

# The Gospel Witness

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AND IN DEFENCE OF THE FAITH ONCE FOR ALL DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS.  
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"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ."—Romans 1:16.

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## The Jarvis Street Pulpit

"THE DAY OF VISITATION"

A Sermon by Rev. E. E. Shields

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, January 12th, 1936  
(Stenographically Reported)

"And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts.

"And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city."—  
Matthew 8:34; 9:1.

### I.

THERE ARE TIMES OF SPECIAL VISITATION FROM THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

Jesus Christ had come to Gadara to bless the people. Here He was—the God-man, the Dayspring from on high, the One Whose birth we celebrated a couple of weeks ago; Whose goings forth had been from of old, from everlasting; the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person, embodying in Himself all the fulness of the Godhead; upholding all things by the word of His power, the Father having committed all things to Him, things present and things to come; appointed to be the Judge of the quick and the dead—here He was, the Maker and Redeemer of men, having come down from heaven and "being found in fashion as a man", in the exercise of His ministry He had made a trip across the Sea of Galilee and He was now ready to bless the country of the Gadarenes.

He had come in the fulness of His power, with His hands laden with blessing, longing to help them. Elsewhere He had raised the dead, cleansed the lepers, opened the eyes of the blind, made the lame to walk, unstopped deaf ears. He had cured the palsied; all manner of disease had fled at His touch. Moreover, He had power on earth to forgive sin. The God-man came to Gadara to bless the country.

Some people have thought the storm that was raised upon Gennesaret as the Christ made His way across, was an attempt by "the prince of the power of the air" to destroy Him before the time came for His sacrifice. At any rate, the word says that when He was asleep, and the disciples awoke Him, He arose and "rebuked" the winds and the waves, and there was a great calm.

He had been in the ship, preaching to the people on the shore; and He said, "Let us go unto the other side." They brought Him across the lake of Gennesaret, and as He came to Gadara there met Him a man "possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way". He was possessed by a legion of devils: "What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many." Jesus Christ cast out the devils with a word.

He only can do that. "Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected." He has the future in His grasp, and always knows what He will do. He came to Gadara to bless. Not only was He ready to cast out these devils, but He would have healed the bodies of all Gadarenes. He might have wrought a special miracle and raised someone from the dead. He would have blessed all Gadara with His salvation, had they received Him. But their material goods had been touched. The devils had besought Jesus that He would allow them to go into the swine, and they had caused the swine to rush into the sea—and the swine-keepers had lost heavily. There spread a panic among the people. They said, "If things happen to us after this fashion we shall have no living. The owners of the swine have lost all they had. We had better look well to the main chance."

All the people of Gadara were gathered together. They all saw Jesus. They balanced one thing against another; they made their choice between Jesus Christ and eternal life, and their material good. And "when they saw him they besought him that he would depart

out of their coasts. And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city. And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy." When He got back across the lake, many were cured.

There are times of special visitation. It is not said that anybody in Gadara was healed but the one man out of whom the Lord cast the demons. Sometimes God's salvation seems to come by chance. But there is no chance with Him. "He must needs go through Samaria . . . there cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water." Christ talked with her, and she was gloriously saved. In ways like that the God-man wrought His ministry. After the same fashion also the apostles were directed. "They assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not." They "were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia". That does not mean that those provinces were to be denied the Gospel; but that it was not the Spirit's plan that Paul and Silas should go there at that particular time; for God had special work for them in Macedonia.

While Jesus Christ was ready to bless all Gadara, apparently He made that special trip, without communicating His thought to the disciples, for the express purpose of healing the demoniac. So far as we know, no others were saved at that time. The man wanted to go with Him, but you remember Christ said, "Return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him." So that it is probable some were saved in Gadara later, even though the multitude at that time looked at Jesus and besought Him that He would depart out of their coast.

When He returned to the other side it is said, "The people gladly received him." They were waiting for Him, and they received blessing. That was when the daughter of Jairus was raised from the dead. He might have raised someone from the dead in Gadara, but the people had weighed the material against the spiritual; they had chosen the temporal and despised the Son of God. Yet a woman, after He got back from Gadara, who was diseased and needed His help, pressed through the crowd and touched the hem of His garment—and was healed. It was not that He was not ready to save in Gadara, not that He was not ready to bless, that Gadara was unsaved and unblest. It was wholly because of their unbelief, because they had set their faces steadfastly against the spiritual and in favour of the temporal. They had chosen death instead of life, hell instead of heaven, unrighteousness and iniquity instead of Him "who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption".

