Ecclesiastes - Commentaries by Unknown Author

Things New and Old: Volume 28, Mysteries Under the Sun

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“For all this I considered in my heart even to declare all this, that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God: no man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them. All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath. This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all; yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead. For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion forever in anything that is done under the sun. Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works. Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment.”—Eccles. 9:1-8.

The preacher had been occupied with certain mysteries as to the death of the righteous and the wicked—mysteries which greatly perplex to this day, and which could not be understood without this book of Ecclesiastes. Sometimes the circumstances attending the death of a well-known child of God are so terrible, and even the death itself, that we exclaim, How can this be? What can it mean? “There is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in his wickedness.” (Chap. vii. 15.) Strange as this may sound, yet it is a fact which we know occurs. A true Christian, through loss of reason, or some—other cause, comes to a sad end, and, as to this life under the sun, he perishes. He dies, and is buried; whilst the notorious wicked live—it may be next door—to old age, in much worldly comfort and prosperity.

It is also true that “There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death; and there is no discharge in that war; neither shall wickedness deliver those that arc given to it.” (Chap. 8:8.) And again, “Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him: but it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God.” (Chap. 8:12, 13.) He may go on for a time, as if death and judgment would never overtake him, but come they will, and then he will prolong his days no more.

But here, in this life under the sun, there is this mystery. “There is a vanity which is done upon the earth; that there be just men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked: again, there be wicked men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous.” (Chap. 8:11-14.) Now, no one can deny that this does sometimes happen. It is very mysterious. That a truly justified man should come to such a terrible death, through loss of his reason, as might only be expected to happen to a wicked man; and that a wicked man should die peacefully in his own bed, as people say, “He went off like a lamb!”

And further, “All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath.” (Chap. 9:2.)

Is it not well, when some terrible event happens to a justified man, to ponder the words of scripture? The fact is thus distinctly recognized, that, as to this life, with all its circumstances, there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked. Yes, it is so. The same pains, infirmities, sickness, death; in pestilence, or in war; the utter failure of the mental powers in old age; yea, the dissolution of the body—there is one event to the wicked and to the righteous. In either case it is the same: “For the living know that they shall die; but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion forever in anything that is done under the sun” (Chap. 9:5, 6.)

This is most solemn, but is it not absolutely true? But, mark well, these scriptures only speak of the things that are seen, the things under the sun. Go back but a few hundred years, is it not so? The wicked and the righteous are both alike utterly forgotten. They may have toiled in righteousness, or reveled in sin, one event has happened unto them. They have no portion or reward in this world “under the sun”—the memory of them is forgotten.

“For all this I considered in my heart, even to declare all this, that the righteous and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God.” Precious words of comfort! However sad and perplexing their end may have been, “their works are in the hand of God.” Oh, the riches of His grace! No circumstance of body or mind can change His love. There we can leave them.

And yet it is most true, “No man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them.” All things come alike to all, that is, in this world, under the sun. Is it not most sad that great numbers take this scripture, or pervert it, as though it proved that no man, by any means, can know that he is saved? This scripture describes facts under the sun.

It proves that nothing that can happen, either to the justified or the wicked, is sufficient, in this life, to determine whether he has the favor of God, or not. That is, no providence under the sun, however painful or pleasant, tells of this. We may be stricken with sorrow at the death of a well-known believer. How solemn the voice to us! “There is one event to the righteous and to the wicked.” And we can declare this, “that the righteous and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God.” And this is all we know from all travail beneath the sun. Thus, if reason be fled, and the end so sad as to crush our hearts, let us remember, this does not prove, in such an extreme case of sorrow, that the sufferer has lost the favor of God. No, wondrous words! “one event to the righteous and to the wicked.” He knoweth why, and we can leave the righteous and all his works in the hand of God.

What has God to say to us in all this? Let us bear Him. “Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works.” God would have us personally to cultivate a cheerful disposition as a remedy against morbid depression; but also to one who knows what it is to eat the bread of the table of the Lord with joy—not to be saved, but because he is saved eternally—what untold joy! And to drink the wine, not hoping to get redemption through His blood, but because he has redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins, and, having this, now God accepts his works. But let all know, that to cat the bread, and drink the wine, as a means of getting saved, is abomination in the sight of God. C And now, if you can eat the bread, and drink the wine, in real joyful thanksgiving for redemption, then, “Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment.” Let no mysteries or perplexities under the sun take away this devotedness and holiness of walk. This is exactly what Christendom in the end has not—the white raiment, and the anointing with oil. (Rev. 3:18.) But let thy garments be always white; would the very appearance of evil, not to get saved, but because thou hast eternal redemption, and, having that, “let thy head lack no ointment.” (Chap. 9:7, 8.)

How divinely perfect is the word of God! Without this book of Ecclesiastes, we should be utterly perplexed with what sometimes happens to the Christian under the sun, not only during his life, but even in his death. But there this inspired book stops; and by the things that happen to him here under the sun, of his future state we know nothing.

We must not, however, suppose for a moment that the light the Holy Ghost gives in this book, as to the things that may take place in common with the righteous and the wicked under the sun, sets aside the solemn teaching of other parts of scripture, as to the Fathers discipline of His children, as is seen in Heb. 12:1-14; or even the death of the body, in some cases, as governmental judgment in discipline, as in 1 Cor. 11:27-31.

Let us now look for a moment at the resurrection contrast. (Read 2 Cor. 4:14-v. 9.) Light breaks upon this dark scene. No longer, no man knoweth, but,” Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.”

We do not look here at the things that are seen beneath the sun, but at the things which are not seen, and eternal. “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

All is now changed. “Always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.” All is intelligent confidence. We are not here under the sun. The house may be dissolved—this does not shake our confidence. It may be sad, and painful; but we see beyond. “It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory.” “And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.”

Both these scriptures are equally true. In the death of the righteous and the wicked, one event happens to both. Yea, the righteous may be allowed to die as the wicked; and the wicked, on the other hand, as the righteous. But not so the resurrection. Whatever may have been the death of the righteous, the justified believer, he is raised in glory, he is caught up, to be with and like his Lord. Unbounded and eternal joy awaits him. Yea, and even at dissolution, he knows that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

But to the wicked, the condemned unbeliever, his destiny is now also as clearly revealed. He may have closed his eyes as the righteous; he lifts them up in hell, being tormented. And when the righteous, raised from amongst the dead, shall have reigned with Christ through millennial days, then the rest of the dead shall be raised, to stand before the great white throne. Then no more will happen one event to the wicked and the righteous. The righteous then will be forever blest in the glory of God; the wicked be forever in the lake of fire. (Rev. 20; 21)

“Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works. Let thy garments be always white, and let thy head lack no ointment.”

