

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

"ALTHOUGH—YET"

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

Delivered in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Thursday Evening, October 12th, 1939

(Stenographically Reported)

"Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls:

"Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

—Habakkuk 3:17, 18.

There are two principles in the text expressed in the words, "although" and "yet". It is well that Christians should, occasionally at least, and as frequently as possible, take stock of their assets, reckon up their treasures, endeavour to estimate how much they are worth. I think perhaps these verses will help us to do so. Such an exercise is most useful and profitable at any time: it is especially useful at such a time as this.

I told you how you could find Habakkuk—turning backward from Malachi—and so perhaps this text will yield its treasures most readily to us if we read it after that fashion.

I.

Such salvation as God provides, whatever be the content of that word salvation—THE SALVATION THAT COMES FROM GOD ALWAYS HAS AN ACCOMPANIMENT OF JOY. It is really a joyous thing to be saved. Christian people ought to be joyful. I grant you it is quite possible that one should be dragged from the water in a state of unconsciousness, and thus rescued from drowning—and in that respect, be truly saved without any experience of joy, because the rescued one knows nothing about it. But he is saved, though he does not know it. Or a physical salvation may be effected perhaps by rescuing someone from a burning building who has been reduced to a state of insensibility by smoke or gas, and without any knowledge of his salvation, really be saved—but without any sense of rejoicing. Thus too I think it is possible for one to be saved in the spiritual and eternal sense—really saved—without having any sense of joy at the moment.

The joy of salvation is not one of the infallible evi-

dences of salvation; for one may be saved and yet not be particularly joyful. If we carry the figure of the new birth through, there is much of teaching in it in this respect. A child may be a perfect child physically, born into this world with a good constitution, at least so far as his condition may be evidenced by a natural and proper use of a pair of lusty lungs. Its crying is an evidence that it is very much alive. There is one not far from where I live. I hope it has occasions of joy, but whether or not, it loudly proclaims the fact that it is alive. So it is possible for Christians to be very much alive even when they cry a great deal. But joy is the second fruit of the Spirit: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." *And fruit always takes time to mature.* It is not something that is made overnight. True Christian joy is a spiritual growth, a natural expression of a new life which God has implanted, and it may sometimes be slow in developing and maturing; but if the life is really there sooner or later it will blossom into a true joy.

What are the characteristics of that joy? How may we know that we have such a joy? The joy of the Lord, the joy of His salvation, the joy which is the fruit of the Spirit, is something more than an unintelligent bubbling up of the emotions. It is a good thing to be able to stir one's emotions occasionally, to have our emotions stimulated, if they are wisely stimulated. I have often found myself brought into a state of greater pleasure by the singing of a hymn. It recalls past experiences, and stirs something within me. But I have seen people sung by others, and sometimes sing themselves, into a state of ecstasy. I have nothing to say against

that as an occasional experience, but from such temporary raptures, there are sometimes rather painful reactions, and if one is led to trust to these superficial emotional experiences as an evidence of something that is deeper within, when they pass, the soul may be plunged into a state of despondency that is not unrelated to despair itself.

I heard a man speak on one occasion—it was a great occasion—who was especially endowed with superlative oratorical powers. He delivered a sermon that was really a great oration, a very florid affair it was. The preacher spread his wings occasionally, and carried the people away with him. When it was over, I asked a certain minister who was present, who was noted as a great phrase-maker, how he enjoyed it. For answer, he imitated a posture of a drunken man and said, "Wonderful! Wonderful! the wine of it made me drunk."

Well, I have seen people religiously drunk, pleasurably intoxicated by various forms of religious emotionalism. I do not say that such ecstasies ought not to be, but I am trying to point out that if your joy is to be something that abides, something that will remain with you everywhere and at all times—not only in the great assembly, or when enjoying the intimate companionship of Christian friends and delighting in a mutual exchange of Christian experiences—not only then, but something that will go with you to the shop, the office, the hospital, and the sickroom, and all the difficult places of life. You must not forget that there is a way of rejoicing which our Lord Himself exemplified. Although He was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief", yet He said, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." Notwithstanding He was the acquaintance of grief, and was Himself "a man of sorrows", He experienced joy in the superlative degree; and He wanted us to have such an experience of His life that our joy should be "full", that to the limit of our several capacities—for they differ—we should be joyful.

I say Christian joy is something far more than a transient experience, induced by an emotional excitation. On the other hand: *Christian joy is something more than—and other than—a coldly reasoned joyousness.* That is Christian Science. My late friend, Dr. A. C. Dixon, used to say that he could always identify a Christian Scientist on the street; for he said, it is part of their religion to smile—but it is a superficial smile, something put on from without. They reason themselves into a certain position, and then say, "We must make the best of it. Certain things are not so, and we must smile, and live as though they were not so." But their placidity is the smoothness of a frozen lake whose frigid surface holds the turbulent waters in subjection within, and they must put on a placid and joyous exterior no matter what is in the depths beneath.

The fruit of the Spirit—the first fruit of the Spirit—is not logic. I have nothing to say against logic itself; but I am as much afraid of a strictly exclusively logical religion, of that attitude which assumes that salvation lies at the conclusion of a syllogism, that you can by logical processes reason a man into a position where he will say, "I am saved. Christ died for sinners; all men are sinners—I am a sinner, therefore He died for me, and I am saved!" I am as much afraid of an exclusively logical religion, as of a religion that is wholly emotional. Logically saved? Yes; but there may be no spiritual

participation in the great truth at all. A man's religious experience may be limited to an intellectual conviction, and have no relation to heart and life. Thus one may be able to set out in a logical formula the way of salvation and yet be not saved.