In a general way, *His coming to Jerusalem at this time was a time of special visitation*. Jerusalem never had had such opportunity, and she has not had such opportunity since, as when the Son of God walked her streets, and taught, and wrought His miracles of healing and of salvation in her midst. And yet His own city received Him not: "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." At last He gave them up with a cry when He said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say,

Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

The parallel passage in Luke tells us that He added, "Because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." They did not recognize that in Jesus Christ was the wisdom and power of God, salvation to the ends of the earth; that He was all they had dreamed of, all the prophets had foretold, all they had hoped for, the Desire of all nations, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the Maker and Redeemer of men. He had walked their streets, preached things that had been hidden from the foundation of the world; full of grace and truth, He was able to save and heal—and they knew Him not, but crucified Him upon the cross.

But *there are special times of finding in individual lives*. "For this (forgiveness) shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found." There is a "time of finding". There is a time to find God. There are times when God draws near, times when He comes in the person and power of the Holy Ghost, and the issue of life and death is drawn for individual men and women. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him, while he is near." If men know it not, if they reject Him, if they steel their hearts, they may quench the Spirit to their own eternal undoing.

*Every preaching service is such an opportunity*—and they are numbered. Preaching services are being counted off—one less—one less—one less—until the judgment-day; one less in your life, until the last one shall come. There will come a last call to supper. If you do not come in response to that last call, you will never come at all. I want you to realize the truth, that meetings such as this have been planned by Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, from before the foundation of the world. It was planned that Christ should come in "the fulness of time", that He should die, and be raised again, return to glory, and send the Holy Ghost, and that the word should be preached throughout the world.

Baul tells us that the preaching of the cross to them that believe "is the power of God". It is not only that Christ is the power of God, and the wisdom of God, but the gospel, the preaching of the word, "is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth". The preaching of the word to men is God's ordained means of saving men—and you need nothing more. If there had been any need of anything more, God would have given it; had we needed a fuller unfolding of His plan for the future, it would have been given. God has given unto us "all things that pertain unto life and godliness"; and He has given us a revelation that is full and complete for the purpose of saving men in this day.

*The Divine revelation is sufficient*. You remember the story—which some people call a parable—of the rich man and Lazarus, of how the rich man in hell prayed to Abraham: "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou

wouldest send him to my father's house; for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment." You remember the answer?—"They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, *If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.*"

The divine revelation is sufficient for all purposes of salvation. When this gospel is preached, as it has been in this place for years, and is being preached in other places where the word is unfolded, that salvation comes to us where we are—in the pew, on the street, in your car, in your home, flying in an aeroplane, down in a submarine, wherever the word of God is, there is salvation. "But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even *in thy mouth, and in thy heart*: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt *confess with thy mouth* the Lord Jesus, and shalt *believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*" Do not say, "If I could go to heaven and see Him, or if I had witnessed the resurrection and ascension, I would believe." The Holy Spirit by Whom the miracles of His birth, His resurrection, and His ascension, were wrought—the Holy Spirit Who knows all things, Who "searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God"—comes to your heart and mind when the gospel is preached, so that you may know as though you saw the Christ. Every preaching service is an opportunity of salvation to all who will believe; and men who thus hear the word will be without excuse at the bar of God if they do not repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

## II.

EXPERIENCE REVEALS THAT MEN CANNOT REJECT GOD'S VISITATIONS WITH IMPUNITY. What do men do with these offers of salvation? What did Jerusalem do? I like to think that in spite of the judgment that came upon Jerusalem, some were saved. It was at Jerusalem the three thousand souls were saved at Pentecost; and a couple of thousand afterward. There were many saved at Jerusalem before judgment fell upon the city. God is not unrighteous to judge without knowledge. He will judge a nation, but He will save His own out of the overthrow. There was something in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in A.D. 70, which history has never been able to explain. Jesus had said "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them which are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled."

