



“The Glory of This Latter House Shall Be Greater Than of the Former, Saith the Lord of Hosts.”

December 15, 1938.

PROGRESS OF BUILDING OPERATIONS

We have learned that many of our readers, on receipt of THE GOSPEL WITNESS, first scan its pages for news of building operations. For their information we have reproduced on our front page, a photograph taken on Monday of this week. The photograph was taken from the roof of a building across the corner from the church. And we would point out to readers beyond Canada's borders that this photograph was taken December 12th in the land of "Our Lady of the Snows." It represents the best exterior view we could get, but it gives a very imperfect idea of the work that is actually going on.

More than one hundred and twenty workmen are engaged on the building. We wish we could show our readers the great building that is rapidly rising to the east of the auditorium. What can be seen of it is so foreshortened in the photograph as to give a very inadequate idea of its size. The eastern end of the building reaches to the middle of George Street, so that the entire length of the building is a complete block plus half the width of George Street. The architects inform us that we have a half acre of building on one floor, so that on the three floors we have an area of an acre and a half.

The scaffolding about the upper part of the steeple is left in place for the use of the sheet-metal workers who are already engaged covering the steeple with copper. All the new part of the roof, part of which may be seen in the photograph, will also be covered with copper like many of the old cathedrals of Europe. It will be noticed that one of the finials on the tower is missing. It is, however, ready to be hoisted into place. These four smaller steeples—we use the term to make it simple to our readers—will also be covered with copper. While it is new, it will shine almost like gold in the sunlight, but the weather will, in a very few years, turn it green.

Above the hoarding at the front of the church, just above where the large letters, "Massey Hall", appear in the picture, there will be seen a large opening for the window, and a new breach in the wall below. A careful examination with a glass will show between the top of the hoarding and this new opening, the top of a huge expanse of cement-work, a large platform reached by steps from the front, and from either end. The entrance at the tower is clearly visible. If our readers will, in their imagination, double that entrance and put it right in the front, they will have some idea of what the new entrance in front will look like when completed. These two gothics will meet, but will not interfere with the large window above.

A few days ago we visited the shop where windows, doors, frames, and some of the interior furnishings, are being made. We saw the three huge window frames, the one for the front, and the others for the south and north transepts of the building. The size may be judged from the window still intact which escaped the fire at the Gerrard Street side at the eastern end which is clearly visible in the picture. One has little idea of the size of these windows when they have been hoisted into place. The frame itself seemed to equal the dimensions of a small house as we viewed it at the factory; and we were told that it required ten men to move it. We hope soon to give our readers a photograph that will show up the progress of the work on the new building to the east. When the building is

completed, if all rooms were occupied at once, there would be accommodation for more than three thousand, five hundred people—in fact, not far short of four thousand.

In addition to all the sub-contracts included in the general contract, the Building Committee have let the contracts for nearly all the rest of the work, which include plumbing and heating, glazing, seating, and the hardwood contract for the organ screen, pulpit and Communion platform.

We solicit a continuance of the prayerful and practical interest of all our readers. It is our confident hope that the building will be ready for the re-opening, furnished and all complete, not later than the middle of May. To walk about our dilapidated Zion, and mark its bulwarks and tell the towers thereof, at this stage, would fill the undiscerning with despair of any such happy consummation; but one hundred and twenty workmen, working eight hours a day, can bring a great deal to pass.

Meanwhile

We have said little about our general services, and perhaps our readers scan our pages enquiringly for some news of the progress of the work. Our week-evening services—Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday—are still held in Cooke's Presbyterian Church, the hospitality of which church and its minister we greatly appreciate. We cannot imagine how any better arrangement could have been made; and certainly we could have found nowhere in the world a more hospitable congregation.

Our Sunday services continue to be held in Massey Hall. We are under a great handicap in our Sunday School work; notwithstanding, we manage to maintain a Sunday School attendance around the thousand mark. The morning and evening services are well sustained by large congregations. We try always to keep in mind that our evening service is shared by the whole GOSPEL WITNESS family. Through the printed page the ministry of that service reaches an enormous multitude. We ask our readers to continue to pray both for the actual work in the church, and for the church's ministry through THE GOSPEL WITNESS.