Similarly, it would be quite possible, by rational processes, to drive a man to the position—as Christian Science does—where he will say, "I am at peace; I have joy, and everything is all right"—when everything is all wrong that may lie at the end of that rational process. The joy of the Christian life is something more than a mere logical conclusion. Christian joy surely is a satisfaction of soul that is related to our whole complex nature, and brings every part of us into a joyous harmony. It is founded in the intelligence. If grace and truth are to be "multiplied unto (us) through the knowledge of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ", if grace and truth have their roots in a larger knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord, the development of Christian character and the experience of Christian joy, must consist in a participation in the fruits of the Spirit, and must have some relation to an enlightened understanding, and to the knowledge which comes through God's revelation of Himself to the soul. "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts"—what for? He Who said in the beginning, "Let there be light", when all was darkness and chaos, so comes into these confused and darkened and disturbed natures of ours, as to give "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

So, dear friends, *Christian joy is related to what we know to be true.* "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." We believe that which we hear. We know certain things to be true because God has spoken them. When Jesus Christ had given certain direction in the fifteenth chapter of John about abiding in Him, and His words abiding in us, when He had set forth that treatise that would lead us to the heart of the whole matter, He added—to quote again that which I quoted before—"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." His joy comes to us through a knowledge of the things spoken, and from our belief of the truth.

After all, Christian joy springs from that which is deepest in every one of us. You and I know things that defy exact definition. Sometimes we laugh at women's reasoning, and are inclined to make a joke of the feminine habit—at least of the reputedly feminine habit—of ending all argument with the single word, "Because". Notwithstanding, there is a knowledge that is not born of objective rational perception. There is a knowledge that is instinctive or intuitive, to the Christian. There are some things we know just because we are Christians; and if Mr. Philosopher comes and asks me to tell him why, I am inclined to say, "I know of a certainty much that I cannot prove by any rational process." And that is scriptural: "The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him." Just as a child instinctively knows its father and mother, and comes by development really to know a great many things long before it goes to school, and as some of the richest things of life grow out of that intuitive knowledge, so the newborn soul knows—just knows—it is the thing of which he is most sure, he is most certain.

I think I know my name. I think I could establish my title to it from legal records. I think I know my age—you don't. I know, but even then I am dependent upon figures recorded elsewhere. There are a few other things I know of which I am reasonably sure; but the thing I know most surely—and that ten thousand earthquakes could not disturb—is that Jesus Christ is my Saviour. I know that. I am positive of that. "I know whom I have believed." "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." Which does not mean, knowing God in a book, or knowing the Jesus of history; but means the coming into personal contact and fellowship of the renewed soul with the Redeemer. We gaze into the face of Christ, and we know Him, as Mary knew Him. "Supposing Him to be the gardener," the man in the garden—that is, the man in the book, if you like; but when that inner consciousness, the soul of her, heard Him say, "Mary", she falls at his feet, saying—"Rabboni—Master." Would you argue with Mary? She says, "I know! I know!" Why? "He spoke to me, the Risen One."

And in the same way, you and I know, and because we know it, and because of all the implications of that knowledge, because it is the thing that fills our whole nature, as the fruit of the Spirit,—this renewed nature, possessed by the Spirit of God teaching us to love God; and "whosoever loveth is born of God." And up out of the soil of the garden where the Spirit of God has wrought, there springs this lovely flower of joy. It is an exotic; it is a heavenly plant; it is not indigenous to this natural soil; it is something like the Lord Who produced it, Who came down from heaven. It is a joy that is inextinguishable: so do we rejoice with "joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

II.

Let me take a step farther. THIS JOY OF WHICH THE TEXT SPEAKS IS A JOY WHICH IS FOUND IN THE PERSON OF THE LORD HIMSELF.

It is a joy that is not to be found so much in salvation as in the God of our salvation. We rejoice not so much in the gifts, as in the Giver. A good many years ago in my father's home, we had a dog of which we were very fond. He was as black as a coal, and my sister took the initials of her three brothers and named him, J-E-T—Jet, because he was jet-black. He had not much of a tail—because it had been cut off—but he made the best of what he had! He was an expert beggar. Sometimes he would go where my mother was sitting and beg, nestle up to her as though he was quite sure she was the only one in the world. He would, so to speak, fondle her, as much as to say, "You are the best one in this family." And I have heard her say more than once, "Ah Jet, I am afraid that is cupboard love." They talk about "rice Christians" in China—and there are "rice Christians" at home. It is possible for us to speak of joy, while rejoicing more in the gifts of the Lord than in the Lord Who bestows the gifts.

We are not to be unthankful for what God gives us. We are admonished not to forget His benefits. We ought to give thanks for His innumerable mercies. But we are on dangerous ground if we have not learned a better and deeper secret than that. This prophet is not speaking of the gifts of the Lord, not of His bestowments, not even of salvation itself; but he says in effect, "I have found a way to rejoice in the person of the Lord

Himself. I have found joy, not so much in salvation, but in the God of my salvation."

