not want any others to think that you are, and therefore ponder well before you speak and write this series on this subject. Remember that

Dr. _____ is a pioneer in this subject and has preached continuously over fifty years upon it and he teaches a secret coming, and also openly."

The writer may rest assured that his letter has given no offence. I quote it in the same kindly spirit, and in order to refer to the principle it contains.

I have every respect for Dr. _____. I have had the privilege of occupying his pulpit many times, and I know many of his congregation, and am happy to number them among my friends. But with all respect, I bow to a higher authority than that of Dr. _____, great and glorious preacher of the gospel as I gladly acknowledge him to be. It does not necessarily follow that because a man has been a diligent student of the Word of God for half a century, he is therefore free from all error. There have been many men of undoubted godliness, who loved the Lord with all their hearts, trusted in the atoning blood, were numbered among His elect, but who for more than half a century believed and practised the sprinkling of infants for baptism. But that does not make it right.

There are thousands of people who approach—and do generally approach—the Word of God with preconceptions. They come to the Bible, not to discover what the Word of God teaches, but rather to confirm them in their own opinion. It requires a little grace to acknowledge that one is mistaken, that too long he has accepted certain positions as being thoroughly scriptural, and that at last one has discovered that he has been reading into Scripture his own thought instead of listening attentively to the teaching of the Word of God itself.

I have no intention in these studies to enter into contentious discussion with anyone. I do not speak of the doctrine of the Lord's return as of a truth of revelation with which we may wisely play, or about which we may speculate. I have known many people to "strive about words to no profit", who argue merely for the sake of arguing. I fear there are not a few who discuss the doctrine of the Lord's return in that spirit. I desire to make it clear to you that this precious truth is a truth of very practical value, as are all the truths of Scripture.

I think of a friend of mine, now gone to glory, whom I knew in years past, who was a minister of the gospel, very true to the great verities of the faith, and who was, at the same time, a rich man. He had some little hobbies, was a naturalist of distinction, and a member of not a few scientific societies. Among the hobbies he cultivated was one in which I think none of us here are likely to indulge: he was very fond of precious stones, and had a collection of diamonds, rubies, emeralds, opals, and many other precious stones. Some of them were but partly cut; some were exquisitely cut and polished.

I called on him in his hotel one bright winter morning when the sun was shining gloriously through his window, and all the world without was beautifully mantled in immaculate snow, which only intensified the brightness of the morning. My friend was sitting in the window looking intently at something as, in response to his invitation, I opened the door and stepped in. Without rising—for he had something in his lap—he said, “Come in, and I will introduce you to my friends.” I went over to where he was seated and drew a chair beside him.

I found he had a piece of black silk spread over his knees, and arranged on the silk a number of precious stones. As he held one after another up to the sunlight he said, “I travel a great deal, and I am often alone. These are my friends. I love to admire the handiwork of God as displayed in these gems.” I do not know how many thousands of dollars he had invested in those stones. I spent almost an hour handling them—I think almost the only diamonds I ever handled. While I do not attempt to justify his hobby—and certainly do not recommend it to the average preacher—still it was an interesting one.

I have seen some people handle the Word of God after that fashion. This man had special pockets made in his clothing in which he carried his diamonds, and rubies, and emeralds. I have known some people who carried about the great doctrines of Scripture simply to talk about them, to discuss them. They have no practical value, no practical bearing upon the life. I believe there is no truth of Scripture, no doctrine of the gospel, that is not divinely designed to minister grace to us. Our Lord prayed, “Sanctify them through their truth: their word is truth.” Every word of God, properly understood, properly received, its principles properly applied, has a sanctifying effect upon the life. If there be any aspect of truth to which your attention is given, any particular doctrine which you treasure in your heart and mind, which yet at the same time does not make you a little better as a Christian, then you are holding the truth in unrighteousness, and you are not making the proper use of that which God has revealed. No communication ought to proceed out of the mouth of a Christian but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearer. We ought so to examine the Word of God, so to appropriate the truth in this marvellous treasury, that it will enrich our minds and hearts, and manifest itself in a growing conformity to the image and likeness of Christ. Please understand that so far as I am concerned I have no interest whatever in the discussion of “tables and endless genealogies, which minister questions rather than godly edifying which is in faith”, of which the scriptures speak, and which simply lead to endless discussion. There is no profit in that.

I want to try to show you this evening—taking this further address before we come to examine the subject itself—that the promise of our Lord's second advent is a promise that has a very direct bearing upon our everyday life. It is a practical truth, a truth that ought to bring us nearer to the Lord. It is not something about which we should spend our time in idle and useless speculation.

Last Sunday I spoke particularly of the importance of the promise of the Lord's coming to the individual believer: I should like you to think with me this evening for a little while of the practical bearing of this truth upon the church, of the importance of a proper appreciation of the value of the promise of the Lord's return to the present-day life of the blood-bought church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I.

A CLEAR VIEW OF THE LORD'S RETURN WILL DETERMINE OUR THOUGHT OF THE CHARACTER OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. We live in a day when it is popular to belittle the church, to speak disparagingly of what is called “organized religion”.

I do not wonder that that should be so when one looks abroad upon many organizations that bear the Christian name; and even on the part of those who hold fast by the essential truths of evangelical faith there is a tendency to make light of the church, and of its ordinances, and to fail to apprehend the place which the church has in the plan of God. I believe that if we can see in the future this clearly stated promise, certain of fulfilment, that the Lord Himself will personally return to this earth, we shall be able properly to appreciate the value of the church, and properly to estimate its spiritual character.