Echoes of Mercy: Volume 13 (1903), Poor Wise Man., The

(Eccl. 9:13-18.)

THERE are many wonderful things told us in the Bible, and often put in such simple words that a child has no difficulty in understanding them.

I wonder how many of the readers of this little magazine have considered the simple yet wonderful story told us in these few verses in Ecclesiastes. God is very gracious to us, and in His Word has caused to be recorded these narratives, that they might be like pictures from which we may learn great and important truths.

We read in the fourteenth verse that “there was a little city, and few men within it.” Now, what is that the picture of? I can fancy I hear some one say, “Well, I am sure it cannot mean this world, because it says a little city and a few men within it, and this world is very big, and a great number of people in it.” Nevertheless I think it does mean the world, and when we compare our earth with the other worlds that are circling round our sun, and that shine so brightly on a clear night, which we often hear people speaking of as little stars, but many of which are really planets, worlds a great deal bigger than our earth, we must own that the earth on which we live is a very “small city” after all; so I think that we shall not be far wrong if in this little city spoken of in Ecclesiastes we see a picture of our own earth.

And we learn that a “great king came against it.” Who could that be? At any rate it is a picture of some one very powerful, and who must have hated the city and the men that dwelt in it very much, or he would not have taken the trouble to “besiege it,” and “build great bulwarks against it.”

There is only one that hates us and this earth like that, and that one is our great enemy, Satan—a very powerful, cunning, and cruel enemy, and who would have easily overcome us if we had been left to fight against him alone. Oh! dear reader, beware of Satan, and ask God to deliver you from such an enemy, and His Holy Spirit will point you to the One who has overcome him, and who will give you the victory.

“Now there was found in it (the city) a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city.” This surely was just what the city needed, and has there been in the world one that I can recognize as this “poor wise man”? Ah! yes, indeed; who was it that in Isa. 4 is spoken of as “despised and rejected of men”? It was Jesus, the Son of God and Son of man. Jesus says, “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have

nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head" (Matt. 8:20). Yes, dear reader, when Jesus was here He was indeed poor, and we read also the reason why He was poor—and surely such love should break the hardest heart—for it says, "That though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). And in Proverbs 8 it is the same Jesus that is spoken of, and there He is spoken of as Wisdom; so I am sure that this "poor wise man" is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, He who came down to deliver us from the power of Satan. And how did He do it? Look in the Epistle to the Hebrews, for there we read about Jesus again; it says of Him, "That through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:14).

Now, I would speak very personally to you who have taken up this magazine, to perhaps just casually glance at what is inside it: Have you felt the power of Satan against you; have you felt the power of sin, and longed to be rid of the terrible burden of your sins? If so, have you asked in simple faith this wonderful Saviour to deliver you from Satan, and from your sins? If not, go into your own room alone, and pray that simple yet ever effectual prayer of faith, "Lord, save me," and He will, for God cannot deny Himself, and Jesus has said, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37).

W. E. W.

Questions and Answers in Christian Treasury, Questions and Answers: With the Lord or Asleep Until Resurrection?

QUESTION: I was taught by my parents that when we die, we go to be with the Lord. Now I am told by others that all go to sleep in death till the resurrection. If you can, please enlighten me about this. What does Eccl. 9:5 mean, "The dead know not anything"?

ANSWER: The death of the Christian is often spoken of as sleep. (See Matt. 27:52; Acts 7:60; John 11:11; 1 Cor. 11:30; 15:6, 18, 20, 51; 1 Thess. 4:13-15; 5:10.) But being asleep refers to the bodies, so that they know not anything; they are away from all that is going on here on earth. Ecclesiastes is wisdom under the sun. We need what the Lord Jesus and His apostles tell us, to know the full truth.

We find clear evidence from them that neither saved nor unsaved are unconscious as to the spirit. Death in Scripture is NEVER ceasing to exist. There is no death to the soul or spirit.

Man, the highest of the animal kingdom, is a responsible being, and his existence is for eternity. The body decays at death, but the soul or spirit has gone either to be with Christ in paradise, or to the prison under chains of darkness, awaiting the day when the body will be given again to stand at the Great White Throne to receive the sentence—the wages of the sins of which the person was guilty The saved are seen in Luke 16:23; 20:38; 23:43, 46; Acts 7:59; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:21, 23; Rev. 14:13, and another picture of the martyrs in Rev. 6:9-11.

The unsaved are seen in Luke 16:23 and 12:5.

They are warned to "fear Him, which after He hath killed hath power to cast into hell." Notice it is after He has killed. We see the unsaved, who would not listen to Noah's preaching, are now in prison (1 Peter 3:19).

When the Lord Jesus comes for His own, the dead in Christ will rise first, then the living ones changed (Phil. 3:20, 21) will be caught up together to be with the Lord (1 Thess. 4:15-18). These will also stand at the judgment seat of Christ, now glorified in their resurrection bodies, to receive their reward, and be appointed to the place each one is to fill for Him.

Correspondence, Correspondence: JOS 4:1, 9; Jews vs. Christians; 1 CH 21:1-17; MAL 4:2; 1 COR 5:5

Ques. What does Josh. 4:1.9 teach us? T. H.

Ans. Read chapters 3 and 4. Jordan river is another type of the death of Christ.

At the Red Sea we saw all our enemies dead on the seashore. Our sins all gone.

At Jordan we see Christ's and our death with Him.

In the stones taken out we have a memorial, a constant reminder that we came up out of that death.

In the stones put in by Joshua, is a picture that our old, man was crucified with Christ, and is now to be seen no longer.

God sees us now "in Christ", risen with Christ, and Christ in us in the life He has given us (Col. 3:1-4). We are therefore to mortify (keep in the place of death) the members, of the old man (Col. 3:5).

Ques. What is, the difference between the Jew in Rom. 2:18, "approving the things that are more excellent," and the Christians in Phil. 1:10 doing the same thing? J. T. G.

Ans. The apostle is convicting the Jew, having the knowledge of the law, of breaking the law, and was therefore under its curse (Rom. 3:9, 19, 20; Gal. 3:10; Matt. 5:20).

In Phil. 1:10 the apostle is praying for the spiritual progress of the saints in Christ Jesus, i. e., all believers in Christ Jesus, that their love might abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment: that they might approve things that are excellent, or, try things that differ (margin); that they might be sincere before God, and without offense before men, till the day of Christ, and thus be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

The first is convincing the Jews of their transgression, and thus showing their need of the Savior.