How many Christians are there to whom the Lord is a living, vital, ever-present, personal, reality? It is true that He is nearer to us than breathing, and closer than hands and feet; but is Jesus Christ a figure to you, a mental abstraction, an ideal, a remote historical personage? Or have you come into such close fellowship and communion with Him that you have learned to find your special delight in the person of Christ rather than in anything which the Lord has done for you? I believe that is the only safe way. It is the only way by which we may be sure of that underlying, deep, undisturbable, never-failing joy of which the prophet here speaks.

The Lord, in the prophet's view, is superior to His gifts. He says, "Though they are all gone, though they be all removed, yet I have God left—and I shall rejoice in Him."

Can you conceive of a house of great value, tastefully and expensively furnished, a home of which any man would be proud? The man comes home some day to find his home in flames—but his first concern is that his wife and children are safe. He makes his way in through the flames, perhaps even before the firemen come; and manages somehow to save his wife and his children, and to stagger out again, with his arms about them, his face wreathed in smiles—though the house is a mass of flames. He sees the house go down in ashes before him, but he says, "I have left that which is more than all else beside."

That is the principle of this text, that we are to learn that our chief portion, our real heritage, is not in heaven—in its positive bestowments, or its negative deliverances and immunities, but in the person of the Lord Himself. He is our supreme joy. What else but that would have supported and sustained the martyr in the prison cell, and later in the flames of fire? What but the presence and the person of the Lord Himself? Read the story of the stoning of Stephen. He had not much left, had he? His life, his spirit, was about to take its flight; and when those who looked upon him beheld his countenance, they saw his face "as it had been the face of an angel". There was an expression of heavenly joy upon his face—and what did he say? He said, "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." He did not say, "I see my loved and lost, the streets of gold and walls of jasper, the tree of life and gates of pearl." He did not say anything like that. With a face like the face of an angel he said, "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." That was all! All! Just because he had learned the prophet's secret of finding his joy in the Lord Himself.

We must learn, I say, to recognize that the Lord is superior to His gifts. Be thankful by all means for whatever He gives us, but let our joy be in the Lord Himself—as being over and above everything that He can give us. Suppose when the King was here last Spring, he had singled you out and told you he was coming to your house, and was bringing you a present. However valuable it might have been, after he had left it with you, what do you think would have filled your mind and conversation? His gift? No! You would have told everyone that the King—the King himself had visited you—wonder of wonders, the King had visited you. True he brought you a gift; but he did not trust anyone else to bring it, but came himself!

And surely, the time comes in a Christian's life when he learns to put fellowship with God above all the gifts that God can bestow on him, and to receive the royal command to be where He is and to talk with Him, to listen to Him talk to us, as the acme of all that even God can grant us. That is the highest joy a Christian can know this side of heaven.

Do you know what that joy is, when Heaven comes down our souls to meet, and glory crowns the mercy-seat? That indeed is a real joy which we find in the presence of the Lord. So I say, the Lord is quite independent of His gifts, and we must learn to think of Him apart from everything He bestows, for what He is Himself; then we may find Him our treasure-house, we may find Him our supreme delight and joy.

While He is independent of His gifts, *He is inseparable from His gifts; for He always brings His gifts Himself.* You will always find when something is brought to you, some special love-token from the King, the sound of the Master's feet is behind it; and if you are quickly at the door, and do not wait too long before you arise to say, Thank you, you will find Him waiting for you. Do not let Him run away and leave the basket before you reach there, because if you get there first, you will find greater joy in the One Who brought it than in the gift itself; but, having the gift, you will always find the Giver is not far away.

I think often of the eighth chapter of Acts, where the angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Join thyself to this chariot." When I came to this church, one of the deacons, a very discerning and wise man, said to me, "Pastor, we have arrived at a very dangerous state in Jarvis Street Church. We have in the membership of the church quite a large number of people who have been successful in their business and professional careers, and are now in possession of a certain competence which enables them to pay other people to serve them; and we have a great many people in Jarvis Street who think, if they give of their money, they have done their whole duty. The great problem for us is to get them to give themselves."

There is always that temptation, to want to do our work by proxy, to get someone else to do it. "Go, join thyself to this chariot." Teachers, do not ask someone else to do your visitation for you. Do not go to your Superintendent and say, "I am so busy that I am afraid I can't do my visiting." Go! Go! Go, join thyself! Join thyself to your scholars. Give them yourself, so that when they come to Sunday School, they will feel that the one who is teaching them, has been after them—and didn't send someone else. That is the divine method. "The Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Not an angel, but Himself. That was His greatest gift, Himself; and having given Himself, "shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

Our text suggests that it is possible we may deliberately, as a voluntary act, "rejoice in the Lord", and "joy in the God of our salvation". These two words are akin, but they do not mean the same thing, they are not identical. To "joy in the God of my salvation" is more of a routine, regular, regimentation of things, but the idea in the word "rejoice" is an upleaping, "I will jump at it", "I will rejoice." What does it mean? That we are deliberately to set ourselves to find some occasions for rejoicing in the Lord. It is the principle of the hymn we sometimes sing,

"Count your many blessings,
Name them one by one;
And it will surprise you
What the Lord hath done."

It is not merely what the Lord has done, or has given: it is what the Lord is forever more in Himself. We must rejoice in the Lord, as one goes to the storehouse for bread, or to the well for water. We are to find our soul's satisfaction in Him, determined to rejoice in Him, deliberately, of set purpose.

III.