I remind you that the New Testament gives a large place to the doctrine of the church. There are people who make light of it. They have a church roof over their heads, a place to preach the gospel, a place to call sinners to repentance—all that they do with commendable faithfulness—but no place in which to put the babes when they are thus spiritually born, no fire upon the hearth, no household of faith in which the children may be nourished, trained, subjected to the necessary spiritual discipline.

Mr. Brown read to you this evening the opening chapter of that marvellous Apocalypse with which the Book concludes. There John addresses himself to seven churches, distinct churches, having at that time a real existence. The epistle from which my text is taken is addressed to the church at Corinth. There was a church at Ephesus to which an epistle was specifically addressed, in addition to the message in the Apocalypse. There was a church at Philippi, at Colosse, at Thessalonica; there were churches in Galatia. There were groups of believers who were called churches that were part of that spiritual entity which is described as “the body of Christ”, the company of the elect, the bride of the Lamb.

Let us remember that the Bible is perfectly clear on this. There was no element of chance in the divine plan. Our Lord Jesus did not come to earth as an experiment: He came to execute the counsels of the Eternal formed in the Eternal Mind before the worlds were made. He came clothed with divine authority, equipped by every quality of His being to carry out the divine programme; and it is specifically said that “Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it”. He knew what He came to do. He knew that He was born to bleed, that He came to die, to give His life a ransom for many. The programme of His first advent, even to the last detail, was divinely ordered, and to the minutest particular it was executed by our sovereign Saviour in fellowship with the Father and with the Holy Ghost. The purpose of His coming was to give His life a ransom for many, to die for the church, the company of His elect people upon whom His heart's affection had been set from the beginning.

Did He die for anybody outside of the church? Are there saved people—or will there be in time to come—who have no place in the church? Or does the church, the term “church”, represent the whole body of God's redeemed people?

We are come, even now, according to the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews, “unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly

and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant."

I was at a funeral a year or so ago, conducted by another minister. I had some connection with the family, and therefore attended. He read the passage which I have just quoted, then said to me, "I used to think that we were to come to Mount Zion by and by. But the more I have studied my Bible through the years the more clearly I see that we *are* come to Mount Zion; that 'the church of the firstborn' represents the great body of God's elect."

The church is described as the "body of Christ". He is the invisible Head, and will some day manifest Himself. The church is the bride of Christ. He is the Bridegroom. If we keep our eyes clearly upon that great fact, that Jesus is coming again, as I shall presently show you, if we can see why He is coming again it will give us a view of the church, of its character and ministry, which will not harmonize with the popular conception of a great body made up of all sorts of people, saved and unsaved. I say, a clear view of the coming of Christ has a direct bearing upon the character of the church.

What is our task? In the view of some people the church is a kind of moral reform agency, a street-cleaning department; we are here to clean things up a bit, to alleviate the ills of society. I read an address, before the days of the consummation of union among the various bodies which issued at last in the United Church of Canada, delivered at a Methodist Conference, in which a leader of that church said, in effect: There was a time when Methodist ministers read Baxter's 'Saints' Rest', when they talked about salvation, about people's being born again, when they preached with a view to getting individuals converted. But, said he, we have outgrown all that now. We have come to see that the church exists for the elevation of the masses.

In England to-day many of the churches are in a very bad way, first, because of Modernism, but partly because the platforms of the churches had been made political platforms, and the ministers advocates of various political reforms. But if we can keep clearly in mind that there is a crisis in prospect, that this dispensation of grace will reach its culmination in the appearance of the Lord from heaven when He shall come to reward His servants and take account of their stewardship,—if we can keep our eyes upon that event, it will throw all life into a different perspective both for the individual believer and for the church as a whole.

Some things we shall not expect to accomplish, but of some accomplishments we shall be absolutely sure. For example: when a maiden becomes betrothed, and she has an engagement ring upon her finger, she has an entirely new view of life, has she not? Whatever her outlook before, it is changed now. There is just one thing for which she lives: she is getting ready for the marriage occasion. Every day is leading up to *the* day, the wedding day, when her beloved will come.

To recognize that the church is made up of those who constitute the bride of Christ, that this present condition of life is not only temporary in the ordinary sense, but temporal and transient, is surely scriptural. That is Paul's view, as I shall show you more clearly in a moment. If you study the writings of this man you will see that he looked at everything in the per-

spective of that great event when his Lord would come. I say, if that is the outlook, and if that is what a church is, the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, "what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness"? If it be so that by sovereign grace we have been chosen out of the people, called out of the world, if we are the church, the body, the bride, of the Prince of glory, what sort of man ought you to be when you go to business to-morrow? What sort of home ought you to have? What sort of character ought we to be developing if we are thus divinely related to the coming Christ?

II.

How it will affect the ministry of the church! You cannot conceive of an organization of spiritual people holding loosely by the Word, awaiting the coming of the divine Bridegroom. You cannot conceive of a body of people with that in view, spending their time as some churches do to-day. Oh, the pity of it! The movies will soon have to demand that the churches pay licenses, too, with their pictures, their bowling alleys, to say nothing of the theatricals. Look abroad to-day on the organizations called churches, and bring them all into the light of this promise, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven", and that He is coming for His bride, that that great day is the day of which it is said, "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." You can hardly see some of these churches for smoke! How terribly has the professing church fallen if that be the ideal!

