

The Bible Standard

“Send out your light and truth! Let them lead me;...”

Psalm 43:3

“LIFT UP A STANDARD FOR THE PEOPLE”

Isaiah 62: 10

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“I AM HE WHO LIVES, AND WAS DEAD, BEHOLD I AM ALIVE FOR EVERMORE”—Rev. 1: 18

THE EMPTY TOMB JOHN 20: 11-18



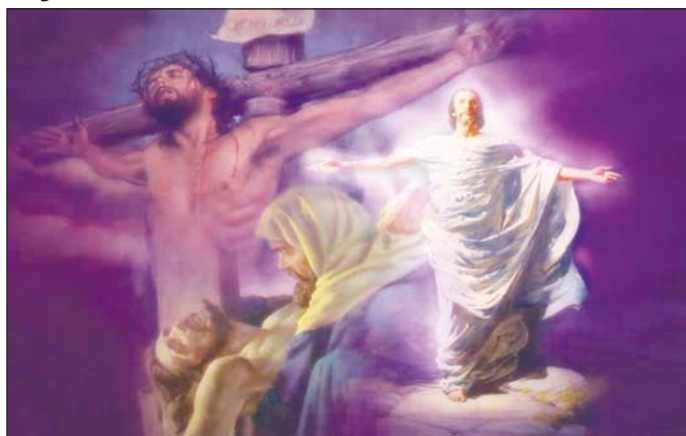
NOT only was it necessary that Christ should rise from the dead and become alive forevermore in order to accomplish the great work planned by God, foretold by the Prophets and secured by His own sacrifice, but it was necessary also that clear proofs of His resurrection should be given to His disciples for themselves and for us through them. The necessity for this lay in the fact that in the Divine Plan this Gospel Age was marked out to be a faith Age—for the selection of a special class, able, like father Abraham, to walk by faith and not by sight. But faith—in order to be of faith, and not merely credulity—must have some reasonable foundation upon which to build its superstructure; and it was to provide this foundation for faith that our Lord remained with His followers for forty days after His resurrection before ascending to the Father—as the Evangelist declares, “He also presented himself alive after his sufferings by many infallible proofs, being seen by them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1: 3).

The disciples realized that great events were transpiring, and to what extent their knowledge and character development had come, they but slightly comprehended the future. They knew that their hopes as respects an earthly kingdom and their Master as an earthly Lord had failed. They had vague indefinite hopes that all that He had said to them would in some manner have a fulfillment, but how or when or where was beyond their conception. They knew not that a change

of dispensation was occurring—that the rejection of Israel after the flesh and the calling of a new Israel after the Spirit had commenced and that they themselves were among the first privileged to pass from the relationship of servants of God to that of Sons (John 1: 12).

As yet they knew little about spiritual things, not having been begotten of the Holy Spirit to son-ship and not having the knowledge of things to come. Jesus had not yet been glorified, and it was impossible for the Holy Spirit of son-ship to come upon them until after His sacrifice for sins had been presented in the Most Holy and accepted of the Father. They knew not that the new Kingdom was to be a spiritual one, and that Christ, its Head, must pass from fleshly conditions to spiritual conditions in this resurrection, even as the Scriptures declare, “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 15: 50). Flesh, blood, bones, hair, the human body, etc., do not belong in the spirit realm (see BS No. 554). They had much to learn, but they had a great Teacher and, as we shall see, His arrangements for their instruction were specially adapted to their conditions as natural men, to give them such a foundation of knowledge and experience as would be helpful to them when they would be begotten of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