The second is encouraging the Christians to abound in love yet more and more, as the only way, to gain true knowledge, and to glorify God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ques. What was King David's sin in numbering the people who were under him? He said, "These poor sheep what have they done?" Why did the Lord then judge the people? (1 Chron. 21:1-17). J. E.

Ans. God is holy, and judges sin, and will ever do so sooner or later in all parts of His universe. On the ground of the work of Christ, redemption comes in for all who are broken and contrite of heart before Him.

2 Sam. 24:1 tells us that the people were also guilty, and that David's sin was also their sin. We may not understand what God is doing now. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

Ques. Please explain Mal. 4:3. A. V.

Ans. Malachi is prophesying of the restoration of Israel, and of the judgment of their enemies. It is judgment of nations on earth.

Ques. "The dead know not anything" (Eccl. 9:5). Is this so? F. V.

Ans. Ecclesiastes tells us what is "under the sun." Eternal issues are seen in the New Testament, as in Luke 16:19-31. What fools men are, trying to persuade their minds that there is no judgment. But the Word of God is plain, and enduring, and everyone must give an account to God, and everyone will need to bear the judgment of his own sins, unless he comes to "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

Reader, do not quibble or reason! Come to the Savior. Come as you are. Come today. Harden not your hearts.

"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?' Heb. 2:3.

Ques. Can an assembly deliver a person unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus? (1 Cor. 5:5). E. M.

Ans. No. It needed apostolic authority to do that. The gathering's simple duty when evil comes in, is to put away from among themselves that wicked person. That is obedience to the Word (1 Cor. 5:13).

Ques. Does 1 Cor. 5:5 apply to saints? P. A.

Ans. Yes. 1 Cor. 5:5 refers to God's discipline on His sinful child who was living in fornication. We see that he was restored, after he repented and judged his sin (2 Cor. 2:7.11, and 7:10, 11).

In 1 Tim. 1:20 we find two that made shipwreck of their faith, and lost their good conscience and became blasphemers. The apostle delivered them unto Satan that they might learn not to blaspheme. This was in both instances the act of God by the apostle. When the assembly puts away a wicked person, it is their simple duty (1 Cor. 5:13), but they do not deliver the person to Satan.

Correspondence, Correspondence: Death - Present or Asleep?; John 2:17 - Zeal of Thine House

Ques. I was taught by my parents that when we die, we go to be with the Lord. Now I am told by others, that all go to sleep in death till the resurrection. If you can, please enlighten us about this? What does Eccl. 9:5 mean, "The dead know not anything?"

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When the Lord Jesus comes for His own, the dead in Christ will rise first; then the living ones changed (Phil. 3:20, 21), will be caught up together to be with the Lord (1 Thess. 4:15-18). These will also stand at the judgment seat of Christ, now glorified in their resurrection bodies, to receive their reward, and be appointed to the place each one is to fill for Him.

Ques. Please explain explicitly, "The zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up" (John 2:17). S. E. W.

Ans. It means that the Lord Jesus, seen here as the Messiah in His burning zeal for God's glory in His house, rises above every other thought. "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God" (Psa. 40; Heb. 10). If anyone spoke against God, the burden of it fell on Him. "The reproaches of them that reproached Thee are fallen on Me." Psa. 69:9. Here we have the Lord's sufferings from the hand of man (He took it all from the Father). It is

not atonement here. This is seen in Psa. 22. It is some of His inward sufferings, in which other Godly men might share. It is like Psa. 102:1-11.

He knew, to carry out the will of God would lead through death (John 12:27). This earnest desire to fulfill all the will of God, brought suffering and reproach upon Him.

There are three prophetic days: John Baptists' day (chap. 1:1-36). Jesus' day, with the godly remnant of the Jews (37-51). The marriage day, pointing to Israel's restoration (chap. 2:1-22).

Jesus comes to the house of God, but it must be cleansed (14, 15). There the disciples remember (Psa. 69:9). Then we see in the same shadowy way, that He is to go through death, into resurrection life and glory, before all these things can be fulfilled (verse 19-22). This was the sign He gave them.

This scene foreshadows the purging of the kingdom in the latter days before the Lord as King can take possession of it.

May it be our earnest desire while we wait for Him, to have a little of that zeal, that we also may learn, and do His will (Rom. 12:1, 2).

Bible Queries, Notes on Former Questions: Vol. 1, 389; 428

Q. 389. Vol. i. p. 117. Does the "angel," Eccl. 5:6, mean the "priest"? In Mal. 2:7, the priest is called "the messenger of the Lord of Hosts," the word for angel being the same as for messenger.

I have seen a different rendering for the passage which is somewhat free, but appears to clear up the difficulty, "Suffer not thy mouth to subject thy body to punishment, (i.e. through the breach of thy vow), neither say thou to the priest, it was a mistake (I have made the vow inconsiderately and therefore have not kept it), wherefore should God be angry at my voice, and frustrate the undertakings, for the success of which my vow was made?" H. E.

Q. 428. Vol. i. p. 139. The whole question appears to my mind to rest upon the application of the word "heaven." That our blessed Lord refers to the immediate presence of God seems very clear from what precedes this verse. He had been discoursing to Nicodemus on the new birth, and the work of God the Holy Ghost, in fact of "heavenly things," and heavenly in this particular that they had to do immediately with the Godhead. The connection is not broken but continued through verses 12 and 13. "And" continues our blessed Lord, no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." As though He would have Nicodemus to see that no one but Himself could tell him of the " heavenly things " which He had just before unfolding to him, for no one had ascended up to the very presence of God and been permitted to look into the Eternal mind from which these "heavenly things" proceeded save He who came down from heaven, from "the bosom of the Father," John 1:18, and who was in the counsels of Jehovah when man's salvation was planned, and who even then, though manifested as " Son of man" on earth, was in heaven with the Father by virtue of His eternal Godhead. The difficulty respecting Enoch and Elijah disappears • when the subject is viewed in this light, as no Bible Student would contend that they were taken up to the heaven of which to my mind our blessed Lord speaks in this passage. C. F.

Note. Are not the " heavenly things " in v. 12, those of which our Lord was about to speak, not those of which He had already spoken! Ed.