I do not say it as a pleasantry: we have not to get our trunk ready. He will provide the wedding garment. But your business and mine is to be ready to meet the Lord with joy and not with grief.

As for our work, our business is to preach the gospel. There is a good phrase in one of the prayers in the Book of Common Prayer of the Anglican Church, a book which is full of beautiful things. I can dispense with its baptismal service and some other things, but its prayers are magnificent. I like to turn them over, and make them my own. And there is one prayer in which the petitioner prays that "the number of God's elect may be accomplished", that they may all be gathered out, that those for whom He shed His blood may be brought to His feet in humble penitence, and quickened by the divine Spirit so that the whole body of God's redeemed people may be ready for the wedding-day.

It will enable us, then, to carry on our Lord's work measurably indifferent to the world's judgment. I do wish I could communicate to you, to every Christian here, my thought in this respect. Somebody in the prayer meeting last night quoted the scripture, "The fear of man bringeth a snare." That is true. You have withheld your testimony a hundred times because you were afraid. In your social life, in your business life, in your recreational life, in all the walks of life, you have been subject too much—and so have I—to the influence of this world,—ministers who care for position and reputation; professing Christians generally who are held fast by the things which are seen

and are temporal: we have all been guilty. But while bound by such chains no man has freedom to get on with God's work.

There are people—I suppose it is true of all of us to a large extent: of all of us some of the time, and of some of us all the time—who live too consciously in the eyes of the world, and who act invariably with a view to establishing themselves in the favour of men. One of the wonders of the life of the Apostle Paul was the completeness of his separation from the world of time and sense, and the marvellous victory God gave him over all his contemporaries, so that he was made by divine grace perfectly independent, able to say, "I care for nobody. I am not influenced by man's judgment—With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment (man's day). I am living for another day. I have my eye toward the east. I am looking for the rising of the Sun. Judge not", said he, "before the time, until the Lord come." Suspend your judgment, and go on with your work. Set heart and mind upon that, and try to be ready when the Lord comes.

As I view it, some things must certainly take place before His coming, but if my pre-tribulation rapturist friends are right, then praise the Lord. I wish the Lord would come this moment, before this sermon is ended. I should be glad to be gone. I am not complaining of life, but I have had enough of this old world to last me for ever. I should be glad to go. But the main thing is that we should keep our eyes upon the truth of Christ's coming, and so live, and so labour, and so judge, and so appraise values, that when the Lord shall come we shall not have to revise our standards. That will be a great day when the Lord shall come, "who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts".

It is a great privilege to be a minister,—the next best thing to being a lightning-rod! When the people of Israel got out of sorts, they blamed Moses. When there was no water, they blamed Moses. When there was no flesh, they blamed Moses. Whenever they got out of the wrong side of the bed, they blamed Moses. I do not know what they would have done if they had not had Moses! I have learned almost to enjoy it. A man resigns his pastorate in a city one hundred and twenty miles away, and blames me for it. When asked about it I said, "I do not know a single member of the church of which this brother was pastor. I live one hundred and twenty miles away. I do not know his people. But if at that distance, not knowing anything about them, I exert a greater influence on them than the pastor, who sees them twice on Sunday and two or three times during the week, I shall have to admit he was wise to resign."

If you are a Christian you will be blamed for many things. Do not worry about it. Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come. He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness. He will make manifest the secret counsels of the heart. I want to be on the right side of things then, don't you?

"Then shall every man have praise of God." We need a little appreciation—at least, I suppose we do. Say, "Well done", when you can. But you will not do very much for the Lord until you have grace to

rise above that, because the hardest things nobody will recognize.

A hungry man comes home from work, and sits down to his evening meal with a good appetite. He finds it in his heart to say to his wife, "That was a splendid meal." He expresses his approval of everything on the table, and she is gratified that this hungry man has been satisfied for once, and feels some measure of reward in his words of appreciation.

But every housewife knows that the mere getting of dinner did not occupy her all day. In a dozen corners, down in the cellar, up in the bed-rooms, everywhere, she has been busy all the time; and the greater part of her time has been taken up with things that the lord of the house does not even see. For these, her thoughtless husband never says, "Well done"; he never even notices that they have been done. If that is the sort of husband some of you women have, you will be in danger of concentrating on the dinner, and leaving the other necessary things undone. Thus if we live for the praise of men, the applause of the world, we shall be setting our sails to catch the wind; we shall be giving our thought to the things that will bring us into prominence, for which people will commend us. But the deep things, the things that are necessary to the upbuilding of character, to the getting ready for the coming of the Lord, will be neglected if we live for that. But if we can keep our eyes upon that day, we shall remember that every man shall then have praise of God.

Let the other man have first place if he wants it. What matters it? "Judge nothing before the time." When the Lord comes, when the white horse and his Rider come down the skies, He "will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God."