NEWS OF UNION CHURCHES

ST. CATHARINES—Rev. J. H. Watt. The Bethel Baptist Church, St. Catharines, is rejoicing in the manifest blessing of God upon all departments of its work. The Sunday School has been growing steadily, and for last Sunday set its objective at one hundred. They were delighted when one hundred and thirty boys and girls were present. The Church services are well attended and larger accommodation will soon be needed. Pray with them that the unsaved who are under conviction may soon yield themselves to the Saviour.

KAPUSKASING—Rev. Robt. Brackstone. "On November 20th we held our first communion service. Twelve adults, all baptized believers, gathered around the Lord's table. It was a new, yet blessed experience for most of the believers here. They responded liberally to the purchasing of a communion set.

"I rejoice to report that the saints here are doing systematic visiting, and already results have been observed at the Bible School and Sunday services. There is no greater joy to a pastor's soul than to see his people engaged in visitation. A few weeks ago a lady made a profession of faith in Christ. The increased earnestness in prayer and in the Lord's work here in every department has brought us much blessing. I praise God for my people in this place. We in Kapuskasing give you thanks for the Union's prayerful and financial interest in this work as well as in every enterprise for Christ Jesus." R. B.

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The Jarvis Street Pulpit

THE LIBERATION OF AN IMPRISONED SOUL

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

Preached in Massey Hall, Toronto, Sunday Evening, December 11th, 1938

(Stenographically reported)

"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?
"I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."—Romans 7:24, 25.

A gospel service ought to resemble, in many respects, a hospital clinic, to which people come with their ailments for diagnosis and treatment. I shall assume this evening that there are some here who need help, and shall try to speak to you as a doctor would speak to his patients; endeavouring to show you the seat of all human ills, the cause of all our troubles; and, at the same time, to explain how we may find a way out, where we may find a remedy.

The text is a profound one, and yet very simple. It is a mirror in which universal human experience is reflected. It is the story of every individual life—at least, in its first two chapters. Here mention is made of a *prison-house of the soul*, the "body of this death"; a *captive's cry for deliverance*: "Who shall deliver me"; and here, too, is a *way of escape, in answer to his prayer*: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

I.

It is a picture, then, of A PRISON IN WHICH A SOUL IS INCARCERATED. It is called "the body of this death".

This prison-house was not made to be a prison: it was originally designed for a palace. The human body is the sublimest of all material creations, and, together with the human mind, constitutes the greatest handiwork of God. This two-storied edifice was never designed for a prison, but for a palace in which a sinless and immortal spirit should dwell, a spirit endowed with divine qualities, with divine capacities and potentialities, a spirit fitted for the companionship of angels, and for the fellowship of Deity.

It was for this purpose the palace of man-soul was created, that the creature likeliest to God of all created beings should dwell therein; and that God should dwell with him; that the tabernacle of God should be with men, that God might dwell with them.

His Majesty, the King, will visit this country, God willing, in the springtime. There has been some discussion as to where and how he may be entertained when

he comes to Toronto. There was a house here that was specially designed to be occupied by the Lieutenant-Governor of the Province, his representative; and whenever the King should visit this part of his dominions, a place where he himself might dwell. But that house has fallen into the hands of the spoilers; it has been emptied of its furnishings, and reduced to a mere shell, unfit for royal habitation. And I think he who spoiled it showed his kinship with the chief spoiler of all royal and beautiful things.

So the human personality, with all its inestimable capacities and potentialities, its mental chambers, its intellectual and physical powers, designed to be occupied and used by God Himself, was created in order that it might be occupied, if I may so say, by one of the King's lieutenant-governors, to whom He had given His commission, "Have dominion"; and in which, together with such, the King himself might dwell. It was thus designed that there should not be a province in all the dominions of the King of kings, nor a spot on earth anywhere, where the Lord God might not find a dwelling-place. For some such high purpose were we all created, that God might dwell in us and with us; and that we should abide in perpetual fellowship with Him.

But *the palace is possessed by an usurper who has converted it into a prison*, called now "the body of this death". Sin is the usurper; and he has perverted and prostituted all human powers to his own purposes; so that there is not a room in all this vast structure which originally so marvellously displayed the glory of God, that has not shared the pollution of sin's presence.

The chamber of the affections elaborately, sumptuously, designed to be the throne-room of the King, where He should dwell and reign supreme, has been given over to vile affections; and is occupied by that vicious trinity, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life", which are not of the Father, but of the world.