I imagine a case. Here is somebody who was converted at Pentecost. He has a family, and has been teaching that family that the Saviour said there was coming a time when armies would encompass Jerusalem, and that that would be a sign that judgment was at the door, and that when that took place they were to flee. I can imagine the father, hearing of the approach of the Roman armies, sending his children out to find a way of escape. I can see them coming back one after another saying, "There is no way through.

As far as we could see, the Romans are about the city." I seem to me I can hear the father say to himself, "It is strange I never thought of that before. The Saviour said, 'When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies.' It never dawned on me that that is the very thing I cannot do—Jerusalem is compassed with armies." But something took place which has never been explained. The Roman armies withdrew some distance from Jerusalem, and the Christians, having the word of the Lord, seized the opportunity and fled to a place called Pella, and were in hiding until the Romans finally took the city and put one million, one hundred thousand to the sword, razed the temple to the ground, and took many thousands into captivity. It is said that not a single Christian perished in the siege of Jerusalem. *But judgment fell upon the city which rejected Christ.*

Do you know how Gadara paid for looking upon Him, and beseeching Him that He would depart from their coasts? *Under Vespasian Gadara was reduced to ashes.* Why? Because they looked on Jesus, and "besought him that he would depart out of their coasts." It does not pay to reject Jesus Christ when the opportunity comes. There came an opportunity to that rich young man, and the issue was fairly put to him. He had great possessions, and our Lord knew that he loved them. Therefore He said, "Go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me." And it is written, "He went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions." Someone says, "That was an unreasonable thing to ask, something that Jesus Christ did not require of everyone else." But He knew that man's heart, and He said, "If you want eternal life, sell what thou hast. Your riches are standing in the way. If you want life, you may have it: but not while you love these earthly things." And the man chose. He chose death rather than life. It does not pay to reject God.

I remember a case in my ministry some years ago. I had preached on a particular Sunday evening, warning men that their opportunity of salvation might be cut short at any time by the coming of death, by the return of the Lord, or by the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit from them. About a dozen young men sat in the right of the church, and as I spoke I noticed one of them laugh. Perhaps I should have forgotten had it not been for what followed. The next day I went downtown, and overheard a rather anxious conversation between two men, and heard this young man's name mentioned as having met sudden death. I hastened toward his home, and came across the father on the way. He was weeping as he went down the street, crying, "Oh, if I only knew he was saved I would not care." I went on with him to the house. The undertaker was busy in a room on one side. He came out in a few minutes, and I caught sight of a young man who had been the companion of this young fellow, and was in church Sunday night. This young man staggered out of the room, perspiration streaming from his brow, and pushed his way outside. I went out and tried to sympathize. He said to me, "And there is the fellow who was going to reform, who was going to become a Christian. He and I walked up and down this path last night until one o'clock this morning. We talked over the affairs of our lives, and had planned that things should be different. We arranged to come to see you, and talk it over. I parted with him here at the gate, and went home."

The young man lying cold in death had got up in the morning and gone to work at a grain elevator, where he shovelled peas down a shaft to men who waited below. After a time the men at the chute noticed the supply of peas failing. They rested on their shovels a few minutes, but when the stream entirely failed, they went to investigate. That young man had fallen in head first, and the peas had closed in around him, and he was smothered to death. I called upon his mother afterward, and I never saw such a look upon any human face as she wore. She could not be comforted. She seemed haunted always by the thought of a son who was lost, one who had rejected Christ and gone out into the night.

And someone says, "But this sounds old fashioned as though no one really believed even to-day in salvation and in eternal fulfilment." Do you know that since the days of Wesley and Rowland Hill, and a thousand others, we are nearer the days of which they spoke than they were then by just so many years? And those things are by just so much more important to the world now than then. On November first last, on the night of the earthquake, nearly everyone thought it was a good thing to be a Christian, not a bad thing to be saved. But men forget easily. The fact of the matter is, however, that the issue is always drawn, and God in the person of His Spirit is placing eternal things before men and women day after day, week after week. The destiny of souls is being settled by the preaching of the gospel. The sum of it is that the most important thing in the world is the coming of the word of God to individual hearts and lives.