Let us pray: O Lord, we have all sinned and come short of Thy glory. In ourselves we have no right to a place in Thy plans, much less have we a right to a place in the royal household. Yet Thou hast set Thy love upon us; Thou hast loved our souls back from the pit of corruption. Thou hast loved us with an everlasting love, and with loving kindness Thou hast drawn us. Thou hast made us partakers of Thy life, because Thy grace has abounded. Thou hast honoured us in that Thou hast put us in trust with the gospel; Thou hast made us labourers together with Thee. We are only human, full of faults, conscious of our frailties. Oh, how we sin against Thee! How miserably we fail of the fulfilment of Thy high and holy designs respecting us! Forgive us, we pray Thee. Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us. Give to all Thy dear people in Thy presence this evening a sweet consciousness of Thy favour. May we be cleansed, and know that we are cleansed in the precious blood.

The world, with all its allurements, calls to us. We hear a thousand voices. There are many attractions roundabout. Especially is this true of those who are younger in years, who have not yet proved by a painful experience the vanity of all earthly things. Oh, give us grace that we may be saved from these seductive influences. Give us grace that we may live for Thy day. Help us to reckon that we are indeed crucified to the world, and the world to us. May it have no part in our estimation of things! Save us from its clogging and clinging influences. Set us free in Christ Jesus to do Thy holy service. Lord Jesus, Thou knowest our hearts. We can hide nothing from Thee, and, like one who had denied Thee, we come saying, Thou knowest all things; thou knowest that we love Thee. We look for Thy coming. We long for the day when we shall see Thee as Thou art. We long for the day when we can cast our golden crowns at

Thy pierced feet. In spite of our worthlessness this is our confession to Thee, Thou Saviour of our souls, we love Thee! We love Thee above all earthly things.

So fill us by Thy Spirit that we may be made more than conquerors through Him Who loved us. Help us to live for Thy day. If there be one here this evening unprepared for that stupendous event, unready to meet the Lord at His coming, make such an one ready now. Give to such an one that spiritual readiness which will enable him to say out of a full heart, Even so come, Lord Jesus. Bless this church. Keep us faithful. Keep us true to the great verities of the faith. Save us from being side-tracked, diverted from our course. And, O Lord, so visit us that there shall come to Thy people a great spiritual revival, that we may be fitted for the service to which we are appointed. Lord, bless us every one, for Christ's sake.

SERMON ECHOES.

We have received a letter from a greatly beloved brother with whom we have had years of happy Christian fellowship, which we hope will long continue. This friend says:

"I join you heartily in your three Hallelujahs. Praise God for THE GOSPEL WITNESS, Jarvis Street Church, and The Seminary.

"I read your introductory sermon on our Lord's return with keen interest. Sorry we do not suit you better, but then, being only 'superficial students of Scripture', and 'indisposed to exertion', we have to do the best we can."

On another sheet he pastes a quotation from the sermon underlining certain words, and writing a little in the margin. We reproduce his quotation from the sermon and his comment as follows:

"I readily recognize that the Scofield Bible is very popular with novices, that is, those newly come to the faith, and also with many of longer Christian experience who are but superficial students of Scripture. Ready-made clothes are everywhere popular with people of average size—they are saved the trouble of several "fittings" at the hands of the tailor, and can pass from shabbiness to sartorial respectability in no longer than is required to change one's clothes. People of more than average girth or height must still, generally, at least, submit to the more exacting practice of being "fitted." On the same principle, ready-made religious ideas will always be popular especially with those indisposed to the exertion of fitting their religious conceptions to an ever-increasing scriptural knowledge. That common human disposition very largely explains the popularity of the Scofield Bible. It is easier to turn on the radio or the gramophone than labouriously to learn to play the piano one's self; and just as the piano, in many homes, remains unopened because displaced by radio or gramophone, so the Bible, bearing the marks of diligent study, and of the painstaking student's practice of comparing spiritual things with spiritual, has been displaced by the Scofield Bible with printed notes ready-made, predigested, and like canned goods generally, ready-to-serve.

"Such as, for example, Dr. Henry G. Watson, Dr. James M. Gray, Dr. Elmore Harris, Dr. A. C. Gaebelin, Dr. A. T. Pierson, Dr. W. G. Moorehead, Dr. W. J. Erdman, Dr. I. M. Haldeman. As for 'this poor man', he believed all he believes now concerning the great doctrines of Scripture long before he met or heard of Dr. Scofield or the Scofield Bible."

To this we reply that our friend entirely misunderstood us. We had no intention of suggesting that the editors of the Scofield Bible were either "superficial students of Scripture," or "indisposed to exertion." In the paragraph in question we were discussing the principle of binding up a carefully elaborated system of interpretation with the Bible itself, and putting that Bible into the hands of young Christians and others. Our point was that people who were content to let others do their thinking for them, and others who desire to become scripturally wise without much exertion, find in the Scofield Bible a system ready prepared for them.

We did not in the sermon, nor do we now imply, that those who have adopted some of the views set forth in the Scofield Bible are necessarily "superficial students," or "indisposed to exertion." On the contrary, we consider they are very profound students; for some of the views expressed, in our judgment, are quite unfathomable. As to their being indisposed to exertion, in respect to some of the views with which by and by we shall deal, we have been led to admire chiefly the industry displayed in elaborating them.

We must humbly acknowledge that this writer is too "superficial" to be able to understand them, and too "indisposed to exertion" to be able to follow them all through the intricate maze of hypotheses upon which, it seems to us, much of the system is based.

When we showed the above kindly criticism to one of our Seminary instructors he said, "You meant to imply, did you not? that the compilers of the Scofield Bible were the wholesale tailors who made the ready-to-wear suits, and the persons who were 'superficial' and 'indisposed to exertion' the people who wear them." That is exactly what we meant.