AND THIS IN SPITE OF MANY ADVERSITIES. It is easy to be happy sometimes, and to persuade ourselves that we are rejoicing in the Lord. I read to-night a guide's account of some German tourists who were touring the United States last summer. And what do you suppose they were most interested in? He could scarcely get them past the windows of a chain store—remarking on the price of butter, the price of cheese, the abundance of fruit. Exclaiming, "Isn't that wonderful?" They were amazed at the abundance and price of things so common to us, but scarce and costly to them. Of course they had to be loyal, but in spite of themselves, they were interested in the abounding plenty of the things that are so scarce at home. The lines have fallen to us in goodly places. We may not be rich, but we are not hungry, or cold, or destitute; there are no bombs falling about us, and we are not subject to any great privation. We have our little personal difficulties, but after all, we are very favourably circumstanced. All things considered, it ought not to be hard for us, in this meeting, in spite of the personal problem about which you cannot talk, or I cannot talk, to say, "In spite of it all, I rejoice in the Lord,"

But that is not what this prophet is talking about. He is not talking about rejoicing in the Lord in the summer-time, or when harvests are plentiful. No! No! In spite of adversities, although there are a great many things against me, I will rejoice in the Lord.

Will you follow me a minute? He rejoices *in spite of certain evident natural processes that are inseparable from God Himself.* He continues to believe that God is the Ruler and Preserver of everything, even of those phenomena which seem to belie all the promises of His goodness. The fig tree is not blossoming—and who makes the fig tree to blossom? God makes the fig tree blossom; that is a bit of natural law, that is something that is in the hand of God Himself. "The fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls"—all these natural sources of supply, these things that come to us by the operation of laws of which God is the Author, at this moment they have failed him. Where is God? Where is He? Why did He let my fig tree be without blossom, without any promise of fruit? Why did the grapes fall before they had matured? Why is there no fruit on the vines? The olives are barren, the fields bare. Who did that? God did it. He could have ordered it otherwise, but He did not. Something comes to you that seems to have come from God, and it seems to be the very opposite of the idea that God loves you, and cares for you—for you are stripped of everything.

"Ah", said the prophet, "I haven't got His figs, or

grapes, or His olives, or His wine—but *I have Him*; and I will rejoice in the God of my salvation even if I haven't any of His gifts." My dear friends, we need to learn much of the joy of fellowship to be able to say that. Do not affect a superior air. We do, I tell you. I have known some people who are more interested in dinner than anything else in life, who seem to think that if they had a great deal of money the acme of enjoyment would be to load their tables with good things. I hope we have risen to a higher level than that, and live for something else than to eat and drink and be merry. That isn't the highest joy in life.

Are we to take no joy in these things? You say, "I eat to keep my strength up." You think you do! I don't believe any of us know—I don't believe any of us could know—unless we were brought to that state where the fig tree does not blossom and there is no fruit on the vine—where there is nothing to put on the table. I think of mothers with their families, who have no bread for the children, no proper clothes. You may get up on your high horse religiously—or on your stilts, or on whatever you use to exalt yourself—but be careful how you pass judgment upon anyone in such a state. Do not forget that none of us knows what he would do if reduced to a state of famine. People have resorted to cannibalism in positions of siege. Nobody knows what it means until he has been there himself. But here is one who says that if all things are taken away, "Yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." That is a very high altitude of spiritual experience; but it would not be here if it were not possible of attainment.

There is a suggestion of a *positive withdrawal of things that had once been in possession*. He had had flocks, but they were now cut off from the stall. He knew what it was to have fruitful vines—but not now. When God's providential government, not only in the realm of nature, but in all spheres of human experience, seems to be against us, when He seems to have withdrawn His hand, when it seems as though everything were going awry, everything out of order—all of life's moorings slipping away,—it is not easy to rejoice amid such conditions. None of us knows the other's lot exactly, and therefore we dare not judge each other. Everyone here has his or her own difficulty which is not to be belittled by anyone else. Nor is anyone to be censured for sometimes feeling terribly depressed. But I am pointing to the ideal, and I say there must be a way, when all these blessings are taken away from us, in spite of everything, to rejoice in the Lord and to joy in the God of our salvation.

I insist that *the Christian religion, in every aspect, is a reasonable religion*. I know it is a religion of faith. Faith is something above reason, and not contrary thereto; there is nothing unreasonable about faith: But what secret had this man learned? *He had learned that his relationship to God is independent of creature comforts*. He would have said, "I have an appetite as you have, and if it pleases God to satisfy it, I will praise Him for His abounding goodness: I have learned only that there is something independent of anything this world can produce, and when the fields are bare, and the stalls are empty, and everything is taken away, when all creature comforts fail, I have what means more than all, the Creator Himself; and therefore "I will rejoice in the Lord."

And so, as we are independent of them, *this Christian joy is superior to them*. Have you found greater delight in thinking of God than in any physical pleasure—when you do not want to eat or drink, or do anything to interrupt your fellowship with God, or miss a moment of the joy of it; when, if anyone said, "Come and eat", you would say, "Do not intrude upon this holy hour"? The disciples knew that their Master was a Man—they rather felt that He was more than that, but they did not know how much more than that He was. They intruded upon a holy hour, saying, "Master, it is mealtime; come and eat." "Eat? I have meat to eat that ye know not of. I am sitting at another table. I have tasted of a superior fare. I do not need your vituals; I am independent of them; I am superior to them."