Imagination was designed to be the art-gallery in this glorious palace; but its marvellous pictures of divine glories, its heavenly statuary, have all been removed. Have you read the story in the eighth chapter of Ezekiel, where the prophet was brought to the temple which had been defiled, and was directed to look? He said, "And when I looked, behold a hole in the wall." The story continues, "Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and when I had digged in the wall, behold a door. And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here. So I went in and saw; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed upon the wall round about. And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israël, and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, with every man his censer in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up. Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery, for they say, The Lord seeth us not; the Lord hath forsaken the earth."

That is an accurate picture of the human imagination that was designed to be illuminated by heavenly rays, and filled with the imagery of Heaven's beauty. These spiritual glories have vanished and have been displaced, in some instances, by pictures of venal orgies and bacchanalian revelries; or, at best, by pictures of the kingdoms of this world and their glory on grand, or miniature scales, by models of temporal toys or evanescent splendours, all of them "without God in the world."

The *chamber of the understanding*, the counsel-chamber of the soul, where Wisdom was wont to preside, is given over to "seducing spirits" who devise mischievous things, and love darkness rather than light. The *memory*, designed to echo and reverberate with divine music, and to fill the soul with holy recollections and heavenly aspirations, bears the ineradicable marks of its unclean tenantry. Here the soul stores "electrical transcriptions" of its mundane enjoyments, and accords the voices of all manner of evils incessant encores. The *conscience*, the *sanctum-sanctorum*, the private audience chamber of the King, has been perverted, despoiled of its purity, its eastern window darkened, and filled with sundry "wicked balances" and "deceitful weights." The *will*, the chamber of the keeper of the keys above the palace gates, is emptied of every regulating and controlling power, so that while the gates cannot be swung back from within, they may be pushed wide open by any vagrant spirit from without. Thus terribly, and completely, has the man made in God's image and likeness, fallen from his first estate! The palace has become a prison, and "the mind of the flesh" of which Paul speaks in this chapter has become its ruthless keeper, its implacable jailor; all the emotions and motions of the soul are subjected to his vicious will; and all the legitimate passions of the mind and of the body, divinely created, but intended to serve as disciplined and ordered servants, to do the holy will of the King, have become wardens of the prison, and by the plying of their whips of carnal desire, they drive the enchained soul to do the work of the devil, until the whole man is enslaved, and made partaker of the universal corruption.

Not a flattering picture of human nature! But I venture to affirm it is a true one—true not only to the

teaching of Holy Writ, but equally true to all human experience. We cannot do the good that we would, and the evil that we would not, that we do. Oh the pity of it, that men and women made as I tried to show you last Sunday evening—and this is the opposite of last Sunday evening's picture—men and women made to be free, and to stand fast in and to enjoy the liberty which God has ordained for all His human creatures, should be shut up in prison!

II.

But there is A CRY FROM THE PRISON CELL: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?—How shall I find a way out of this prison-house? How shall I find a power by which the bonds and bands of sin may be broken, and my spirit be liberated and set free to roam at will amid the paradise of God?"

That is the great problem of the world to-day. It is a cry that goes up from this sin-cursed earth as perhaps it has scarcely ever ascended before—from men, and communities, and nations, and empires; from all human habitations everywhere: "O wretched men that we are! who shall deliver us from this state of bondage and of death?"

The occupant of this prison is perhaps slow to discover that the prison is no longer a palace. For a while he felicitates himself that he is a royal guest, that he is being made the recipient of special favours, that he is being lavishly entertained. In the language of the street he says for a time, "This is the life." Young men and maidens, youths, men of middle age, and older perchance, may still try to persuade themselves that they are living luxuriously in the indulgence of every whim, and the exercise of every fancy. It is not until they try the doors and find them all locked that they discover the palace has become a prison.

The young man says, "I can drink, and I can leave it alone"—and he believes what he says. "I can do thus and so, or refrain from doing it"—and believes he is speaking the truth. "I am the captain of my fate, the master of my soul", he says—and is quite sincere in saying it. He thinks he is! It is not until he attempts to liberate himself that he discovers that the walls of his prison-house are very thick, that their foundations are deeply laid, and that their towers challenge the skies. It is not until he has tried every door, seeking egress, that he discovers how firmly barred and bolted they are, and how utterly futile must be his utmost endeavour to set himself free.

For a while, I say, he does not know it: he thinks he is in a palace, and not a prison. It is not until the day breaks, *until the day breaks from without*, and "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness" shines in his heart, "to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ", that he begins to discern his true circumstances; and in the ascending glory of the morning, he discovers there is a world of beauty, wealth, and wonder without. He learns then that there is a larger and freer life beyond the boundaries of what he has called his palace; and that yonder there is fulness of joy, that beyond the senses, there are pleasures forevermore.