We need hardly say, perhaps, that we had no intention of suggesting that Dr. Scofield monopolized the views expressed: we have no doubt that many a "poor man"—and rich man too (and "this poor man" to whom we refer is rich in Christian grace and charity, and one of the most attractive personalities we know) has arrived at Dr. Scofield's position, some by learning them from others, and still others by their own study of the question.

We shall not complain if those who disagree with the positions we take in this series of sermons are as gracious in their criticisms as the princely soul whose words we have quoted above.

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Baptist Bible Union Lesson Leaf

Vol. 7 No. 2

REV. ALEX. THOMSON, EDITOR

Lesson 18 May 1st, 1932

SECOND QUARTER

THE SECRET OF SPIRITUAL STRENGTH.

Lesson Text: Numbers, chapters 5, 6, 7, 8

Golden Text: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." I Peter 2:9, 10.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS:

Monday: Deut. 23:10-14.

Tuesday: Ps. 76:1-12.

Wednesday: Is. 52:1-6.

Thursday: Is. 52:7-15.

Friday: Luke 17:11-19.

Saturday: Mark 12:38-44.

I. CLEANSING THE CAMP (5:1-4).

Holiness characterizes every law of God, and this implies wholeness, whether physical or spiritual. This is the ideal, the standard toward which God leads His people, and which He aids them in reaching. In the accomplishment of this purpose He enjoins separation from that which is not whole, and which would defile. This principle of separation runs throughout the scriptures in both Old and New Testaments. It is manifest here in the cleansing of the camp. To allow persons to dwell therein who were afflicted with an infectious disease, or who were carriers of such a disease, would surely endanger the health of others, therefore the command is given to "put out of the camp every leper, and everyone that hath an issue, and who-soever is defiled by the dead". But while the hygienic reason is clear, there is also present the principle of ceremonial cleanness, teaching the necessity for general cleanness or holiness in the service of God. To reach this state, and to retain such a position, the unclean must be put out of the camp. This was the divine command concerning Israel, and it is enjoined also in relation to the church, (I Cor. 5:1-8). It is somewhat difficult these days to put discipline into operation, but it is the duty of the church to keep the membership clean, knowing that to permit uncleanness endangers the whole, as one bad apple in a barrel will eventually affect the good apples. The lesson may also be applied personally, in that one sin harboured in the heart will influence the whole life, and pollute the well-spring of the being. We should, therefore, cast out and be done with all sin, that we might serve God with clean minds, hearts, and bodies, (Heb. 12:1-3), being washed in the blood of Christ from all that defileth, (I John 1:7).

II. THE LAW OF TRESPASS (5:5-10).

This section deals with all offence affecting the property of another, of defrauding another concerning the same. Such an offence is not uncommon now, and it would probably not be unusual even in Moses' day, for the heart of man is the same in all ages. Provision is

therefore made for dealing with the guilty one. First it should be noted that such an offence was and is a trespass against the Lord. It is sometimes overlooked that a wrong done against man is a sin committed against God, for which an accounting must be given. In the instructions relating to this offence the guilty one is directed to confession of the sin committed, to make restitution for his wrong, to add the fifth part thereof, in the nature of a fine which would act as a deterrent to a repetition of the offence, and to make an offering unto the Lord. In the matter of restitution should the person wronged be dead, it was enjoined that the "trespass be recompensed unto the Lord, even to the priest". Explanation should be made of the necessity for confession and restitution concerning wrongs committed against others in the present time. In too many cases when others have been wronged the guilty one ignores the past, and expects the one wronged to resume cordial relations without the wrong being rectified.

III. THE JEALOUSY TRIAL (5:11-31).

In the jealousy trial provision was made for the testing of a wife's purity when suspicion of her guilt in an adulterous relation had arisen in her husband's mind. At first reading it might seem as if this were not altogether just in the case of an innocent woman, yet it protected her from the unjust accusation of a suspicious husband and from the consequences arising therefrom. It also acted as a distinct discouragement to immorality in the knowledge that the guilt of the same would be sure to be found out and punished. In relation to the test direction is given to bring the suspected one to the priest, and with her an offering, (v. 15), no one appearing before the Lord empty, (Ex. 23:15). She was set before the Lord, (v. 16) and the priest took holy water in an earthen vessel and mingled with it dust from the floor of the tabernacle, (v. 17). The woman's head was uncovered, the offering was placed in her hands, (v. 18), and she was given the bitter water to drink, being solemnly charged by the priest before partaking of the same, (vs. 19-23). If innocent, the water would not affect the woman deleteriously, but if guilty sad consequences would ensue, (vs. 22, 24-26). Note the work of the Holy Spirit in this age in convincing of sin, (John 16:8-11), and the necessity for admission of guilt before God.

IV. THE LAW OF THE NAZARITES, (6:1-27).

The law of the Nazarites pertained to that of separation unto God. Either man or woman could take the vow of separation, (v. 2), and the marks of this state are defined as separation from wine and strong drink, (vs. 3, 4), long hair, no razor coming upon the head during the time of the vow, (v. 5), and the abstention from defilement from a dead body, (vs. 6-8). In the case of involuntary defilement instruction was given to begin the vow over again, the head being shaved, (v. 9), and an offering brought to the door of the tabernacle, (vs. 10-12). At the conclusion of the time of separation the Nazarite offered before the door of the tabernacle, and a certain ceremony was performed in relation to him, respecting offerings, and the disposition

of his hair, (vs. 13-21). Note that children of God are called to be separated unto Him, (2 Cor. 6:14; 7-1), not for a short time only, as is the custom of some in Lent, but forever. They are called to abstain from all appearance of evil, (I Thess. 5:22). The form of the priestly blessing concludes the chapter, (vs. 22-27).