Such, my dear friends, may be the life of every saint of God. Oh that we might passionately desire that intimate fellowship with the Divine that will mean more to us than all that this world can give! For then we shall get where the psalmist was when he said, "I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold. Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way." Or like Job when he said, "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food." At last he had learned the secret of having a bit of heaven upon earth.

Why did I say that? Was it characteristic of heaven? Remember how Moses speaks of the "precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and the precious things put forth by the moon . . . the chief things of the ancient mountains, and the precious things of the lasting hills, and the precious things of the earth and fullness thereof, and the good will of him that dwelt in the bush." He links God and His good will with the chief things of the everlasting hills, and the precious products of sun and moon. But in the picture of heaven, as it is to be by and by, there will be no moon, and therefore no precious things put forth by the moon; and no sun, for they have no need of the sun to shine in it. I have a garden from which I have learned a great deal. I have tried to invent substitutes for the sun, I have tried to force things to grow without sunlight. But I found that certain things could neither be produced nor matured without the sun. When we get to heaven, sun, and moon, and the myriad stars, will have paled into insignificance. They will all be gone. What will remain in that shadowless, tearless, deathless, nightless city? "The glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." And in the measure in which we are shut up to the person of our Lord, and find our supreme satisfaction in Him, heaven will have begun below; and we shall know the meaning of the scripture which says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us 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."

Let us pray:

We know but little, O Lord, of the infinite meaning of that great saying that God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son. More than all the treasures of earth, than all the wealth of the universe, Thou didst bestow upon us in that unreserved, sovereign Gift of Thine. Help us that we may throw wide every avenue of our being, that we may receive that love of God which passeth knowledge; and be filled with all the fulness of God. For Jesus Christ's sake, Amen.

HOW TIME DEMOLISHES THEORIES

We publish below a letter from "one who has studied chronological prophecy for upwards of fifty years". This letter was not written to us, but to a certain "Bible teacher", who apparently has absorbed the general teaching of Scofield eschatology. The writer of the letter, as will be seen, implies that his fifty years of study of what he calls "chronological prophecy", gives some authority to his opinions.

The letter was dated April 23rd, 1938. The rapture was to take place in 1938-39. From 1939 to 1943 would "probably be a fairly peaceful reign of the Antichrist", etc. March, 1943, to September, 1946, is to mark the Great Tribulation. "The rapture is indicated by God's Word to be in 1938-39 and most probably 1938."

The answer to all this is that it is now January, 1940. The rapture of the church, so far as we have heard, has not been reported. And we can scarcely believe that many would agree that the present period, included in the 1939-1943 period, can be described as "a fairly peaceful reign of the Antichrist"!

Is there anything that can do greater damage than such effusions as this letter? If anyone had been weak enough to believe it, where now would be his confidence in the authority of Holy Scripture? Yet this sort of thing is, by many, regarded as "Bible teaching".

April 23rd, 1938.

Dear Dr.:

Greetings in the Precious Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. As one who has studied Chronological Prophecy for upwards of 50 years, I venture to suggest to you that the time is now fully ripe for a short and yet very definite message going forth to all truly born again, filled with the Holy Spirit, and looking for the Lord's Return for His Own, as to the time set forth in God's Word for the closing events of this age.

Your splendid booklets give excellent Scriptural data as to the Imminence of 1 Thes. 4:13-17, but I believe the time has now arrived when the Lord would have His own know about the Time of His Coming, except that the day and hour will ever remain in God's keeping. Such information was vouchsafed at the First Coming, and Daniel 12:8-13 and Rev. 3:3 are sufficient authority for our being well informed as to the time of the Second Advent.

Because there have been from time to time unfortunate failures in regard to the interpretation of the prophetic times it has been used of Satan to cause a reaction against all endeavours to interpret them and it is perhaps not surprising that even leading exponents of prophecy are keeping away from the Time Prophecies altogether. The Time Prophecies, however, are nevertheless a most important part of God's Word. They are NOT insoluble puzzles, but are intended to be NOW understood in these last closing years of the Age. Fifty years ago I heard the late Dr. Gratton Guinness explain that "the seven times" (Leviticus 26) of the Gentile supremacy (Daniel 4) concurrently with the "Seven Times" of Israel's rejection, are 2520 years. This conclusion has never been seriously assailed. It is based on the prophetic time or year, which consists of 12 months of 30 days each or 360 days. This is quite clear from Rev. 11:2-3, Rev. 12:14 and Rev. 13:2 where $3\frac{1}{2}$ times 42 months and 1260 days are equivalents.

In accordance with Scriptural usage (Numbers 14:34 and Ezek. 4:6) a day is put for a year. In these time prophecies God is giving guidance for His servants in these last closing days and NOT setting complicated arithmetical puzzles. We may therefore regard the seven times as a straightforward period of 2520 calendar years. Guinness recognized that there were several starting points for this period of 2520 years, for instance B.C. 607 was the year of Jonah's death (the last King of Israel, for subsequent kings ruled by permission) thence 2520 years forward reached to A.D. 1914, when the "Time of the End" commenced in the awful great war. B.C. 604 was Nebuchadnezzar's first year of Kingship over Babylon (when he was told by Daniel that he was the

head of gold of the Gentile Image (Daniel 2:38) 2520 years later (Jerusalem, Palestine) was taken from the Turks Dec. 9th, 1917 (Haggai 2:18-19) and given to the Jews for a home.