Bible Queries, Notes on Former Queries: Vol. 2, 378, Ecc. 5:20

Q. 378. p. 52. Will the Editor kindly tell us whether F. L. P.'s answer to D. T. C. is right? Why should the overcomers of one church (Laodicea) move into Philadelphia? The four last churches go on to the end, and we to not see that their overcomers move into Philadelphia. Moreover, what does F. L. P. mean about no overcomers being found in Laodicea, see Rev. 3:21. " To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne," &c. Why does F. L. P. say that in Philadelphia all are overcomers? The promise there is individual as everywhere else. "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar," &c. Rev. 3:12. Lastly does F. L. P. refer to salvation when he says about verse 20 (Chapter 3) that "the mighty word if keeps the door open for "any man" to repent and be saved. I always thought that the promise of John 14:23, and Rev. 3:20, referred to fellowship with Christ, and was addressed to believers. I fail to see there a sort of gospel preaching. Is it possible that one of the seven assemblies according to F.L.P. was composed only of false professors. Which of us is mistaken, F.L.P. or myself, and will the Editor kindly set us right?

A. We are glad to have further remarks on the interesting subject which appears by no means settled either by D. T. C. or F. L. P. In the first place in our vivid application of these churches to the present day, we all seem to have forgotten that there ever were actual churches at Philadelphia and Laodicea, and that to ask a man because he was faithful in Laodicea to go and live at Philadelphia some 50 miles away is obviously unreasonable. It may be replied this is not what D. T. C. meant, but it is clear that such would be the case if the thought were carried out. If it be true that spiritually, as E. B. positively states, the four churches go on till our Lord's return, it is plain that those who answer to Philadelphia are a godly company, while those who are overcomers in Laodicea are individuals in an ungodly one. It would certainly appear that those who persevered in Philadelphia in keeping separate from Thyatira and Sardis on the one hand, and from Laodicea on the other, would be overcomers (though not of anything in Philadelphia), hence the force of F. L. P.'s remark. We cannot however agree with him that in Laodicea there are no overcomers, nor in his giving to verse 20 a simple gospel interpretation.-Ed.

Q. Eccl. 5:20. The writer, having shown the abuse of wealth by covetousness, shows (ver. 18,19,) the contrary use thereof, and then comments or reasons (v.20) that the good man's days shall quietly pass away without sad remembrances, (or with little thought), for God giveth him comfort, "The happy man finds life short, enjoys its good things thankfully, and waits for the better life beyond."

P. 92. With regard to some remarks by A. R. C. in reference to Rev. 4:7, while I do not see any Scripture for the fancy, it is curious that it was adopted by the Roman Catholic church, as may be seen by the living creatures put beside the evangelists in their churches, in pictures or statues. I have an old picture where the four evangelists are so drawn. A. M. H.

"Whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before Him." Eccles. 3:14.

"For I know that what He doethStands forever, fixed and true;Nothing can be added to it,Nothing left for us to do."

Young Christian: Volume 24, 1934, There Is a Time to Dance

“Is it sinful for a Christian to encourage dancing, or to take part in it when entertained by Christian people, who practice it, arguing that it is a harmless recreation?”

It would seem that this subject is a perplexing one to some young Christians in this day. Beloved young readers, are you willing to turn with me to the Word of God?. Let us bear in mind that “whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” (Rom. 14:23). And faith can only act on the known will of God.

It may he said, But do we not find dancing in the Scriptures? Yes, that is true, we do.

“Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously.” (Ex. 15:20).

This was the great joy of redemption from Egypt. Is it so when those called Christians, in this day, entertain their friends with dancing? Are their hearts filled with joy because God hath redeemed them? Do they sing to the Lord, because He hath triumphed gloriously? Do they think of the Lord, or dare they name His holy name at the dance? No; they never dance the dance of Miriam.

David “also danced before the Lord with all his might” (2 Sam. 6:14). But why did he dance? It was because the ark was brought into the city of David with gladness. The restoration of this symbol of Jehovah’s presence filled the heart of David with gladness, and thus in its dispensation was a time to dance. Have we ever been filled with higher and holier joy, because the enjoyed presence of the Lord Himself has really been restored wherever two or three are gathered to Him? Does not David condemn us? Honestly, dear young friends, do you believe you are invited to dance with all your might before the Lord? Or is it not really that you may make yourselves as happy as you can be in Cain’s world, and forget God? Is God in all their thoughts when they invite you to dance? You will not find a dance in modern Babylon that answers to Miriam’s or David’s.

Let us try another scripture. Israel, had sinned exceedingly while Moses was away in the mount. (See Ex. 32). They had freely subscribed their gold, and fallen into idolatry. They had really turned after demons. “And they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.” And they offered offerings, indeed, they imitated the worship of God. “And said, Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord.” Read the full account. “The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.” And in verses 17 to 20 we learn they played at dancing till they shouted again. Was this a time to dance? Was this faith, or sin? Which?

Now is not this an exact picture of Christendom: of those very so-called Christians that invite you to sit down and eat and drink, and rise up and play at dancing? They have practically turned aside from the Word of the Lord to the idolatry of paganism, and to the pagan festivals which they call feasts to the Lord. They sit down content in this world, to eat and to drink religiously, as many a one even takes the Lord’s Supper. And then, as it was while Moses was away in the mount, so now, while Jesus, the once crucified, is away in heaven, they invite you to rise up and dance. Dear young souls, may God open your eyes.

But is there not a scripture which says there is a time to dance? There is, let us read it:

“A time to mourn, and a time to dance.” (Eccl. 3:4).

The question then is this – is it now, is this the time to dance?

If an enemy invaded these shores, and if disloyal men betrayed the head of our national government into their hands, and he was with the greatest possible cruelty and indignity banished from this country, would that be a time for loyal citizens to dance, or to mourn?

When David was driven from his kingdom did his loyal friend, Mephibosheth, dance? When the king returned:

“Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king, and had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came again in peace.” (2 Sam. 19:24).

What would David have thought of him if he had called his friends together to amuse themselves with play and dancing?

Dear young readers, do you profess to be loyal Christians? to belong to the King of glory, who for the present has been rejected, and mocked, and with the utmost possible cruelty had been rejected by this world, by Jew and Gentile yea, who has been put to the most cruel and shameful death and who is still hated and rejected by this world? And is this the time to mourn His absence, or to dance for joy with that world that hates your Lord? That long-rejected Lord will soon return

“In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power.” (2 Thess. 1:8-9).

That blessed Lord has told us, it shall be in that day as it was in the days of Noah and of Lot. Was it a time to dance when the angel had warned Lot? His daughters and sons-in-law may have been at an evening party having a harmless dance. Was that a time to dance?