V. THE OFFERING OF THE PRINCES, (7:1-89).

Several things may be noted in reference to the offering of the princes. First, it was voluntary, arising from the free will of the persons concerned. This is also the principle underlying New Testament giving, (2 Cor. 9:7). It was made after the tabernacle had been fully set up, (v. 1). It was an offering of a practical nature, consisting of covered wagons, oxen and other animals, and silver vessels, (vs. 84-88). The offerings were given in an orderly fashion, each prince giving his offering on a certain day. It may also be said that each one gave of his best. God deserves the best, and less than this is unacceptable unto Him. The privilege and duty of giving God an offering should be explained, for there are many of the Lord's people who neither understand, nor adequately fulfil their obligation in relation thereto.

VI. LIGHTING THE LAMPS, (8:1-4).

Part of the duty of Aaron and his sons pertained to the lighting of the lamps in the holy place of the tabernacle. These were part of the seven-branched golden candlestick. The purpose of the lamps was to give light in the sanctuary, there being no window in connection with the same. Such light was therefore necessary. Note the position of the light, (Ex. 40:24, 25). The Lord is the Source of all light, (John 1:9). His word as proceeding from Him gives light, (Ps. 119:105, 130; Is. 8:20; 2 Pet. 1:19), and being related to Him, His people are the light of the world, (Matt. 5:14-16).

VII. CONSECRATION OF THE LEVITES UNTO THE LORD, (5-26).

In a previous lesson we noted the fact of the setting aside of the Levites for the service of the Lord in relation to the tabernacle. In this section we are informed of the ceremony of consecration to that service. In this connection several things are worthy of attention: First, the matter of the cleansing, (vs. 6-7). This was ceremonial, hygienic, and typical, the latter implying cleanness, or holiness, in the service of God. Second, the presentation of meal and sin offerings, (v. 8), signifying dedication of works and expiation for sin. Third, the laying on of hands, (v. 10), manifest also in New Testament times in consecrating to service, (I Tim. 4:14). Fourth, the presentation of the Levites unto God as an offering, (v. 11), a sin offering and burnt offering being offered in their behalf, (v. 12), after which they entered upon their service, (v. 15). The years of service were from twenty-five to fifty, (vs. 24, 25). The lower age here than formerly, (4:3), applied to the service of the sanctuary, not to the work of carrying the tabernacle, which was much harder, and required more maturity. David numbered the Levites from twenty because they were not required to carry the various articles of the tabernacle, (I Chron. 23:3, 24-32). Note the solemn nature of consecration, and its need these days.

Baptist Bible Union Lesson Leaf

Vol. 7

No. 2

REV. ALEX. THOMSON, EDITOR

Lesson 19

May 8th, 1932

Second Quarter

THE CHRISTIAN'S COMPASS

Lesson Text: Numbers, Chapter 9.

Golden Text: "Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren."
—I Cor. 6:8.

Daily Bible Readings:

Monday—Ex. 12: 1-20.

Tuesday—Num. 28: 16-25.

Wednesday—Ps. 119: 105-120.

Thursday—John 16: 1-15.

Friday—Gal. 5: 16-26.

Saturday—Rev. 1: 9-20.

1. THE PASSOVER (vs. 1-14).

We have observed in a former lesson the record of this command relating to the observance of the passover. It is again introduced on account of the question which arose concerning the men who were defiled and could not participate in the observance. In referring thereto, the particulars connected with the same may be pointed out, and the typical teaching again emphasized, applying, as it does, to our Lord's redemptive work. The observance herein recorded was the first, and according to some, the only one in the wilderness. It was kept at the appointed season, (vs. 1-3), in accordance with the rites enjoined.

The question of the defiled men was then considered. Those were men who had become defiled by a dead body, (v. 6). It was necessary to carry out the rites connected with the burial of the same, but such duties defiled the persons concerned, and when such defilement occurred on the day of the passover celebration, it prevented their participation thereon, as no defiled person could keep the feast. It became necessary, therefore, to secure some direction in the matter. A worldly-wise person would have given an answer in accordance with his own wisdom, but Moses sought divine aid in the matter, realizing that this was something which God must decide. Heavenly wisdom, not the earthly kind, was required, therefore his command to the men, "Stand still, and I will hear what the Lord will command concerning you", (v. 8). Note the necessity for seeking divine wisdom in all the perplexities of life, private and collective. The answer is forthcoming and direction is given to observe the passover on the same day of the following month, (vs. 9-11). This was a gracious provision, making possible obedience to the divine command, and permitting the privilege of participation in the feast. We may learn that God does not expect more from us than we can give, and that He makes it possible for us to obey His commands. There is therefore no excuse for disobedience.