As you know, as well as any man, there have been innumerable fulfillments of prophecy since 1914, which proves conclusively that the period of Israel's Chastisement is for 2520 years. But the all important point has been hid by God until now and that is that Daniel's 70th week (seven years) are NOT included in the 2520 years period (as prophetic students have all along understood) but they commence immediately the 2520 years period has run its course.

Briefly, Scripture indicates the following events as follows: 1938-39 THE RAPTURE OF ALL in Christ (1 Thes. 4:13-17) (most probably this year 1938) being the close of the 19 year cycles from the signing of the Peace terms on June 28th, 1919. Events will move more rapidly at the close of the Spanish War, which is timed to finish long before June 28th next, then Germany and Italy will show their hands.

1938-1939—Immediately the Rapture is accomplished "sudden destruction" (1 Thes. 5:3) will come upon those left behind, it will most probably be the great war of Revelation 6:3-8. Out of this war, the Anti-Christ (probably Mussolini) will arise and will in the Autumn of 1939 (when the 2520 year period expires) make a seven years agreement (covenant) with the Jews. (It has been several times stated on good authority that Mussolini has Jewish blood in his veins). This will enrage Hitler, who will break with him, henceforth Germany will lean towards Russia, with whom eventually she will have an alliance (Ezek. 39 and 29) in the attack at Armageddon (1946).

1939-43—Will probably be a fairly peaceful reign of the Antichrist, the two witnesses will be delivering their testimony to the Multitudes telling them NOT to worship the Antichrist in the $3\frac{1}{2}$ years of Great Tribulation which immediately follow the death of the Two witnesses (Rev. 11:3-13).

March 1943-Sept. 1946—The Great Tribulation (Daniel 12:1, Matt. 24:21, Rev. 13:5). Then at the Battle of Armageddon fought at the Feast of Tabernacles Sept. 1946 our Lord will descend with His Saints and set up His Millennial Kingdom. It has been shown that our Lord came to Bethlehem in Sept. 4000 years precisely after Adam was created and as we are told in Zech. 14:16-18 that the nations will have to go up to Jerusalem each year during the Millennium to keep the Feast of the Tabernacles, it is quite obvious that this will be to rejoice that it was at such a Feast Our Lord delivered the World from War and commenced His Glorious Millennial Reign. I send you herewith a booklet by my friend Van Lennep, as to its being precisely 4000 years from Adam's creation to our Lord's birth. I do not hold with Van Lennep altering the Daniel dates, because the 2520 year fulfillments in the past 24 years prove that they are correct. You will observe on page 10 of his book he agrees with a shortening of his chronology to 55 years, this, in correspondence, he attributes to Matt. 24:22. This Millennium date of Sept. 2001 therefore becomes Sept. 1946, which agrees with my understanding of the time Prophecies for the End of the Age.

I am advanced in years, with only a small pension and am therefore quite unable to produce the message to the Saints in the able way you have written your books. I therefore ask you to at once do the needful showing that the Rapture is indicated by God's Word to be in 1938-1939 and most probably 1938!

I believe the world's trouble will commence immediately the Spanish War terminates which Italy says will be by the end of May 1938. THEN it will be seen what Italy and Germany have been fighting for in Spain.

I believe it is very probably the Rapture may be THIS PENTECOST, for the European situation is extremely critical (consider that Britain this week sent her three best airmen to the States to buy 2000-bombers) and war will most certainly come within 12 months and many well informed people believe it is timed for this summer. Whenever it comes the Church will not be there. Rev. 3:10 prohibits such a thing. NOW, as never before should all the Saints heed God's exhortation Ezek. 3:17-20 and 33:2-9! FOR THE TIME is very short. I DO NOT agree with those people who say that all Christendom is damned after the Rapture. Ironsides, Ware and the Brethren take this view but it is not Scriptural. Rev. 7:9-17 tells us that an innumerable multitude which no man could number are saved during the GREAT TRIBULATION. And further God tells us that this Company are of all nations and kindreds and people and

tongues. So they are Not Jews and heathen only as Ware and Ironsides say.

The preaching of the Everlasting Gospel (Rev. 14:6) is preached to all that dwell on the earth; to every nation and kindred and tongue and people and as this is a supernatural preaching it is very probable that the Saved will be as many or more than the Saints of the preceding 19 centuries. At any rate it is a multitude which NO MAN could number. But these will have missed being of THE BRIDE. They are Servants. Only those Raptured BEFORE the final seven years (NOW) are of THE BRIDE, those saints previous to Calvary are Friends of the Bridegroom. To miss the Rapture means much, but those left behind CAN overcome Satan by the Blood of the Lamb and by the Word of their testimony and they loved not their lives unto the death (Rev. 12:11). I pray God to richly bless and use you. Yours in Gospel Bonds,

LETTERS FROM TWO FRENCH SOLDIERS

Letters from Soldat Frédéric M. Buhler, who was with us for four years in Toronto, and from Adjutant Emile Guedj, both of the French army, have just come in, and we pass them on to their many friends in Canada, England and the United States. Mr. Buhler writes:

Perrache Station, Lyons,
December 10th, 1939

Dear Friends:

The last circular letter was written very shortly before the declaration of the war, and on September 5th I received the order to join my mobilization center immediately and without delay. Thus I have been over three months in uniform. Far from being unhappy, I am experiencing more than ever the comforts of the Bible and of Christian friends who have been kind enough to write assuring me that they were remembering the French Bible Mission in prayer daily. I know there are many others who are doing the same.