There was eating and drinking, and perhaps dancing: marrying and giving in marriage, when Noah had long warned the world of coming judgment; but the flood came at last. If it was not a time to dance then, is it now? A far greater judgment is at the very doors. Men did not believe it then, but it came. It will be so again.

Do you say, “O, but I am a Christian, and I expect the Lord to come first, and take me?” Do you look for the return of the Lord to take His church? And do you really believe that all who have heard and rejected the gospel – your very friends, it may be – that all these will be left behind for everlasting judgment, and can you amuse yourself and them with dancing? If you were sure the Lord would come tomorrow, would you spend tonight in dancing? Is not dancing a pleasure of that world lying in the wicked one? Has not God said in His Word,

“Love not the world, ‘neither the things in the world. If any love the world, the love of the Father is not in Him.” (1 John 2:15).

O, be not deceived; if you are really a Christian, then Jesus says, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” Do not let the devil deceive you by telling you that you can have both the pleasures of the world now, and heaven at last. Are we not baptized unto His death? Do dead men dance? We are to reckon ourselves dead with Christ and alive to God in Him.

Well, if it is not a time to dance now, will it ever be so? Yes, indeed there will be a time to dance, even on this earth. Faith in the Word of God sees a blessed time beyond the darkness and the judgments about to be poured upon this poor guilty world.’ The ancient people of God to whom the promises were given, the children of Israel, will be gathered to their own land.

“Let Israel rejoice in Him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their king. Let them praise His name in the dance: let them sing praises unto Him with the timbrel and harp.” (Psa. 149:2-3).

“Praise Him with the timbrel and dance.” (Psa. 150:4).

O what a change! The devil is the accepted god of this world now, and Jesus is rejected.

It is a time to mourn. The Lord shall then be King in Zion.

“For behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.” (Isa. 65:18).

“Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her... For thus saith the Lord, Behold I will extend peace to her like a river.” (Isa. 66:10, 12). (Read the context of chapters 65 and 66).

Yes, then will be the time to dance, for those who are spared to people the earth when Jesus, the Messiah, the King, shall reign in Zion. But notice the character of the dancing there. It is real joy in Christ, their King. It is with the heart filled with praise to Him. It is as if the body is thrilled with holy joy in the Lord, and expressed its joy in Him in the dance.

Can you tell me where there is such dancing as this now? Is the name of Jesus ever named in the dance? Does the heart swell with praise to Him? There may be the mockery of mixing dancing with a form of family prayer, as there was around the golden calf.

In conclusion then, as dancing is not now in keeping with the time in which we live, – (Jesus having been murdered and rejected), so it cannot be of faith, and “whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” Is it possible for a Christian who is waiting for the Lord from heaven to be found dancing? We do not believe that the two things can exist together. May the Lord separate all that are His from this pleasure-loving world.

Young Christian: Volume 23, 1933, Sore Travail

Eccles. 1:13

The sorrows that alike befall both righteous and wicked during the fleet years of life of our vanity, must ever be a mystery to the sight; only faith can find a reason and this only partially.

Solomon, like ourselves, sought much to find some satisfying portion in earthly things, but found it not. The sameness of all that ever happens; the weary labor that all creation shares in performing; the sorrows and unrest of all things burdened his spirit. The sun rises, and the sun goes down, to run the same race tomorrow; the wind wearily repeats its sounds: all the rivers run into the sea, and yet the sea is not full; the rivers return to their sources to run the same weary race again.

“All things are full of labor; man cannot utter it.” Eccl. 1:5-9. The tenor of it presses one down, and one asks, Why is all this, what fruit is there in any labor under the sun?

“The preacher” proved all things, and found nothing to rest in, nothing enduring, nothing but what is vanity.

He tried pleasure: it was all “vanity and vexation of spirit” (“pursuit of wind”).

He sought to find joy in wisdom, for he saw that wisdom excelled folly as far as light excelled darkness; but this too was vanity for death overtakes all.

What good was there in anything? all things had to have their season, and nothing long. And, worse than all, wickedness was in the place of judgment, and the oppressor in the place of power. The slothful and the miserly were alike vanity. And wisdom too, for it gained nothing for its owner but increased capacity to suffer.

And why all this? The answer is the only one that can throw light upon the mysteries of providence.

“This sore travail hath God given to the sons of men to be exercised therewith.”

Sore indeed the travail is, and deep indeed the exercise of heart induced by it; but one learns from it to long for something better than the best things earth can furnish.

But this is as far as Solomon could go; he could close the door on earthly hopes; it needed the coming, death, and resurrection of a greater than he to open the door to the realm of abiding and satisfying joys.

Under the old dispensation man might find the vanity of the world, and, in faith, trust

God to solve all mysteries, but not till the New, was the door opened to heaven.

It needed the death of the only One who had a right to life; and His resurrection and ascension to that place on the Father's throne, to give us real intelligence as to wiry the righteous suffer here. In the triumph and glory of the Captain of our salvation, we see the object and result to us of the sorrows we pass through here. They are to fit us for that glory unto which God is now bringing many sons, there to share the company of Him who overcame for us.

"If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him." 2 Tim. 2:12.

By suffering we are led more deeply into fellowship with Him, and thus capacitated the more fully to share His joy. Just as gold gets larger by being beaten, so we, as vessels, are hammered out that we may be able to hold a larger measure of joy when the reigning time comes.

And when the soul grasps this, it gives power to even "glory in tribulations," and what a triumph of grace this is! But this is only as we "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." When that glory has become the hope of the soul tribulations are accepted as being the natural, the proper path to that glory. Suffering is just as much a gift of grace as believing.

"For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake." Phil. 1:29.

Let the soul but grasp the purpose of God in saving us— fellowship with Him in the coming glory, and tears are seen to be the needed watering of that which the sunshine of His grace has caused to spring tip. And not one is lost; put, as David says, in God's bottle, they are preserved to that day when each one seen in the sunbeams of God's glory will sparkle as a brilliant jewel, formed in these days of trial, to be the everlasting reminders of that wonderful love that thus led us and bore us up through all our sorrows.

The Lord has said "ye shall be sorrowful but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." And it is and will be so. And he who in fellowship with the rejected Lord, has trod a path of tears, will find that he has laid up for him a larger treasure of jewels than he whose path was smooth and whose tears were fewer.

In trials the heart gets capacitated to enter into the Lord's mind as to us and as to His things, and we may well conclude that the impressions thus made on the character are made for eternity. If glory will allow of regrets, one chief one will be that we had not more appreciated these precious seasons of suffering which now we judge so hard.