Certain directions were given concerning the observance, (vs. 11-14). The

passover lamb, typifying our Lord, was to be eaten with unleavened bread, implying, spiritually, a life free from impurity, (I Cor. 5:6-8), a holy life, (I Peter 1:15, 16), and with bitter herbs, reminding us of our Lord's sufferings. None of it was to be left until the morning, as then it might be partaken of as ordinary food, and so lose its special typical significance. No bone was to be broken, fulfilled in Christ, none of Whose bones was broken, (John 19:31-37). A penalty was exacted of the one who was qualified to partake of the feast, and who forbore to do so, manifesting thus distinct disrespect for the redemptive work of God, (v. 13; I Cor. 5-7), and deliberate disobedience to His command, (v. 3; Ex. 12:25). And, last, commandment is given concerning the stranger, or proselyte, who would keep the passover, the same directions applying to him as to the Israelite. In order to qualify for partaking of this feast, one must be an Israelite, either by birth or proselytism, have circumcision, the mark of separation upon him, and be free from defilement. Explanation may be made of the spiritual meaning of such qualifications in relation to feeding on Christ, namely, a Christian, separated unto God, and living a holy life.

II. THE PILLAR OF CLOUD,
(vs. 15-23).

As a completion of the provision for the welfare of Israel in the wilderness, the Lord granted unto His people the pillar of cloud. It appeared as a cloud by day, and had the appearance of fire by night, and rested upon the tabernacle, (vs. 15, 16). It was therefore visible to the whole camp. Its purpose was to regulate the movements of the Israelites. When it abode upon the tabernacle the people tarried in their encampment, and when it was taken up they journeyed, and when it rested they pitched their tents, (vs. 17-23). They were wholly dependent on it for guidance, and without its direction they moved not. The significance of this cloud is observed in the fact that God promised to appear in it, (Lev. 16:2). It was therefore the outward manifestation of the presence of God with His people, and following the cloud was tantamount to following God. He was their Leader, guiding them in all their journeys.

When we consider the circumstances of the Israelites we are convinced of the necessity for such a divine Leader. They were in the wilderness, travelling a way they knew not, and toward a destination in a hostile country. They were great in numbers, including many who were of tender years and condition, and also much cattle, and great wisdom was required properly to care for such a host. Man's wisdom being insufficient, God alone could help them. The choice of each camping site was of real importance, also the time to move, and the length of the journey. In addition their enemies had perforce to be taken into consideration. In all these things God aided them, and in obedience to Him they crossed the wilderness in safety, their food being supplied, and their clothes remaining serviceable all the time, (Deut. 29:5). This action on the part of God

saved the Israelites from worry, and was intended to keep them peaceful in spirit. Disobedience on their part, however, brought unrest, as it does in every age. Note the gracious nature of God's action and attitude, also the comfort derived from the presence of the cloud.

There are several lessons applicable to the present day which may be derived from this provision of God, in that we are in a similar position spiritually to the Israelites, as "strangers and pilgrims" in an alien world, (I Pet. 2:11), travelling toward a promised, blessed destination, (Heb. 11:10), and therefore in need of divine guidance. God knows the way we are travelling. He loves and cares for His own, and desires to guide them in safety to their eternal home. Obedience is essential on our part if we are to benefit from His guidance.

As God was in the midst of His earthly people, so He is present with His regenerated people in the Church of Christ. The Lord Jesus is the Head of the Church, which is His body, (Eph. 1:22, 23), the Holy Spirit is the Guide, (John 16:13), the Direction of activities, (Acts 16:6, 7), and the source of power, (Acts 1:8), and the Word of God is the record of the divine commands by which we are governed in thought, word, and deed, (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). It should ever be kept in mind that God never leads one to do that which is contrary to His revealed will. To do so would be to contradict Himself, and as "The Truth" this is impossible with Him. God remains supreme among His people. He has never abdicated His position, therefore there is no need for a human head over the church. There should be practical recognition of His presence and leadership.

Several beneficial results ensue from such a recognition of God. There is first the consciousness of His presence. This brings such blessing and strength that we are enabled to go forward on the heavenly way in spite of all obstacles. We feel fit for anything with God beside us, and this blessing is for all saints. We also secure divine wisdom and guidance, so necessary in each experience, private and public. A large part of the professing church has gone astray through following the wisdom of men, rather than that of God. Our Lord is wisdom, (I Cor. 1:30). It means further that our hearts are kept calm under all circumstances. There is no need for worry if God is looking after affairs. He loves us, supplies our need, and manifests His care, even in the little things of life, (Matt. 10:28-31). Such an attitude also results in victory over enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil. It means putting God first, then trusting Him implicitly and such faith is sure to be honoured of God. An orderly life, resulting in blessing to others, and giving glory to God, is the final result of giving God His proper place in private, and in public. An explanation may be given of the necessity of surrender to God.

The Union Baptist Witness

Is the Official Publication of the Union of Regular Baptist Churches of Ontario and Quebec. Send all communications to the Office Secretary, 337 Jarvis Street, Toronto 2, Canada

BETHEL, ORILLIA.

Bethel Baptist Church, Orillia, stands for the infallible Word of God, and is happy to be in full harmony and co-operation with the principles and practice of the Union of Regular Baptist Churches of Ontario and Quebec.

Unfortunately, a certain rumour has been circulated to the effect that this church is wavering in its stand for the Union, and in the course of time may become what is known, and usually designated, as an "Independent" church. With the kind permission of the Editor of THE GOSPEL WITNESS may I be allowed to say positively that the statement does not contain a fragment of truth, but is utterly false. The Pastor, deacons, and congregation, stand faithfully for the Constitution of the Union, and are one hundred per cent. loyal to the leaders of the new Convention. With the possible exception of two or three members, Bethel Church members are in perfect harmony.