To all those who, during this year that is almost over, have contributed to the progress of the French Bible Mission by gifts or prayers or encouragements, go our heartiest thanks, and I want to express the wish that the Lord will bless you in return with many spiritual blessings in Christ. May you all have, in spite of existing conflicts and our present sad circumstances, a truly "Merry Christmas" and "Happy New Year" in the assurance that Jesus the Saviour born at Bethlehem will be Emmanuel, God with us, during the coming year.

Yours cordially in His love and care,

F. BUHLER.

P.S.—Pastor and Mrs. G. Nicole, with whom I am happy to be today, join me in greeting all their known and unknown friends of Canada and United States.

Somewhere in France a company of engineers are at-work with pick and shovel, repairing roads and making communication lines. At daybreak the adjutant left by truck with thirty-five of his men for the scene of labour some thirty kilometers (eighteen miles) from the camp. In civil life before the war, the officer was Pastor Emile Guedj, the beloved leader of the church at Colombes, but on Sunday morning, September 3rd, he received the mobilization order and left hurriedly without having the opportunity of saying goodbye to his church. In the following words he describes some experiences in the French army where, with nearly five millions of his fellow soldiers, he is busily engaged in strengthening that great wall of defence built by French foresight and ingenuity to protect the rest of the world from the barbarity of a mighty nation led by a madman.

"We were able," he writes of the day's work, "to take only a very meagre lunch. The weather was damp and it was raining, rain and mud . . . horrible, soupy mud. In order to complete the assignment we passed by the usual lunch hour. Finally, as well as we could under the circumstances, we ate our cold lunch, and then one of my 'lads', all of them Bretons, coming from a part of France noted for its devotion to Roman Catholicism, called to me and asked me to sing something. 'Yes', cried another, 'sing The Star of the Morning.' Several of them had already heard and joined with me in singing this beautiful hymn at a little service I organized

the Sunday morning before. 'Fine', I said, 'with pleasure'. The rain had stopped a little and in that great wood I began to sing:

'Etre éclairé de ta lumière,
Jésus Etoile du Matin,
C'est déjà le ciel sur la terre;
Viens resplendir sur mon chemin,
Etoile, Etoile, Etoile du Matin.
Brille sur moi, brille sur-moi, Etoile du Matin.'

"And then again, 'I will sing of His great love', and finally 'The Son of God loved me and gave Himself for me.' One of my young soldiers, who in private life is a parish priest, heard me sing for the first time, and appeared to be delighted with the hymn. My atheistic Sergeant, much moved, united his voice with the others: 'Always I shall sing of that great love'. All hearts joined in praising The Bright and Shining Morning Star. These brave lads from Brittany had forgotten the meagreness of their lunch, the cold, the rain, the mud; in spite of all, it was a beautiful day and the sun shone. At nine o'clock that evening we were able to get back to camp and warm ourselves up a bit. . . .

To-day we made two hundred and twenty square meters of road, more ditches, more shoulders. You would like to have heard them singing, 'Shine upon me, shine upon me, O Morning Star'. Send me some more Gospels. I have promised thirty more of them. Last evening the non-commissioned officers asked me to pray for them, and as I returned to my room and kneeled down, that very moment I heard them singing, 'Shine upon me, O Morning Star'. It is one of their favourites. It was my great joy to pray with a boy of twenty-three years of age who freely gave himself to the Saviour:

'My Jesus, I love Thee, I know Thou art mine'.

"Together with us, our great family in all the Association of churches will give glory to God for His grace which is sufficient."

Bible School Lesson Outline

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

Vol. 4 First Quarter Lesson 4 January 28th, 1940

THE BEATITUDES

Lesson Text: Matthews 5:1-20.

Golden Text: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."—Matthew 5:8.

For Reading: Mathew 5:21-48.

The Beatitudes (from "beatus", a Latin word meaning "blessed" or "happy") describe the blessedness of those who are the subjects of the Messiah's Kingdom. They form the introduction to what is called "The Sermon of the Mount", wherein our Lord expounds the characteristics, duties and privileges of those who have a part in the Kingdom which He has been proclaiming (Matt. 4:17). He also declares the relation of His mission and teaching to the law of Moses, particularly as the law was practised and taught by the Scribes and Pharisees.

This discourse is probably the same one which is recorded in Luke 6:17-49, which indicates that the Saviour had withdrawn from the crowds which surrounded Him (Matt. 4:25; Lk. 6:17), and had gone with some of His followers to a level spot in the mountainous region. The people seem to have heard at least part of the message (Matt. 7:28), although it was directed primarily to His immediate followers (Matt. 5:1).

I. The Subjects of the Kingdom: Their Characteristics—verses 1-12.

(Read also Luke 6:20-26).

Mountains played a great part in the ministry of Christ. Think, for example of Mt. Hermon, Mount Calvary and the Mount of Olives. Mountains are associated with the thoughts of vision (Matt. 17:1, Mk. 9:2), inspiration (Matt. 14:23; Mk. 6:46; Lk. 6:12; 9:28) and isolation (John 6:15).

The poor in spirit are contrasted with the proud in spirit. Those who feel their spiritual poverty will be blessed of God,

while those who are rich in their own eyes, and self-sufficient, will be rejected (1 Sam. 2:7, 8; Psa. 34:18; Lk. 1:53).