JESUS RAISED A LIFE-GIVING SPIRIT

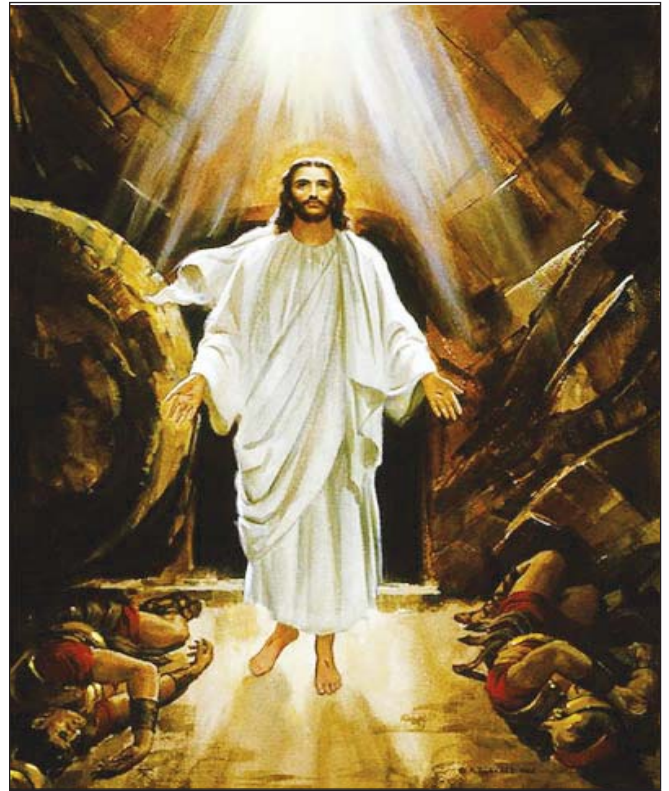


“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.”

1 Peter 3:18

The Apostle informs us that Christ was “put to death in flesh and quickened [made alive] in spirit” (1 Pet. 3: 18; a literal translation). The Apostle’s words being true, those who declare that our Lord arose from the dead a fleshly being are grossly in error. Indeed, it is evident that they have misconceived the entire subject of the atonement, for if our Lord, as the man Christ Jesus, gave Himself a Ransom, He could not be restored to manhood in the resurrection without annulling the Ransom—taking back the price He had laid down for our sins. The Scriptural thought is that as man had sinned and been sentenced to death, it was necessary that the Redeemer should become a man and should give His humanity as the Ransom price for Adam and all his posterity, and the Scriptural declaration is not that this Ransom price was taken back, but that God raised Him from the dead a new creature, to a new nature—not in flesh, not to human life, but to spirit life, a spirit being.

The Apostle Paul agrees with Peter’s testimony that Jesus was quickened in spirit, saying that Jesus was “declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (Rom. 1: 4); and again, the same Apostle, describing the First Resurrection in 1 Cor. 15: 42-45, says: “So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power; it is sown a natural [human] body; it is raised a spiritual body.” The Apostle elsewhere declares that the Church’s highest ambition was to be a partaker in the First Resurrection, which He denominates “his resurrection,” the Christ-resurrection, the resurrection to Divine spirit conditions, which came first to our Lord Jesus and in which all of His Church, His Bride, have a share (Phil. 3: 10; Rev. 20: 6). There can be no question that the Apostle in this description of the First Resurrection means us to understand his words just as they read—whoever interpolates and adds to the Word of God, declaring that it was sown a natural (human) body and raised a natural (human) body, and subsequently changed to a spiritual body, wrests the Scriptures to his own injury, to the darkening of his own understanding of the Divine Plan. In the same connection the Apostle declares that that body which you sow is not quickened, but in the resurrection God gives it a body as it has pleased Him, to every seed its own body—in the resurrection, not after it (1 Cor. 15: 35-38).



“His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead.”—Matt. 28: 3, 4

The Church belongs to the spiritual seed, to which God gives spiritual bodies, of spiritual substances, in the resurrection. Unquestionably the Lord Jesus, the Head of the Church, belongs to the same spiritual seed, and accordingly God gave Him a spiritual body in His resurrection. Likewise, in a succeeding verse, the Apostle declares that our Lord at His resurrection became the Second Adam; and then contrasting this Second Adam with the first, he says, “The first man Adam was made a living soul [a human or earthly being]; the last Adam was made a quickening [life-giving] spirit [being]” (1 Cor. 15: 38-45).

AN IMPORTANT LESSON FOR ALL

The lesson then to be learned by the Lord’s immediate followers was necessarily much more difficult to them than to us; because we have been enlightened of the Holy Spirit and are thereby enabled to appreciate spiritual things. To meet the exigency it was necessary that our Lord, the spirit being, should be present with them for forty days—invisible, as spirit beings are always invisible to mankind’s physical eyes, unless materialized as a human through the operation of a miracle. It was necessary for them to know of His resurrection in order that they could have faith in His message, and

act accordingly, as He desired; yet, had He appeared to them in the glory of His spirit being, opening their eyes to see the supernatural splendor as He showed Himself in vision to John on the Isle of Patmos, His face as lightning, His arms and His feet shining like molten brass in the furnace—the effect would have been to terrorize them, and their natural minds would have been unable to link such manifestations with Jesus recently crucified; neither would He have had opportunity, under such conditions, to have given them instructions, for they could not have received them by reason of terror.