Why reject Him? The Jews rejected him nineteen hundred years ago, and God has been telling of His displeasure with His people during all the centuries since. If you want to know what God thinks about those who reject Him, all you need to do is to look at the Jews. They are a scattered people, without a country, without any certain home, persecuted, railed at, derided everywhere. Why? Why? Because they rejected God's Son. God has given one example, and He expects the world to learn from it, and see the seriousness of rejecting His Christ. There will come a day when you cannot come if you will: "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh." That is a terrible word spoken to those who do despite to the Spirit of grace.

We are dealing with these things every day. I do not think for a moment that when God sent His gospel into the world He contemplated the continual rejection of His Son, and a continual offer of mercy to those who reject. Let me read two or three passages: "Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." "But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts"—That is the way they did to the prophets. It is what they did to Jesus Himself; and only John of all the apostles escaped martyrdom, and he is counted a martyr because he so suffered—"but they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came into Iconium."

These people judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life, and the apostles turned from the Jews to the Gentiles, as a testimony against them, and in obedience

to Christ's command, shook the dust off their feet. You will remember our Lord said to the disciples as He sent them out, "Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrhah in the day of judgment, than for that city." Jesus Christ watches the preaching of the gospel. He knows whether hearts are open to receive it, makes a record of those who reject it—and, thank God, He writes down the names of those who receive Him.

"But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus." The apostles, when they found that people would not receive the word, reckoned them out, so to speak, and reminded them that they were reckoning themselves unworthy of everlasting life.

What will you do about it? Do you want God to compel you to come to Him? Do you want Him to ruin your life? Do you want Him to break your heart in order to save your soul? Sometimes He has to do that. Sometimes when God cannot be heard in the individual life in the ordinary way, He speaks to men over an open grave. Men who never heard Him before, hear Him in the hour of darkness and bereavement; when the desire of their eyes is taken from them, then men think of God. They might have had their loved one, and God too; but God knew the only way to save them was to break their hearts.

Why should you compel God to strip you of material prosperity in order that He may reach you? But He may have to do that. You have a good job, plenty for the future, everything sunny—but you will not accept Christ. You put off the day of your acceptance. When you are well settled in life, you will accept Him, but not now. There is time enough yet. But suppose God looks into your life, as he looked upon the hosts of the Egyptians, and took off the wheels of their chariots "that they drave them heavily"—suppose God were to do that to you? Why not hear Him in the day of prosperity? Why not accept Him now, and let all you have and all you are be dedicated to Him?

Could you lose by that? It is utterly impossible that you should do so.

"Make you His service your delight:  
He'll make your want His care."

Did anyone ever lose by serving God? I dare use the words of Satan himself and ask, Did anyone ever serve God for naught? God is never in anyone's debt. Give, and you will see it will be given to you again. That is the principle of the gospel: "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom." The reason some people are so poor spiritually is because they will not unloose and give. And sometimes people are poor in a material sense for the same reason.

Will you not come? Why make God compel you to come? An old Indian had his own illustration of man's attitude to God and of the method which God sometimes adopted in order to bring men to Himself. He put out his hand to a worm—but the worm turned away from him. He tried again, and the worm wriggled away. Then he made a circle of leaves around the worm and set them on fire. The leaves burned all around the worm, the Indian came near and put down

his hand—and the worm crawled on his hand. Said the Indian, "That is the way God brings people to Himself." Do not reject Him. This is not merely a warning that goes for nothing. Destinies are settled by the preaching of the gospel. Hundreds, possibly thousands, of people have heard the gospel in this place for the last time in recent years. They have hardened themselves against God, and have gone out into the night. They are forgotten in the place where they had so done. Their doom is everlastingly sealed.

Some are here to-night who have rejected the gospel for a long time. You are on the edge—and you may go too far. You had better halt. God watches the preaching of His word. He is not only a witness to it, but has everything to do with it, and quite unknown to the preacher, the Spirit of God operates in the lives of men.

A friend of mine, an evangelist in England, a really mighty evangelist, told me this story about a place in the north of England where he was asked to conduct special meetings. It was reported to him that there had not been a revival there within living memory. He consented to go, and sent word ahead for them to hold prayer meetings around the district for some weeks before the special meetings. When my friend went, there was something of a breaking up among the people—the first time in generations. A considerable number of people came to God.