Then he is minded to seek his liberty, and it is not until then that he discovers how firmly bound he is, and how securely kept in captivity. He aspires to holier things; he finds within himself, as Mr. Whitcombe ob-

served in his prayer this evening, a hunger and thirst after righteousness. He finds growing up within him a passion for better things, for a higher and holier life.

Then he says, "I will believe. I will pass through the door of truth. I will enter upon a world of truth, and appropriate its treasures"—only to find that believing is difficult, that the "god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." He may be a university graduate; he may be a professor of philosophy; he may be ranked among earth's most erudite scholars, a man of keen intellect, with trained mental powers who says, "I have had enough of my skepticism, I will believe." But alas! he finds that every chamber of his mind has shared in sin's pollution. He finds that every guest he ever entertained has left his mark behind him. He cannot shake off his shackles of unbelief which he fondly fancied were but scholarly adornments. When he would fain free himself from it all, he discovers that this personality designed as a dwelling-place for God has become the home of demons.

Not all souls are bound in exactly the same way; they wear different kinds of prison dress, but they are all captives, notwithstanding. Not every soul is subject to the same temptations; not every soul is similarly enslaved. One may be bound on the plane of the intellect. He may have been caught by a vision of "the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them"; and, fired with a passion for power, he may become a world figure—but still a slave of the devil, led captive by the devil at his will. Or he may cherish a lesser ambition to possess himself of wealth, or other kind of power; and his battle may be chiefly upon the higher, or at least more refined and respectable levels of life. But really, they are all the same; and it matters nothing to your liberty, whether you are in prison upstairs, or downstairs, or in a dungeon. If all the doors are locked, and the keepers of the prison keep the doors, it is still a prison, no matter what clothes you wear.

The man says, "I will change the direction of my affectional nature. I will love the things that are worthy; I will set my affections on things above." But even as he endeavours to do so, he finds his affections are chained to earthly loves. He could join us, in singing, were we to sing it to-night,—

"Look how we grovel here below,
Fond of these earthly toys;
Our souls can neither fly, nor go
To reach immortal joys."

Or if he be enchained in the lower dungeon, and under the captivity of these "fleshly lusts which war against the soul," a slave to some form of appetite, to some habit of yielding to the body, by and by the man loathes himself, and feels he can no longer live in such a dungeon. What then? He cries out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

My dear friends, the moment one of God's human creatures discovers that the palace has become a prison, as soon as it is recognized as such, and he feels the loss of his liberty, *he becomes under any circumstances, an utterly wretched man.* Germany and Italy are vast prison-houses to-day, illustrative, on a colossal scale, of individual experience, where wretchedness prevails. One cannot be happy in a dungeon. "O wretched man that I am!" And yet, paradoxical as it may seem, happy is the man who can say, "O wretched man that I am!"

That is our great task, *to get men to see the utter wretchedness of a life that is divorced from God and His grace.* Nor have we any power to do so: only the illuminating grace of the Holy Ghost only—did I not say a moment ago—the morning light from without can break in upon the soul's darkness, and show a man how utterly lost he is apart from Christ.

Blessed is the man who thus prays. He does not say, "Who shall help me to deliver myself." He is past that. He has tried to dig under the foundation of his prison, like the man who became the Count of Monte Cristo. But the foundations are so deep that he cannot dig under them. He finds that sinful human nature goes down to the base. He cannot scale the walls, nor tunnel through them, nor fashion a key to unlock the door—"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" He cannot deliver himself. I say, one is on his way to salvation when he has learned his need of a mighty Deliverer, mightier than he himself could ever be.

III.

SHALL I TRY TO GIVE YOU AN ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION? Here is a man who has seen something; he has heard a Voice. And scarcely has he uttered his great cry, but there is an answer. He says, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." What shall we offer to an enchained soul for his liberation? *A philosophy of idealism?* Shall we tell a man to hitch his wagon to a star? Shall we tell him to set before him some lofty conception of life, and, concentrating all his powers, labour toward its realization? Shall we take him up to the window and let him look out upon the outer world? He sees a vast expanse of meadow, of rolling green, of glorious forest-land, and snow-capped hilltops in the distance. He sees the lambs gambolling about in the springtime, the birds flitting from place to place, and perhaps, from some crag or treetop he may see a majestic eagle catching sight of the sun, spread his mighty pinions and fly away. "Ah", saith he, "it does me good to see such a picture of freedom as that. I will participate in it. That is my ideal; I will go."