It was necessary that our Lord, a spirit being, should manifest Himself as He had in the distant past manifested Himself to Abraham and Sarah, and as angels, under Divine commission, had done on several occasions—as humans (Gen. 18: 1, 2). He needed to lead their minds step-by-step, and their thoughts link-by-link, from the cross and the tomb to an appreciation of His present exaltation as a spirit being, respecting which He Himself explained to them, contrasting it with His previous condition, “All authority has been given to me in heaven and in earth” (Matt. 28: 18). And this leading of their minds must be such as would gradually force upon them the conviction that He was “changed,” that He was no longer human, and no longer subject to human conditions, as before His death. Having this thought in mind, we will have no difficulty whatever in seeing how our Lord inculcated these instructions during the forty days in His various interviews with His followers.

JESUS APPEARED TO THE WOMEN FIRST



Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene—Mark 16: 9.

Mary Magdalene was honored in being the first to whom our Lord revealed Himself. Scholars are generally coming to the opinion that it is a mistake to suppose that Mary Magdalene had ever been an unchaste woman—a mistake to identify her with the woman in Galilee in the house of the Pharisee, who washed our Lord’s feet with her tears and dried them with her hair, and of whom the account says she was a sinner (Luke 7: 39).

The name Magdalene is now supposed to signify that this Mary was of or from Magdala, a town, on the Sea of Galilee. However, according to the Scriptural account, Mary Magdalene was a miracle of grace, for it is distinctly stated (Luke 8: 2; Mark 16: 9) that she had been possessed by evil spirits, seven of them, whom the Lord cast out. Many think that she was a woman of wealth, and the evidences are that she greatly appreciated her benefactor and esteemed it a privilege to follow Him wherever He went. Not only had she come from Galilee to Judea, but she was near the cross at the time of His death, and the first at the tomb on the morning of the resurrection—“while it was yet dark.” Such love and devotion commend themselves to every sincere heart, and are surely worthy of emulation on the part of those who receive at the Lord’s hands spiritual favors—forgiveness, reconciliation, the spirit of a sound mind, new hopes and aspirations.

To harmonize the various accounts we must suppose that the women charged with the work of embalming our Lord’s body lived in various parts of the city, and did not all arrive at the same hour. Mary Magdalene arrived first, and finding the tomb empty, hastened and first found Peter and afterward John, both of whom at once ran to the sepulcher, Mary probably returning more slowly to the same place, arriving there after they and the other women had gone. It was at this second visit that the Lord revealed Himself to her. She had been weeping and then stooped down in order to see through the low doorway, as though to reassure herself that it was empty, and then saw for the first time two angels in white, who inquired respecting her sorrow. The angels had doubtless been there when she was there before, but she had not seen them, because of their choosing not to “appear”; indeed, the Scriptures assure us, saying, “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?” and again, “The angel of the Lord encamps round those that fear him, and delivers them” (Heb. 1: 14; Psa. 34: 7).

Doubtless holy angels had in charge not only our Lord’s body, but also the interests of His bereaved

followers; and now, as on other occasions, some of these appeared—appeared, because they could not be seen without appearing, without a miracle—appeared as “young men,” though they were not men, but angels; not flesh, but spirit beings—assuming fleshly bodies for a time, that they might render the service necessary. In Luke 24: 4 these same angels appearing as men are said to have been clothed in shining garments—so that they might not be understood to be men, but might at once be recognized as heavenly messengers. On the contrary, when our risen Lord as a “quickeningspirit” similarly “appeared” in the flesh, in order to come closer to His followers, He did not appear in shining garments, but in ordinary apparel, assumed for the purpose, and in order that He might have the better opportunity for giving the instructions which His followers needed.

The words of the angels to Mary would be calculated to comfort her grief, for they manifested no grief, and by their question implied that she had no ground for it. At this juncture something drew Mary’s attention; and, turning around, she discovered another person near her, evidently in ordinary garments, whom she presumed to be a servant of Joseph of Arimathea, the owner of the garden—his gardener. She considered herself a trespasser to some extent, and assuming that our Lord’s body was not wanted longer in the rich man’s tomb, she inquired where He had been taken, that she might take the proper steps to care for His interment.

WHY JESUS SAID “TOUCH ME NOT”

Then Jesus (for it was He who had “appeared” in the form of a gardener) spoke her name: “Mary!” At once she recognized the voice, and said, “Master [Teacher]!” she fell at His feet, grasping them as though fearful that somehow, if she let go, she might never get the opportunity of touching His blessed person again. Our Lord’s words to her “Touch me not . . . but go to [tell] my brethren,” would more properly be translated, “Cling not to me”—for I have not yet ascended to my Father; I will be here a while yet before I ascend, but your great opportunity for clinging to me and trusting in me will be after I have presented to the Father and He has accepted the great atonement for sins which I have just accomplished at Calvary.