As he was leaving the place he asked a resident minister, "What is your judgment about this? What is the reason for this spiritual dearth? Why is it that preacher after preacher has had his heart broken in this district?" "I do not know", the man replied, "unless it be this. One hundred and twenty years ago John Wesley preached in this town, and the people took him by the heels and dragged him through the streets. John Wesley, on the outskirts of the town shook off the dust of the city as a testimony against them. From that day to this there has seemed to be the very curse of God upon the town."

But we are alive to-night. We are in health. And the opportunity of salvation is ours. Christ is on the throne, mighty to save. He "ever liveth to make intercession for us." If you will repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, in the twinkling of an eye all your sins shall be put away, all paid for by the death of His Son. If you will repent and believe on Him you will be absolved. The precious blood will be applied for the atonement of your sin. You will have a Friend, a Saviour, a Father, a home, a hope, a new life—you will be everlastingly saved. Comē to Him to-night.

#### "THE GOSPEL WITNESS" IN ETHIOPIA

THE GOSPEL WITNESS is a great traveller. It touches all continents, and many of the islands of the seas. It is read by missionaries on many mission fields. Periodically we receive a magazine from Cairo containing a GOSPEL WITNESS sermon in Arabic. A friend called at the office to-day, bringing a letter from a missionary in Ethiopia, full of interesting war news; and among other things, he expressed his appreciation to this friend of THE GOSPEL WITNESS, which he says comes with streams of refreshing to him in that distant land now so troubled.

Our readers pray for missionaries. We beg of them to think also of THE GOSPEL WITNESS as a missionary speaking through missionaries to countless thousands of people. Let us pray for them all.

#### DISPENSATIONAL INTOLERANCE

We are almost afraid to use the words "tolerance" and "intolerance". The first has often been employed by Modernists who have established themselves in evangelical institutions, and in the name of "academic freedom" or "liberty in prophesying", have claimed the right to teach doctrines utterly destructive of the foundations upon which the institution stands. On the other hand, those who have endeavoured "to contend for the faith once for all delivered unto the saints", have been charged with the "intolerance" of "static" minds.

Truth itself is always intolerant of error; and those who believe the truth are likely to stand firmly for what they believe to be true. But the question is, What is truth, and where is it to be found? We believe it to be a foundation principle of evangelical faith that the Bible is the inspired, infallible, and therefore supremely authoritative, word of God. The Bible is the supreme court from which the ultimate verdict on any question must issue. If a man believes the Bible with all his heart, and so preaches and practises its precepts as to demonstrate his submission to its authority, all who similarly believe must find in that fact at least one basis of fellowship.

Surely also it must be admitted that within the Bible there are elementary truths indispensable to faith concerning which there can be little dispute between true believers. For example, the essential Deity of Jesus Christ, involving the doctrines of the Virgin Birth, and His sovereign Lordship and consequent infallibility as God the Son. There can surely be no argument on that subject for those who do really believe the Bible.

The same we believe to be true respecting the Atonement—that it was substitutionary, vicarious in the sense of being expiatory. About this, it seems to us there can be no doubt for those who believe the Bible. So of the new birth, of justification by faith, of the whole scheme of redemption as being of God, and therefore by sovereign grace alone.

We have not space to enumerate all these elementary matters such as the ministry of the Holy Spirit in regeneration and sanctification; but we specifically mention the Second Advent as being cardinal to evangelical faith. It seems impossible that anyone who believes the Bible can fail to believe in the personal, visible, audible, return of the Lord.

But the Bible deals with many aspects of truth; and prophetically reaches forward into the future. But when we come to the realm of interpretation of prophecy we are obviously dealing with aspects of truth about which there must be varying opinions because, in the nature of the case, they are beyond the realm of demonstrable truth, save only that that must be true which God has spoken. Our point, however, is, that any human interpretation of prophecy relating to the future must be conjectural, and cannot be demonstrated as true. Therefore we plead for a wide tolerance in respect to eschatological interpretations on the part of brethren who are otherwise evangelically sound.

We have now to say some things the necessity for which we deeply regret. This Editor has never endeavoured to qualify himself for Second Adventist oracularity. Before we attained our majority we essayed a series of sermons on the Second Coming, having read the late Dr.

W. E. Blackstone's little book, "Jesus is Coming". But before we got to the end of the series we were absolutely convinced that many of Dr. Blackstone's positions were scripturally untenable. We later gave a good deal of study to the doctrines of Darbyism, with the result that we concluded that in many of his teachings, J. N. Darby was very far from being a prophet of the Lord. We were led particularly utterly to reject the notion of a pre-tribulation rapture, and, with it, the fantastic and speculative programme that follows.