I wish to say further that no one is more welcome to Bethel than the renowned and highly esteemed Pastor of Jarvis St. Baptist Church, Dr. T. T. Shields.

Of late the Lord has been blessing us in a singular manner. Five adults received the hand of fellowship; six made profession of conversion, and four are awaiting baptism. The membership stands at eighty, and almost as many adherents. Two of our members are studying in Toronto Baptist Seminary; four or five are waiting on the Lord for direction, in view of entering into definite study.

A suitable lot for a building has been procured, and paid for; and plans are being made for the erection of a church building.

On Wednesday last a special missionary meeting was called for on behalf of Liberia. Owing to the inclemency of the weather, the speaker from Toronto was unable to come. Nevertheless, we had a crowded house, and an offering of \$60 for the splendid work that is being carried on in Liberia was realized.

—From Pastor John Byers.

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THE SIX NATION RESERVE.

There has been a time of blessing experienced by the Medina Regular Baptist Church (Indian) and many have professed conversion in the special services and house to house visitation. The Indian brethren are deeply appreciative of the fellowship and help of the Union churches and share in the missionary interests which the Lord has given to them. The Secretary-Treasurer, Rev. W. E. Atkinson, who is so continually visiting the churches, is always glad to minister

to the Indian church and nowhere has he greater liberty than he enjoys at Medina. It was possible last week to show the lantern slides of the work in Liberia on the Reserve for the first time. A special arrangement whereby the lantern was attached to the car battery made this possible and the pictures were much enjoyed. The assembled gathering, out of their poverty, gave a liberal offering to the work in Liberia.

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COURTLAND ANNIVERSARY.

The fifth anniversary of the Rev. Robert Guthrie's going to Courtland was celebrated on Sunday, April 17th, with very special services. Rev. W. E. Atkinson was the speaker at both the Sunday School and church services and the Jarvis Street Church's orchestra assisted.

Mr. Atkinson was privileged to present to the church the Union's work both at home and abroad and the lantern slides covering this were received with much appreciation. The services attracted a great company of people and the Word was preached faithfully. Pray that the Lord will graciously bless the ministry of Mr. Guthrie as he begins his sixth year in Courtland and that many during this year will surrender to the Saviour who is so prayerfully and constantly proclaimed by His servant.

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WESTBORO.

Rev. Donald Fraser had the joy of baptizing two more believers on Sunday evening, April 10th, and at the close of that service four men and a boy who had previously confessed Christ asked for baptism. At this service a young man also came forward seeking salvation. For these blessings the Westboro Church is praising the Lord and asks that the churches of the Union continue to remember them in prayer that there may be further rejoicing.

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STANLEY AVE., HAMILTON.

Revival meetings at the Stanley Avenue Church, Hamilton, are attracting great crowds. On Friday, Saturday and Sunday, the church was crowded at all services and in response to the invitation given on Friday night a hundred young people formed a circle around the entire auditorium declaring as they did so their intention to live out and out for Christ. The Sunday services were well attended and during the day twenty-five professed Christ as their Saviour. Ten applied for baptism and church membership and eight others were baptized at the evening service. Other baptisms will follow on Wednesday and Friday evenings and on Sunday, April 24th.

Rev. Anton Cedarholm and Mr. Hillmor Cedarholm are the visiting evangelists. Their messages whether by way of music or preaching are given that men and women may be pointed to Christ. Pray that continued blessing may be experienced at Stanley Avenue Church and those who cannot attend the services should make it a point to listen to the broadcast on Saturday evening, April 23rd from Station CKOC, Hamilton, when Messrs. Cedarholm will be heard during the Stanley Avenue Sunshine Hour from 9 to 9.30 o'clock.

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IMMANUEL CHURCH, HAMILTON

For the special services which Immanuel Church, Hamilton, is preparing, prayer is requested. Pastor H. S. Bennett and his people are seeking to put Christ first in all things and are praying very definitely that there may be an out-pouring of the Spirit upon the work at Immanuel which will bring much glory to His name. Rev. W. E. Atkinson is the speaker on Sunday, May 1st, and Rev. James McGinlay of Central Church, London, opens a series of meetings on May 2nd.

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HILLCREST CHURCH, TORONTO

Happy times are being enjoyed by the Hillcrest Regular Baptist Church, Toronto, and Pastor and people are rejoicing in the blessing which the Lord is sending. On Sunday evening, April 17th, four believers signified their desire to follow the command of their Lord and Saviour with regard to baptism. A service will shortly be held in the Jarvis Street Church when these and others will witness concerning their faith and their obedience to the Lord's command.

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BETHEL CHURCH, ORILLIA

A special Missionary service was planned by the Bethel Church, Orillia, on the evening of April 13th, but the speaker from Toronto could not fulfil the appointment because of the storm. The Pastor of the Church, Rev. John Byers, arose to the occasion and gave the missionary talk and the church responded with a most liberal offering for the work in Liberia.

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NIAGARA FALLS, ONT.

For the first time, we are able to announce a Regular Baptist cause in the city of Niagara Falls. Meetings are held in the I.O.O.F. Hall on Main Street and friends will find a welcome awaiting them. The work shows much encouragement. There is a real place for such a testimony and the prayers of the fellowship are asked.