Mary’s touch could do our Lord no harm, for others touched Him subsequently, as the record shows (Matt. 28: 9), but our Lord desired to lead Mary’s mind away from a mere clinging in the flesh—to the higher relationship and intimacy of heart and of spirit, which would now be possible, not only for her, but for all His

followers, not only then but ever since. In a spiritual way, the Lord’s people may be exhorted not only to “look unto Jesus,” the Author and Finisher of our faith, but also to “cling to Jesus,” and by faith to place our hands in His that He may lead us all through our pilgrim journey, in our narrow way until He shall deliver us.

Our Lord gave Mary a message, a service to perform, and so it is with all who love the Lord and seek Him and find Him: they are not to merely enjoy Him selfishly, but are given a commission in His service for the brethren. This seems as true today as ever. And by the way, this is the second instance in which our Lord addressed His disciples as “brethren,” with all that word implies of fellowship and of all being children of the one Father (Matt. 12: 48). Now He emphasized this relationship by referring to the Father as His Father and their Father, His God and their God. How close this brings our Lord to us in fellowship and relationship, not by pulling Him down, but by realizing that He is highly exalted, far above angels, principalities and powers, and every name that is named! It lifts us up, and by faith enables us to consider ourselves as the Lord considers us, “brethren” (Matt. 23: 8).

Mary departed with her glad message and was undoubtedly much happier in the delivery of it than if she had been permitted to remain clinging to the Lord, enjoying her knowledge somewhat selfishly. To find her Lord alive when she had supposed Him dead meant to Mary a joy such as the Apostle Peter expressed when He said, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, has begotten us again to a lively hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pet. 1: 3).



“Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven.”—Psa. 85: 11

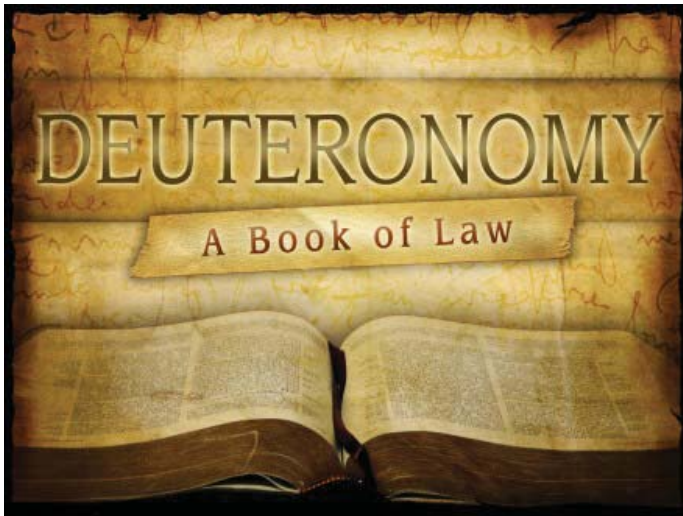
We may well suppose from our own experience that every time Mary told the good tidings to others and made their hearts rejoice, it brought her a fresh increase of joy. The Master similarly sends all who recognize Him as “He that lives and was dead, and is alive for evermore” to go forth and tell others of the glorious fact that we have a living Savior, whose love and interest extends to

every interest and affair of our lives, and who not only is full of compassion, but is able also to help those who are tempted, who are in trial, who are in distress of any kind—One who is able to bring us off conquerors, to give us strength to endure hardness, and who by and by will receive to Himself all the faithful (Rom. 8: 37-39; 2 Tim. 2: 3).

THE DYING MESSAGE OF A GREAT MAN

DEUT. 6: 1-15

“BEWARE LEST YOU FORGET THE LORD.” DEUT. 6: 12



DEUTERONOMY is the title of one of the most important books of the Bible. From it evidently David and the other prophets of the Old Testament drew considerable of their inspiration, and from it our Lord and the Apostles freely quoted. It may be said to be a grand summary of the whole Law of God. It presents to us a number of the orations of that great man of God and leader of Israel; the mediator of the Law Covenant. Its preparation may have been a gradual work on the part of Moses, but its delivery to the people of Israel was apparently reserved until shortly before his death, and about the time the Israelites were ready to pass over Jordan under the leadership of Joshua to take possession of the Promised Land. The grandeur of its language and figures of speech is freely conceded by all, and some have ranked its orations quite as highly as those of Demosthenes of ancient times and of Burke, the more modern. The evident object of the book was to impress upon the Israelites the glorious lessons of their past, and to inspire them with reverence for Jehovah their God, and to be to that people the voice of Moses and the voice of the LORD through Moses, encouraging and admonishing them and, through them, future generations.