He would lift his foot—but his shackles hold him to the ground. He would free his arms, but he is held by iron bracelets. Suddenly he is recalled to a realization of the tragic facts of his case, that the doors are locked and the windows barred. He confesses, "I cannot get out."

A Japanese student some years ago, had heard something about our work and came from Buffalo that he might spend a night in one of our prayer meetings. He was a graduate of the University of Tokio, and had come to the United States to pursue a post-graduate course. He had been offered, by a certain religious body, a course in their colleges in this country without charge. His father was a native missionary in Japan, and he had said to them, "No, gentlemen, I do not want to go; nor do I want to be under obligation to you. I am going across the sea, and shall take such courses as I feel to be necessary, in order that I may prepare myself to defend my own people against the religious poison that you are instilling into their minds." He said to me, "I have visited the churches of all denominations, in New York; and for the most part what I have heard differs nothing from that which I should hear in Japanese temples in my own country—a philosophy of idealism, an ethical religion, telling people what they ought to do. I have told some

of the preachers whom I have met that they are no better than Japanese priests or a pagan prophet; they tell people what they ought to do, but offer them no power to realize the thing they desire. I am more than ever convinced that there is nothing but the dynamic of the gospel of Jesus Christ that will do for my people."

You cannot save the soul by taking him to the windows and showing him a beautiful prospect, without giving him a key that will unlock his prison door.

Shall we offer him for his freedom *some system of educational discipline*? Oh the fallacy of it! But we have been told for a generation or so that the schoolmaster may prove a saviour, and that if only men were educated, all would be well. I have preached in asylums and in jails, and I have learned that in both classes of institution there are educated people, who got into jail in the one case, and who have lost their reason and been put into confinement in the other, because of the ravages of sin in their own lives. They were not free, but slaves. Education will not suffice.

What then? *A formal religion*? Is religion *per se* enough? Is it enough to bring a man to church, to save his soul? No! You cannot put a service in your pocket and take it with you to your work to-morrow. No formal religion that consists in religious observances of one sort or another, whether it be the saying of prayers, the singing of hymns, or the observances of ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, or baptism and the Mass—take them all together and say, "Here is a solvent, that will dissolve the iron that binds you, and set you free." Nothing of the kind! You cannot save a man by such means. "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

There is only one answer: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Note what he says: "I thank God." *The power to free men, to break their shackles, to make them new creatures, is from above.* It is "power from above" we need. It is to God we must go. What saith the Scripture? "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth"—why?—"for I AM GOD AND THERE IS NONE ELSE." No one but God Himself can help us. Only God can set us free.

Will you not see it? Salvation is not to be found in systems of thought, in institutionalism, in religion as such. These can never save a man. I have no objection to a philosophy of idealism: you have it in the Bible. I have no objection to educational discipline: if you become a Christian, you will enter the school of Christ, and will become educated. I have no objection to religion: as you know God, you will have the only true religion. I have no objection to ordinances: they have their proper place. There can be no reasonable objection to religious institutions, if the word "religious" has the proper content. But all these are but media through which the power of God is conveyed. What we need primarily, basically, essentially, is God Himself. No one but God can help us.

But you say, "Who is God? Where is He? How can I find Him? *There is only one way of knowing God.* Says this delivered soul, "I thank God." How did you find Him, Paul? "Through Jesus Christ our Lord." He would have said, "He is the only God I know. The Man of Nazareth has become my Master."

When Jesus of Nazareth went into the synagogue at Nazareth, there was handed to Him the roll of the pro-

phet Esais, and "when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." This mighty Saviour carries at His girdle the key to the outer gate, and to every door in the whole palace of man-soul. He says, "I am he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth." He comes to us to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.

There is an interesting story in the Acts of the Apostles with which you are all familiar, of how Peter was kept in prison, bound with two chains, and delivered to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him. "The keepers before the door kept the prison", and Peter was asleep between two soldiers, bound with chains. Poor man! No one could open the door to get in, and he could not open the door to get out. Did I say no one? "Behold the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands . . . And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision. When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city." And what happened? "Which opened to them of his own accord; and they went out." I have often wondered if Peter had not been afraid of that gate as they proceeded, saying perhaps, "Is not that too much?" Oh no; not for God: "It opened to them of its own accord." By and by the angel left Peter, and "when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews." He was set free.