Things New and Old: Volume 23, Man Without God

Man is without God and is himself lost. Such is the sad and awful consequence of his sin and turning away from God. What could be more terrible for the creature than to lose the knowledge of God? But such is the case with man in his natural condition. He is without God and without the knowledge of God in this world. "God is not in all his thoughts." And when His claims are pressed, how often does man exclaim," Depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways."

Man was not created thus. Ah, no; man's present condition is not the handiwork of God, or the fruit of His work as Creator. God created man "upright," in "his own image, in the image of God created he him." (Gen. 1:27.) All was perfect, and the Creator pronounced it "very good."

Whence, then, comes the change, the ruin, the curse, the fall, the darkness and distance, from God by man? Alas! man, the dependent, responsible creature, the head of the lower creation, has turned away from God, has followed Satan, believed his lie, and despised the word and goodness of his Creator and God. Sin in all its corrupting, devastating, separating power, has come in, and broken the peace and blessing of Eden, separated man from God, and made him a guilty wanderer in the earth without God; and so fully is he without God, that apart from the teachings of His Spirit, he does not like to retain God in His knowledge: he desires that his mind should not be burdened with the thought of God. He says, "I desire not the knowledge of thy ways." Oh, reader, how terrible is this! How awful is the power and results of sin! And you are a sinner. May God in His almighty power give you to awake to the fact. A sinner, without God, and yourself on the road to judgment. What could be more sad?

Not only this, but man has become the enemy—the active enemy—of the One to whom he is indebted for every blessing that he enjoys. God makes His sun to rise upon the evil and the good. Man takes the blessings and despises the One who sends them. Man by subjecting himself to Satan has imbibed the spirit of Satan—he is hostile to God. "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." (Rom. 8:7,8.) "Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God." (James 4:4.)

But let it not be supposed that man has lost his responsibility or accountability. It is written, "That every idle word that man shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment and God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." (Matt. 12:36; Eccles. 12:14.) At the Great White Throne, those who stand there will be judged, "every man according to their works." (Rev. 20:11-15.)

But how can man be reconciled to God? If man is guilty and defiled, and separated from God—a poor lost being—how can he be saved?

For man to know God, and to be restored to Him, there must be a revelation made of Himself, and the putting away of man's sins. There is cause and effect. Sin is the cause, and man being without God and become a guilty being, are the effects. Sin, the cause, must be put away,

and that by Him who is the perfect revelation of God to man. Man knows not God; Christ the only-begotten of the Father, the Incarnate Word, has revealed Him. God has come near man and revealed Himself in the Person of His beloved Son. “No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” (John 1:18.) How infinitely blessed that God has thought fit, in matchless grace, thus to reveal Himself to man when without God, and who himself was lost in his sins! It is not “by searching” that man finds out God, but by God revealing Himself to him.

Cannot we bless God, beloved reader, for thus making Himself known; coming out, notwithstanding man’s unclean and rebellious state, and displaying Himself in the blessed character of love and grace in the Lord Jesus? How this subdues and wins the heart of man to God! Man’s confidence in God was lost through his belief in the lie of Satan; it is established again, as he beholds God thus revealed, not as his enemy as Satan would have him believe, but as a Friend.

How precious are the words of Christ! “All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him” (Matt. 11:27.)

There are two classes: “The wise and prudent” (self-satisfied sinners), and “babes” (those who confess themselves ignorant, helpless, and undone). This wondrous revelation of God in Christ is hid from the “wise and prudent,” but, blessed be God, it is revealed unto the “babes.” The self-wise, and therefore the self-deceived sinner, is rejected, while the trembling babe, the conscience-smitten one, the helpless, weary, heavy laden one, is accepted, and learns and receives God in His blessed and adorable Son.

The knowledge of God and confidence in Him thus is rest, sweet and blessed rest. To the latter class, Christ addresses Himself in Matt. 11:28: “Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Ah, yes; to get back to a forsaken yet gracious God is indeed rest. The unrest of man’s heart is the sad consequence of having got away from God. “Come unto Me”—the revelation of God— “and I will give you rest.” said Jesus. This knowledge of God as a Savior brings rest and deliverance from that which caused the separation and loss—sin and guilt.

But sin must be put away. How wonderful! He who revealed the Father and declared God, because He was God, though become a man, has put sin away; and therefore has a right to say, “Come unto me and I will give you rest.”

How wonderfully clear is scripture on this point. May our souls listen with deep reverence to the following declarations: “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds: who being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand, of the majesty on high” (Heb. 1:1-3.)

Here, then, the One who is declared to be “the brightness of God’s glory and the express image of his person,” has “by himself purged our sins” and having done that,” sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high.”

May all who read these lines know the joy and the eternal blessedness of coming to Christ, and knowing Him as the Revealer of God, and the Purger of our sins.

Young Christian: Volume 29, 1939, In Thy Youth

“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.” Ecclesiastes 12:1.

Yes! in your youth, in the bright, fresh springtime of your life, while all is sunny before you, and while you are strong, remember your Creator. Give God your early days, your best days. How many a one has lamented in middle life that he did not give himself up to God in his youth!

“I am brought to God,” said one to us not long since, “but I have one deep regret, I have lived till my hair has grown gray and my strength has failed without Him. O, that I had turned to God in my youth.”

A few months afterward this man told us he was unable to fulfill his little service in helping on the work of the gospel, as age was telling on him. His heart was sound, but his strength had failed.

“In thy youth—in thy youth.”

Alliance with the world prevents our overcoming the world (2 Chron. 16:2-10).

To Every Man His Work, Bread Cast Upon the Waters

" Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days." Eccl. 11: 1.

If I am walking with God, I shall know something of this blessed life of a Christian in this world. In John 21 how different we find it. The disciples there are seeking their food from the waters, not communicating of their own abundance. This is just the opposite to this exhortation in Eccles u. In the one case I am seeking something from this scene for myself, in the other I am seeking to communicate to others from my own abundance. The difference is immense. Man is so constituted that he is always of necessity a giver or a receiver. And if I launch out upon the troubled waters of this life, seeking to get something from them, I must learn, as all of us will have to sooner or later, that John 21. 5 has a lesson in it for me. (I am only speaking of Christians.) I shall find that when the Lord asks me, after the dark night of my toil, " Have you any meat?" that I have only one answer to give Him, as they had. And " they answered Him, No."