But Darbyism has been out-Darbyed by many modern dispensationalists. We rejoice in much of the teaching of Dr. Scofield's notes, which are printed together with the Holy Scriptures, and called "The Scofield Bible." Respecting the essentials of evangelical faith, Dr. Scofield is generally sound enough; but we know of few books that contain more eschatological error than the Scofield Bible.

We believe the views held by such good and great men as Sir Robert Anderson respecting the postponement of the kingdom, with its inevitable corollary that the Lord Jesus Christ came with a tentative programme, and did not quite know what He was going to do, is a positive heresy inasmuch as it impugns, for us at least, logically, the divine omniscience and inherent divine truthfulness incarnate in the person of our Lord. To us, He is the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," Who never has failed, and never can fail, in the complete fulfilment of His sovereign purposes of grace. That assumption is inherent in any true belief in His Deity.

We heard some time ago of an address by a worthy brother, of whose absolute loyalty to evangelical truth there can be no doubt. This brother, at a so-called Bible "conference", delivered an address in which he set forth the fact that salvation is wholly, exclusively, of grace; and therefore of God's sovereign choice. He was immediately taken to task thereafter by one who followed him for having delivered "an excellent seventeenth century Calvinistic sermon". This same Bible conference subsequently passed a resolution to the effect that no one who did not agree with their theory of the pre-tribulation rapture should appear on the platform of that "conference". Incidentally we supposed that a "conference" was an occasion when people meet to confer.

That is the attitude of many who boastfully call themselves "premillennialists". But if that be premillennialism, we should be driven to repudiate the very name; for the principle involved in such intolerance we abhor with all our heart. Nothing more wildly absurd could ever be imagined than the interpretation given by some of our premillennialist friends respecting the passage which speaks of "rightly dividing the word of truth". Rightly to divide the word of truth is soundly, sanely, scripturally, to expound the Scripture. It certainly does not mean to divide the Bible into Dr. Scofield's dispensations; which is, after all, in principle, but a starting place for Bullingerism.

The devil does not care what instrument is employed to prevent men's submission to the authority of the Word of God. The evolutionist cuts the Bible to pieces on the ground that much of it is not in accord with science. Perhaps we might include the evolutionist in a larger term, and say that the *anti-supernaturalists* endeavour thus to rob the Bible of its authority. There are those

who would delete portions of the Old Testament, as, for example, the records of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and of the destruction of the reprobate nations of Canaan by divine command, on the ground that such courses were unethical according to their standards. There are others who would reject certain portions of Scripture on the ground of their inaccuracy respecting historical matters. But any penknife, whether exactly the same in design as that of Jehoiakim or not, will suit the devil's purpose if only it so divides the Word of God as to rob some part of it of its authority.

We dare to say a strong thing, to which perhaps some will greatly object. We believe so-called dispensationalism is a penknife which, so far from "rightly dividing the word of truth", so cuts and carves the Bible as to discredit it in the thought of reasonable men. And let no one despise "reasonable" men. The apostle prayed to be delivered from "wicked and unreasonable men". "Unreasonable" men are sometimes far more difficult to deal with than "wicked" men. True faith is never unreasonable.

Many dispensationalists are so dogmatic—nay, let us use a stronger word, so oracular—in the proclamation of the tenets of their speculative eschatology as to be utterly intolerant of everyone who will not pronounce their Scofieldian Shibboleth. We believe the time has come to recognize and label much of this dispensationalism as positive heresy. We are admonished to "avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain. A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject."

We are not to break fellowship immediately with one who holds heretical views, but are to admonish him at least once or twice. For that reason, we have long been tolerant of the views of the pre-rapturists, and the "rightly dividers", and the post-rapture revivalists. But the intolerance of many such is not only pronounced, but is often so unreasonable, that it becomes almost impossible for reasonable men to have any association with it. We have known brethren for years who preached their pre-rapturism and its implications without any protest on our part. When so many grave matters required unity of purpose and action on the part of true believers, we hesitated to make an issue of secondary things. But we cannot afford to travel under false colours. We have had many of these brethren in our pulpit, and never at any time have we sought to limit their utterance. But when it became known that we did not agree with them in these matters, and taught that which was contrary thereto in our own pulpit continuously and consistently, their friendship cooled, and their correspondence ceased. So be it.