Thus does my Lord Jesus come to sin's captives; thus does He open the prison doors. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Thus by the gracious power of the blood of Christ, which pays the penalty of my sin, for the sake of which I was cast into prison—by the payment of that penalty, a holy God is free to release His life-giving Spirit to break the power of cancelled sin, and set the prisoner free; so that we are able to sing,

"My chains fell off, my soul was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee."

It is a great salvation; and it is in Christ. No one else can help us; no one else can save us; and, blessed be God, we do not need anyone else. It is Jesus only. None but Jesus can do helpless sinners good.

How may you have it? Follow the direction of the text. First, make confession—"O wretched man that I am! I am cribbed, cabined, and confined, by the power of the body of this death. I confess it. Who shall deliver me? I want to be free." Then hear the gospel, and by faith cast yourself upon God as revealed in Christ

at the cross, in the empty grave, and the open heavens; and then say, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Let us pray—Mr. Brown, will you lead us?

Rev. W. Gordon Brown: Gracious Lord, Who art our Creator, and Who in Thy grace hast come to be our Redeemer, we praise Thee for the liberating power of the Word of Thy truth; that Thou hast made us to know the truth, that the truth might make us free; for he whom the Son makes free, is free indeed. Before Thee this evening, O God, are captive souls: may Jesus Christ, the Liberator, Thy divine Son, make them free at this moment. Grant that, as we have heard, they may cast themselves upon Thee. So may we all afresh enter into the liberty that is in Christ, and leave the last vestige of bondage behind us, to find that Jesus Christ may be all and in all to the redeemed soul. We ask it in Thy name, Amen.

Bible School Lesson Outline

OLIVE L. CLARK, Ph.D. (Tor.)

Vol. 2 Fourth Quarter Lesson 52 December 25th, 1938

THE VISIT OF THE WISE MEN

Lesson Text: Matthew 2:1-12.

Golden Text: "Where is he that is born king of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."—Matt. 2:2.

The history of mankind in general, as well as the history of every individual, exhibits many contrasts and contradictions. The poet Longfellow reminds us that "Life is chequered shade and sunshine". Especially is this true in regard to the age in which Christ was born into this world. That period was characterized by the most intense darkness, but also, by reason of His Coming, by the most glorious light (Isa. 9:2; 60:2; Matt. 4:15-16; Luke 1:79; John 1:9; 9:5). Let us consider some of the contrasts suggested in the narrative of our Saviour's birth.

"In the days of Herod the king—there came wise men—, saying, Where is he that is born king?" These two kings were as unlike in character and destiny as two kings could possibly be. The man Herod was an ambitious, cruel and sinful monarch, while the child Jesus was mild, loving, and absolutely sinless. The one ruled with grandeur over an earthly kingdom. One was a tyrant, ruling by force; the Other was a true King, Reigning in love. The mastery of Herod was uncertain, vacillating, ephemeral; the majesty of Christ was sure, constant, eternal.

The star of great brilliance which appeared to the wise men symbolized the rising of the "Star out of Jacob" promised by the prophet of old (Numb. 24:17). Christ is the Bright and Morning Star to His people (2 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 2:28; 22:16). His star ascended into the heavens, but the star which represented Lucifer, the former son of the morning, descended from heaven to earth (Isa. 14:12-19; Luke 10:18; 2 Cor. 11:14; Rev. 12:9, 10). Christ's triumph over the forces of Satan was complete (Eph. 1:20, 21; Col. 2:15).

This conflict between Satan and God, between Christ and Antichrist, a conflict which has been raging throughout the centuries, is suggested also in the triumph of the birth of Christ of the seed of the woman (Gal. 4:4), in spite of Satan's many attempts to destroy the royal seed, that he might frustrate the sentence of judgment against himself (Gen. 3:15). He desired to keep Christ from the cross. To this end, the Arch-enemy seems to have instigated the purpose of Joseph, which was not carried out, because God intervened (Matt. 1:19). Doubtless, also, Satan inspired the slaughter of the dear little children of Bethlehem, thinking thereby that he would take the young Saviour's life. Once again, God overruled (Matt. 2:13-18).