The time will come when grief shall be turned into joy at the sight of the Saviour, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away (Isa. 35:10; 51:11; 57:18; 61:2, 3; Rev. 7:17; 21:4). Those who mourn will be comforted even now as they realize that this earthly life of sorrow lasts but a brief moment of time in comparison with the long ages of eternity (2 Cor. 4:17, 18; 5:1-4; 1 Pet. 1:3-7).

Meekness is not a sign of weakness, but of strength. The Scriptures describe the meek man as one who patiently endures persecution, as did Moses (Num. 12:3). Evil-doers may seem to prosper for a time, but in the end God's suffering saints will be vindicated (Psa. 37:9-11, 18-22; 76:9).

The Gentiles, or peoples, seek the satisfaction of their natural desires, but the subjects of the Kingdom long for the true spiritual sustenance which comes from God (Deut. 8:3; Isa. 55:2; Matt. 6:31-33; 1 Pet. 2:2). The longing for righteousness is the work of the Holy Spirit, and as surely as He created that hunger, so surely will He satisfy it.

With the merciful, God will show Himself merciful (2 Samuel 22:26, 27; Psa. 18:25; Prov. 11:17). The marvel of the Gospel is that God displays His loving-kindness even toward those who have no claim to His grace (Rom. 5: 6-8).

God is holy, and no sinner may dare stand in His presence with his sin still upon him (Job 9:2; Psa. 24:3-5; 130:3, 4). Access to God is possible to us only on the ground of the atoning sacrifice of Christ, Who took upon Himself all our sin, and imparted to us His perfect holiness. Blessed be the fountain of blood which cleanses us from all sin (Isa. 1:18; Rev. 1:5), and makes us pure in His sight!

Pacifists misapply the words of our Lord with regard to peacemakers. Scriptural peace is far removed from that weakness which frequently goes by the name of peace. Peace belongs only to those who love and obey the law of the Lord (Psa. 119:165; Isa. 48:18). It is founded upon righteousness, and is one of its fruits (Psa. 37:37; Isa. 32:17; Heb. 7:2).

For one to suffer persecution as a result of doing good is to follow in the holy line of succession of the prophets and martyrs (2 Chron. 36:16; Matt. 23: 34-37; Lk. 13:33, 34; Acts 7:52, 59). Such an one gives clear indication of His participation in the sufferings of Christ (Rom. 8:17; 1 Pet. 4:12-14). He may rejoice, because his anguish is a token that he is in the will of God (2 Tim. 3:12; Jas. 1:2-4; 1 Pet. 3:17, 18). His reward will be great (Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 1:7; Heb. 11:24-27).

II. The Subjects of the Kingdom: Their Witness—verses 13-16.

The witness of those who belong to the Kingdom of our Lord is described by means of the symbolism of salt and light (Compare John 5:35). Salt is a preservative, and the presence of believers prevents the universal corruption of the

world by the forces of evil. In a sense, the good sanctify those around them; they may stay the judgment of sin for a certain time (Gen. 19:22; 1 Cor. 7:14). Salt without saltiness is useless as far as its efficiency and value are concerned (Mk. 9:50; Lk. 14:34, 35).

Christ is the Light of the world (John 8:12; 9:5; 12:35), and from Him His followers derive their light (Eph. 5:8). A lamp will not be seen unless it is placed in a conspicuous position. It must not be covered by the bushel measure, or put under a bed (Mk. 4:21), but it may occupy its intended position on the lampstand (Rev. 2:5). If we faithfully uphold the light, the Lord will see to it that the light shines, and He will supply the oil of the Holy Spirit. We are commanded to shine, not for our own praise, but for His glory (Phil. 2:15, 16; 1 Pet. 2:12).

III. The Subjects of the Kingdom: Their Righteousness—verses 17-20.

The moral law as taught by Christ was not the antithesis, but rather the complement of the law of Moses. The righteousness which God demands is a perfect righteousness (verse 48; Jas. 2:10), and Christ lived such a life before men, and then died that believers might be made righteous in Him.

GOOD NEWS FOR WESTERN ONTARIO CHURCHES

We have just received word from Rev. H. C. Slade of Timmins, Vice-President of the Union, that he will be free to give another month to visitation of our Union churches. This time it will be the churches in Western Ontario that are to be thus favoured. The pastors in the Ottawa Valley found a benediction and an enrichment of church life in the ministry of Mr. Slade on their fields, and we know that those in Ontario are joyfully anticipating his coming to them. Rev. E. C. Wood of Chatham, hearing rumours of the projected visit, wrote the Union office asking for the privilege of having Mr. Slade preach in his pulpit on a Sunday, but very gracefully giving us a 'carte blanche' for the whole week if this were not possible. Such whole-hearted co-operation transforms the very complicated and difficult problem of arranging a satisfactory itinerary into a pleasant and easy task. We are confident that it will be so again with the Ontario itinerary, as it was with the Quebec itinerary. Mr. Slade expects to begin the trip on Sunday, February 11th, and he joins us in inviting all churches, north, east, and west, to unite in fervent prayer for the success of this undertaking.

Mr. Slade, with the generous consent of his church at Timmins, is giving his services without charge in the interest of the Union Churches; but the Executive Committee of the Union earnestly request that an effort will be made to make the offerings large enough to pay all travelling and incidental expenses.—W.

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