The Scofield eschatology, it appears to us, is divorced from logic. Seventeenth century Calvinism indeed! Well would it be if some of these "rightly dividing" oracles could study a little the philosophy of Calvinism. In our view, what is called Calvinism is identical with the gospel of grace. It is a system of truth which is as unanswerably scriptural as it is inexorably logical. By all means, let us preach the doctrine of the certain, personal, visible, audible, return of the Lord. But let us not forget that the best preparation for His second coming is to preach the first coming in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

## Whole Bible Course Lesson Leaf

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Lesson 5

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### DIVINE COMFORT FOR AHAZ

Lesson Text: Isaiah, chapters 7 and 8.

Golden Text: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."—Isaiah 8:20.

Bible School Reading: Isaiah 7:1-16.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS: Monday—2 Kings 16:1-9; Tuesday—2 Chron. 28:16-27; Wednesday—Job 9:1-15; Thursday—Ps. 108:1-13; Friday—Matt. 1:18-25; Saturday—Luke 1:26-38.

#### A MESSAGE OF COMFORT (7:1-9)

In these verses there is recorded an incident which occurred in the reign of Ahaz, king of Judah. The kingdom of Israel as originally constituted had been divided in the reign of Rehoboam into two kingdoms, known later as Israel, composed of ten tribes; and Judah, with two tribes (1 Kings 12:21). Between these kingdoms there was no love lost, and on this occasion Israel is found in confederacy with Syria arrayed against Judah. Jerusalem had been attacked by these confederates, but with lack of success (2 Kings 16:5). Still their presence together in the land constituted a threat against Judah which caused the people of that realm to tremble. At such a time Isaiah was sent by God with the prophetic announcement that their enemies would not only fail in their endeavour to overcome them, but would themselves be overcome. And just as indicated, destruction came upon them (2 Kings 15:29, 16:9). Ahaz is bidden to be quiet and fear not, and is encouraged to trust God in his difficulties; but this he failed to do, probably due to the fact that he was not right with God (2 Kings 16:2; 2 Chron. 28:1), for he turned to Assyria for help, and brought himself into bondage, and received little help in return (2 Chron. 28:16-27).

Note the illustration in this experience of those who turn to the world in times of trouble rather than unto God. We require to be impressed with the reality of divine help, and the impotency of the world to aid us. We need also to live in touch with God so that we shall be conscious of His presence, and realize His nearness, and willingness to help. Observe the case of Asa (2 Chron. 14:9-12), also that of Israel at the Red Sea (Ex. 14:21), and of Elisha in Dothan (2 Kings 6:16-18). God is honoured when we trust Him, and we are helped—and the result is that we need fear no one (Heb. 13:6).

#### THE SIGN (7:10-16).

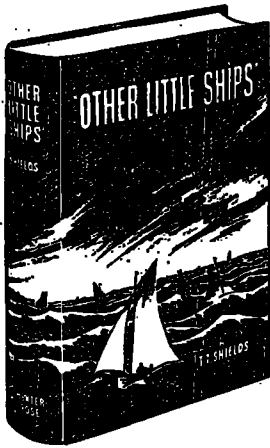
The message given to Ahaz evidently fell upon unbelieving ears. The king had more faith in the might of Assyria than in the power of God. Perhaps he had at that time made overtures for assistance, and did not care to draw back and trust to the promise of God. The matter is pressed upon him, however, and he is requested to ask a sign from the Lord, which would give ocular proof of the truth of Isaiah's message, and convince him of the safety of his city and people. This he declined to ask, using pious language in his refusal. The prophet thereupon chides him, and the other leaders, and declares the Lord Himself would give them a sign. This sign related to the bearing of a child by a virgin. Its fulfilment is found in the birth of our Lord through the virgin Mary. It is applied to that event by the Holy Spirit through Matthew (Mat. 1:22, 23). And to the believing student of Scripture this application of prophecy is final.