Wealthy potentates, as well as humble shepherds, received the announcement of the Saviour's birth. The wise men opened their treasures and presented gifts to the young King, but the lowly shepherds had nought to give Him save the homage of their grateful hearts. And yet, however much the magi and the herdsmen differed in earthly station, they each adored

the Infant Saviour. To Him must all men come for salvation, whether they be rich or poor, high or low, cultured or uncultured (Acts 10:34, 35; Rom. 10:12, 13).

Two questions were asked in regard to the Saviour's birth: "Where is he?" and "At what time did the star appear?" The wise men were not ashamed to ask their question openly; they seem to have addressed their enquiry publicly to all whom they met, for all Jerusalem became stirred. Herod, on the other hand, secretly called the wise men, and interrogated them in private. The magi enquired for the Lord that they might worship Him, but Herod that he might slay Him. The one group sought Him diligently in devoted love, the other group sought Him diligently in malicious hatred. The wise men found Him, but Herod lost track of Him (Jer. 29:13); their quest resulted in life, but his ended in death (Rom. 6:23).

One may also contrast the question found in the opening portion of the New Testament, "Where is he?" (Matt. 2:2) with the question recorded near the beginning of the Old Testament, "Where art thou?" (Gen. 3:9). One question describes man seeking God, while the other depicts God seeking man. Logically, the Old Testament question must come first, since it is only because God in sovereign mercy has chosen sinful men that they have the right to seek His face (Luke 19:10; Isa. 55:6).

The knowledge of the birth of Christ brought joy to the wise men, but trouble to Herod. While the magi "rejoiced with exceeding great joy", the cruel king was agitated in mind and heart at the thought that One had arisen Who might even supplant him. They whose deeds are good rejoice in the Light, but they whose deeds are evil reject the Light, lest their deeds be made manifest (John 3:18-21). The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is the saviour of life unto life, or of death unto death (2 Cor. 2:16).

May we all make our way to the Saviour, following the path which He Himself has laid out for us, and finding Him, worship Him with true and loving hearts!

SEMINARY NOTES

"Did you have a good week-end?"

"A fine one."

This is what one usually hears when he inquires from the student pastors of the weekly progress of their work.

Last week-end Mr. Wm. Frey, our student teacher of French, spent with Rev. W. W. Fleischer at Fenelon Falls, presenting the work which is the foreign missionary enterprise of our Union, the Evangelical Association of French-Speaking Baptist Churches.

Two weeks ago last Sunday morning this scribe preached in the Long Branch Baptist Church, and found a live and growing Bible School and an enthusiastic people with a missionary vision of the possibilities of work along Toronto's western lake front. The morning Bible School at Long Branch, the afternoon one at New Toronto, together with the Women's Prayer Meeting and the Men's Fellowship on Sunday afternoons at Long Branch, total about two hundred and fifty. Certainly this is a very splendid record, but not what we are going to see!

A week ago it was the privilege of this writer to address the Young People's Society at Forward Baptist Church. To bring a word of gospel and encouragement to ninety-five in such a group is a privilege indeed. Rev. J. Scott is doing a fine work in Forward. We understand on Sunday evenings it is usually necessary to bring chairs into the auditorium, which itself seats six hundred and fifty.

Have you seen the first *Seminarian* of this school year? Our student paper is now in its tenth volume and the first number is packed with information and inspiration. On the front page is a new photograph of Mr. Frey and an introduction of our student-teacher of French. Some of the Convention speeches are reported briefly, experiences in soul-winning are related, an article *Pour Nos Lecteurs Francais* appears, and throughout there is plenty of spice and sauce, as one would expect in a school paper. The subscription price is only forty cents a year. Subscriptions may be sent to Mr. C. H. Wilkins, 337 Jarvis Street, Toronto 2, Ontario. Single copies may be obtained for ten cents. We congratulate Editor A. E. Hewson and Assistant-Editor J. A. Dobson, on their splendid first edition.—W. G. B.

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OTHER CHRISTMAS BARGAINS

Many people grow weary, are all but tired out, before Christmas comes, trying to select Christmas presents for their friends; which must be, first, within their means; which will be agreeable to their friends' tastes, and so be to them a gift of real value; and last of all, which in some degree will reflect their own desire for their friends.

To those who are really believers, the further consideration will be added: whether the present will express the donor's testimony for Christ, and thus tend to further the spiritual interests of the recipient, and in the end be glorifying to God. To those whose minds are thus exercised, we offer the following suggestions.

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