This world-the moral scene through which I am passing-does not contain Christ. It had no room for Him when He trod it in grace, and it has no room for Him to-day. Hence, if I am a Christian, it cannot satisfy me; for it cannot minister Him to me, and nothing can feed the soul that has once tasted of life but the " bread of life." (John 6.) Bread is often referred to in Leviticus as the staff of the natural life (Lev. 26: 26; Psa. 105); and in like manner Jesus only is the manna that came down from heaven-the spiritual food-the " Bread " for His people to-day, the Giver of life too to those that have it not. What then has satisfied you, that which you daily find to be enough, learn to distribute to meet the needs of those around you. Christianity is never selfish-it always thinks of others. Whatever the need or the sorrow may be, there is relief. Jesus is the " bread of life." (John 6: 33, 48.) " Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days."

It is only the ministry of Christ that will meet and alleviate the sorrows all around you. This will minister to all earthly sorrows, and will lead on the soul to what is eternal and lasting-" Having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." " Give a portion to seven" (the complete number), " and also to eight" (that is, God's grace goes beyond all evil, and thus is without limit), " for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth." " They need not depart; give ye them to eat." (Matt. 14: 16.) But before you give it, it must be " thy bread; " that is, it must be what you live upon yourself, of which you minister. Nothing else is really yours. If Christ is not your daily portion-the satisfying One for you-how can you speak of Him or minister Him to others? Your words will seem to them but as " idle tales," for the Spirit will not add the unction of His power to words that are not true and real as to yourself.

But the privilege and responsibility remain. Christians are directly addressed in the words at the head of this paper; nor do I admit that they have no application to us. If powerless to minister Christ, what then am I living upon day by day, since it is " out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh "? The Lord Jesus died to give me all I needed, to satisfy me as a poor sinner, and to fill me as a saint. " Children, have ye any meat? " Am I filled, satisfied, fed day by day? If so, " out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." (John 7.) So that I may communicate to others. " Freely ye have received, freely give." Is my Christianity then marked by this exercise of it? " Upon the waters "-restful or restless-" bread " is to be cast, reminding one of Rev. 17, " The waters which thou sawest.... are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues."

Such then is to be your life and mine; and if we enter into what Christ is, it will be so spontaneously, daily, a life of casting our " bread upon the waters," only doing this in perfect rest and contentment of soul. This marked His life on earth. The people—everybody, the place-everywhere; for we are told, " In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand " (that is, go on, continue): " for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that." May we live day by day in perfect rest of heart; experience what it is to have Christ with us, the only changeless, great, and satisfying reality in this changing scene, brightening and gladdening the house or the business, and therefore ministered in all our footsteps, " until He come."

Things New and Old: Volume 4, Heavenly Sunshine

“Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun.”—Eccles. 11:7.

Creation’s light, how sweet indeed!

But sweeter light divine;

Beneath its soothing, cheering rays

My soul would e’er recline;

Without a cloud to intercept

Its ever-shining rays:

My soul would feast on heavenly food,

And tune itself to praise.

The light which shines from Jesus, forth,

Is light divine and true;

It gives to all on which it shines

A glorious, heavenly hue;

It pierces e’en the clouds of woe

Which cover oft the soul,

And lightens up the tear-dimmed eye

With joy unspeakable.

‘Tis this which gladdens even heaven,

No other light is there;

The glory of the risen Lamb illumes the city fair.

light divine, diffuse thy rays

Within this heart of mine,

Unfolding more of Him I love,

And giving joy divine!

A. M.

Echoes of Mercy: Volume 14 (1904), "Bread Cast Upon the Waters."

IN a small village in the county of Essex, there lived a poor woman who earned her daily bread by charring. She was, however, one into whose heart God had caused the light of the gospel to shine.

For some time the spiritual need of the dear village children had lain heavily upon her heart, and she felt led to commence a Sunday-school for them in her own little room.

As was often the case with the poor in those days, she could not read, having received no education; but she had been taught by a lady that beautiful chapter, the tenth of John; and so from time to time as the children came together, she would repeat this portion to them, explaining as best she could the precious truth which she herself through grace had received.

This continued for many years, during which time she learned to read a little.

Before going further into this interesting work, let us ask the reader to take a Bible and carefully peruse the passage referred to — John 10. Therein Jesus says, “I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved.” One question: Have you entered?

Many years have passed away since the establishment of that humble Sunday-school, and this dear, and now aged, Christian is living in London, having lain for six years upon a bed of sickness, proving the sufficiency of God’s never-failing grace and faithfulness, delighting to speak of Him and make known His saving grace to any who may visit her.

A few months ago the writer was privileged to read a letter from her, written to comfort one in bereavement. There is in it no mention of her own sufferings, which at times are very great — no murmurings, but much about the goodness of God, the preciousness of Christ, and the joyful hope of His return. It was truly a letter of comfort in the midst of sorrow.

In the chapter already referred to, Jesus says, “I am the Good Shepherd.”

Reader, another question: Do you know Him as such?

Time rapidly glides away. The days of activity of this humble but faithful servant of God are ended. But the precious seed had been sown in faith, and it pleased the “Lord of the harvest” that this dear servant should see some of the fruit of her labors before being called home. It is written, “Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days” (Eccl. 11:1).

A few years ago a lady returned to England after a somewhat long absence. She had a great desire to find, if possible, her old Sunday-school teacher. Going to the little village where she had been brought up, she learned that her former teacher had married a Mr. W—, and had “moved to London.” The task of finding Mrs. W — seemed hopeless, but the Lord directed this lady’s steps to the house of a Christian minister in London.

While at table one day this gentleman was remarking upon the patience of a “dear Christian woman named Mrs. W—,” who was bedridden, and at times in great suffering. It at once occurred to the lady that this was the very person she was seeking.

She determined to lose no time in following up the clue, and on calling at the address she had obtained, soon ascertained that it was indeed as she had hoped. She was admitted by Mrs. W — ‘s daughter, who was taking care of her mother. On one side of the room lay Mrs. W—, her poor afflicted husband on the other. It was some time before the dear old woman could call her visitor to remembrance; but the mention of the little village school brought her back to memory.

“Well,” said the visitor, “after leaving the village I went abroad with a lady. There I married. Now both my husband and son have passed away; and I have come to thank you and thank God for the instruction received in your little Sunday-school, which was blessed to my conversion, and through me to my husband and son.”

Since that visit it has been the privilege of this lady to minister to her former Sunday-school teacher in temporal things.

And now, dear reader, let this history speak to you. It is a blessed thing to have every need, bodily and spiritual, met for time and for eternity.

Would you have the blessed assurance of present possession of salvation and eternal life? Hear, then, His own words: “I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved” (vs. 9); and again: “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand. I and My Father are one” (vss. 27-30).

Do you ask how it is that such great eternal blessing can be secured to any one who believes in Jesus?