Several things are worthy of note respecting the virgin birth of Christ. First, the scriptural accounts of it. These are found in Matthew and Luke. In the former (Matt. 1:18-25) we observe Joseph's meditated action concerning Mary and the angel's explanation. The Son born would be

called Jesus, Saviour; and all this was in fulfilment of the prophetic word of our lesson. In the latter scripture (Luke 1:26-38), we are informed of the visit of the angel Gabriel to Mary in Nazareth, and of the nature of his salutation and message to her. She is addressed as one highly favoured of God, and was regarded as a divinely chosen instrument, ready for God's use, and fully submitted to His will. Through her Jesus was begotten of the Holy Spirit, and thus became incarnate. The significance of the virgin birth is also worthy of consideration. Observe that it affects the authenticity of Scripture. The Word of God records it, and if it is not true then our faith is weakened, not only in the parts directly connected therewith, but in the whole. The character of Mary is also affected, for it is clear from the record that Joseph was not the father of Jesus, and this means that if Jesus was not born as indicated Mary's character is seriously affected. And this again affects the nature of Jesus, for how could He be the Son of God if apart from the interposition of the power of God, He was born out of wedlock? This in its turn would mean that He inherited a sinful nature, that His death could not atone for sins, that Christianity has no real foundation in fact, and that therefore we are still in our sins, and on our way to a lost eternity. Under such circumstances, apart from His claim to divine prerogatives, our Lord might be known as a good man and a great teacher, but never as a Saviour. Some thoughtless people aver that it is a matter of no consequences, whether or not we believe in the virgin birth of Christ, but they fail to take into consideration the logical consequences of unbelief. Belief in our Lord's virgin birth is a fundamental of the faith, and is reasonable of acceptance when we bear in mind the simple and satisfactory explanation of the same in the scriptural record; together with the omnipotent power of God capable of performing this and all other miracles. All things are possible with Him (Matt. 19:26). Our ignorance of matters pertaining to an ordinary birth should make us pause before declaring unbelief respecting this extraordinary birth of which God Himself is the explanation. Note the significance of the first Messianic promise, seed of woman, not of man (Gen. 3:15), the place of our Lord's birth (Mic. 5:2), and the nature of His person (9:6, 7). Also observe the promise, power, and purpose manifest in our Lord's virgin birth.

#### THE MESSAGE OF WARNING (7:17 to 8:22).

Ahaz, assured of temporary security from the attacks of Rezin and Pekah, had been enjoined to trust the Lord for continued safety; but failing to do this, he was given prophetic information relative to the depredation of the Assyrians in whom he trusted for deliverance. Called in as allies, they acted as enemies (2 Chron. 28:20, 21). Thus Ahaz reaped the evil consequences of his disobedience to the will of God. The prophetic declaration indicated the punishment meted out to Judah would be of a most severe kind (vs. 17-20); the land would be denuded of its inhabitants, and would become a vast pasturage for animals (vs. 21-25). Furthermore, the time was near for the fulfilment of this prediction (8:1-4). The Assyrians would come in great numbers, overflowing the land (vs. 5-8), although they would not completely inundate it; Judah would disappear at that time, as God was with her (vs. 9, 10). Then follows Isaiah's testimony concerning the instruction given him by the Lord. He was not to walk in the way of those who forsook God, and who entered into a human confederacy. His duty was to sanctify the Lord, trust in Him, bind up the testimony, and seal the law among the disciples (vs. 11-16). He thereafter declares it to be his intention to wait on the Lord, and look for Him; after which he enjoins the people to look to God, and to His law and testimony, and to pay no heed to those with familiar spirits. And the chapter closes with a reference to the misery of the people during the Assyrian conflict (vs. 17-22). Observe the present day application of this record, with the separate walk for the child of God (v. 11), the union of world forces against God (v. 12), the purpose of the Christian respecting God (v. 13), his shelter amid the trials of life (v. 14), the stumbling of the wicked before the Lord (vs. 14, 15; 1 Peter 2:8), the waiting of the saint on God (v. 17), the Messianic application of the reference to the children (v. 17, Heb. 2:13), the condemnation of spiritism, the injunction to seek the Lord (v. 19), and the divine test of all preaching and teaching (v. 20). The human heart is the same in all ages. It seeks after the things of the world, and not after God; and the saint must guard against its tendencies. How may we live pleasing to God in the midst of an ungodly world?



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