The chapter before us shows that this immense blessing is the outcome of His unspeakable love: “The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep.”

In order that we might obtain and enjoy the priceless blessing of eternal life, He Himself went down into the deepest, darkest depths of death. He suffered on the cross for you and me. Think of Him there, His holy soul poured forth a sacrifice for sin — yea, “made sin for us, that we might become God’s righteousness in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21).

All has been met in that precious Saviour’s death. God is now “just, and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus” (Rom. 3). And moreover the “precious blood” which “cleanseth from all sin” has flowed forth.

Now raised from the dead and seated in heaven’s glory, He sends these gracious words to you for your immediate acceptance.

“Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.”

P.S. — Since the above was written, news has been received that the subject of the piece has passed away. The earthly remains were interred on 13th April — “sown in hope,” awaiting that glad day when He shall say, “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

Tract Distribution, After Many Days

"Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.... He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.... In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good." Eccles. 11:1, 4, 6. "Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters" (Isa. 32:20).

These verses of Scripture are pregnant with meaning. They give Christ's servants plain injunction and clear directions to go diligently on with the Lord's work, in the full assurance that seed sown will bring forth fruit, although many days may elapse before the fruit be seen. They are very cheering also, for the assurance that they who sow beside all waters are blessed of God, may well encourage our hearts anew to go on with the Lord's work. The Lord loves to cheer His servants. He is the God of all encouragement, and some of the cheer He has given me lately, I should like to share with fellow laborers.

At the close of an after meeting, succeeding a gospel service, a middle-aged lady came up to me and said, "I can tell you your text of this night thirty-four years ago." "Indeed," I replied, "what was it? Pray tell me." " 'And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark'" (Gen. 7:1).

"You spoke from that text in this town, and that night I was turned to the Lord. I did not find full peace till next day, but my mind was made up; I decided for Jesus that night." "And He has kept you ever since?" "Ever since, and He will to the end."

I remembered the occasion, when it was called to my memory, and also the deeply anxious young woman to whom I spoke in the after-meeting that night; but it was very sweet, after a lapse of four and thirty years to find that the incorruptible seed of God's Word had brought forth such good fruit, as her happy face and manifest delight in the Lord indicated.

One Saturday about two years ago I attended a meeting of Christians where many had gathered together for fellowship and ministry of the Word. Between the afternoon and evening meetings a cup of tea was provided. Among those who were bearing round refreshments I observed a middle-aged woman whose bright happy face quite attracted my notice. Catching my eye, she came up to me and said, "I should greatly like to shake hands with you, Doctor, for I have never seen you since the night I was converted." Shaking hands with her cordially I replied, "And when were you converted?" "It is so long ago that I can scarcely fix the date, but do you remember preaching the gospel in a farmhouse more than a quarter of a century ago?"

"Yes, I remember it perfectly, and the date also. It was twenty-eight years ago. Were you in that meeting?" "Yes, I was then a girl of seventeen, living in a house nearby. I was asked to the meeting; I went, and God spoke to me through your lips that night. I was turned to the Lord. It changed my whole life, and I have been happy in the Lord ever since."

At the time I did not know of anyone who was converted at that meeting, though the farmer's twin girls of twelve years of age became very interested, and found Jesus a night or two after at another meeting. It was a great joy, therefore, to meet this child of the gospel after so many years, and her joy in meeting me was reciprocal.

On the Monday following I was present at some similar meetings, and during the tea interval a weather-beaten man came asking a grip of my hand, saying, "You know I was converted through you." "Indeed," said I, warmly shaking him by the hand, "and where did you hear me preach?" "0, I never heard you preach; it was through one of your little books, but it is twelve years ago. I was then a careless, godless man. One day when I came in to my dinner, I saw my little girl sitting by the fireside twisting and about to tear up a little booklet. My wife at the moment exclaimed, 'Take that book from her; do not let her destroy it.' I took the booklet and read the title, 'God says I am saved.' I said to myself, `That's a queer title; I cannot say that,' and not heeding my dinner I stood and read the little book through. It was very simple, I thought, so simple, only to look to Jesus and be saved, that when I had finished it, I read it through a second time. And then I said to myself, 'If that's all a man has to do, why should I not be saved?' I read it through a third time, and the light burst into my soul; I saw the truth, just as the dying girl did of whom it 'speaks, and like her I could say, 'I am only a poor sinner—Jesus died for me—I believe in Him—God says I am saved, and so I know I am.'

"Turning to my wife I said, `Where did that book come from?' `Oh,' she said, 'a sack of coal came in this morning from the coal merchant, and when I untied it, there on top of the first lump was the little book.'

"Was it not wonderful? But I found Jesus then, and I have been rejoicing in Him ever since, praise His name. Who put the book into the sack I do not know, but God spoke to me through it."

How wondrous are God's ways, and how happy will the person who put that book in the sack be, when he or she finds out it was the means of present and eternal blessing to an immortal soul. This tale should cheer and stimulate tract distributors. If we sow the seed, God will bless it.

Fellow-Christians, le t the foregoing instances of God's grace stimulate us all to go on diligently in the Lord's work. Preachers, tract distributors, and those who perhaps can only invite, or better still, bring with them an unsaved soul to a gospel meeting, have good ground for ceaselessly going on with their work.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." 1 Cor. 15:58.

Correspondence, Correspondence: Meaning of Ecc. 11:2

Ques. 89. Please give the meaning of Eccl. 11:2. E. M. S.

Ans. Ecclesiastes is wisdom under the sun. Eccl. 11:1-6 evidently looks at and exhorts us to use opportunities without regard to opposing elements. "Casting the bread on the waters", "Giving the portion" and "Sowing the seed" as opportunity affords, leaving results with God.

This suggests for us service to the Lord, sharing with others what we enjoy; giving a portion to all we can reach; sowing the seed evening and morning, as we find opportunity. May our walk and ways, as well as our words, be "holding forth the word of life." 2 Thess. 2:17.

The Evangelist: Volume 6 (1872), Babbler., A

“SURELY a serpent will bite without enchantment; and a babbler is no better.” (Ecclesiastes 10:11.) A serpent bites because it is a serpent; it wants an opportunity rather than a provocation; it is its nature. So, whatever may be a babbler’s pretext, however pressing he may urge the reason to be why he “ought” to speak his mind or “discharge his conscience” with respect to others’ failings, he babbles because he is a babbler. “God is not mocked,” and knows how to distinguish between the exercise of a Christian grace and the indulgence of a carnal prosperity, if I do not.

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