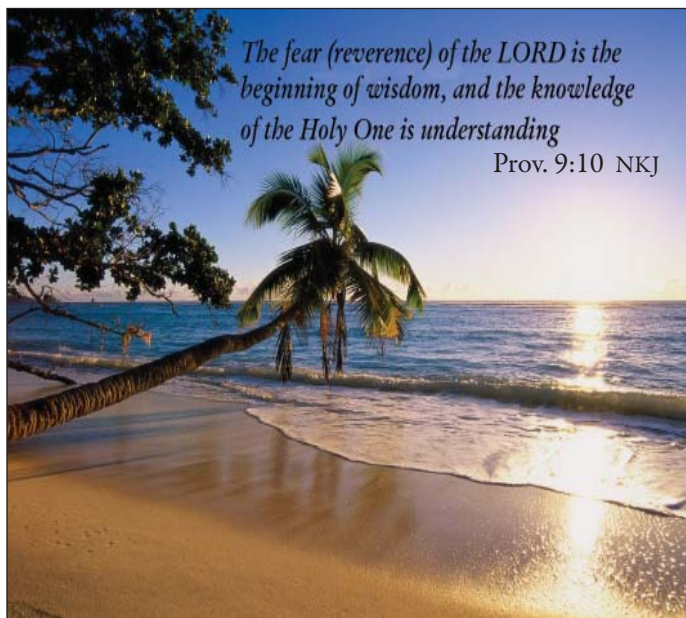
Note carefully the loyalty of Moses to the LORD. He boasted not of Israel as “his people,” as we frequently hear modern preachers do respecting their congregations—although Moses indeed might have been excusable had he used such language, because he was personally the mediator, the representative of the whole nation according to their covenant with the LORD at Sinai. Note well that his great work as a leader passes comparatively unnoticed, and that his exhortations to Israel are all along the highest conceivable lines of duty towards God and responsibility to Him for all the comforts and blessings of the past, as well as for all the hopes they cherished for the future. The preparation and delivery of this oration to Israel reminds us of the words of the Apostle Peter in connection with his epistle when he says, “For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know, and are established in the present truth” (2 Pet. 1: 12). Not only did these orations of Deuteronomy have a valuable influence upon the Israelites at the important juncture of their passing from the guidance of an old leader to that of a younger one and into a new land, but Scriptural history tells us that six hundred years afterwards, when the nation had fallen into idolatry, when the Temple of Solomon was practically abandoned, and the religious worship of the people was at a very low ebb, the finding of this book, Deuteronomy, in the rubbish of the Temple, and the reading of it first in the ears of King Josiah and afterward at his command in the hearing of all the people, awakened one of the greatest revivals in the history of that nation, and led to the destruction of idols throughout the land and the reestablishment of Divine worship (2 Kings 22: 8-20).

PROPER FEAR OF THE LORD

Our lesson of today is generally recognized as belonging to the second oration (Deut. 5: 11). Some surmise that at the close of this oration the “Book of the

Covenant”—the Law contained in Deut. 12: 26—was recited or read. Later, the book was placed inside the Ark of the Testimony in the Holy of Holies, as described in Deuteronomy 31: 24-29.

This lesson opens with the statement that the book is a summary of the Divine commandments, the statutes and judgments which the LORD commanded to be taught and to be performed in the land of promise. The word “judgments” here, as in many other places in the Scriptures, signifies decisions as to right and wrong. The object of these is stated (Deut. 6: 2) “That you may fear Jehovah your God, to keep all His statutes.” This was not only to apply to those who entered the land, but to extend to all their children, and their favor in the land and their continuance in it were made dependent thereon. The Apostle counsels us that perfect love casts out fear, but the Scriptures also show us that the “fear [reverence] of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.” Nor are the two statements in disagreement, for a proper reverence carries with it a fear to displease or offend one who is loved and revered. Moreover, it is only the perfect love that fully casts out all fear, and the perfecting of love is a gradual matter. A beginning of love is not incompatible but quite harmonious with the spirit of deep reverence and as related to the Almighty, a feeling of reverential awe as respects His greatness and perfection and in contrast with our own littleness and imperfection. It is as the Christian grows in grace and knowledge that he is enabled to “perfect holiness in the reverence of the LORD” and at the same time to perfect his love; the latter eventually entirely swallowing up every feeling of fear, although reverence will remain an integral part of the love, for who could fully love God without reverencing Him?



EARTHLY PROSPERITY AND REWARD

There is no doubt about it that in this lesson (Deut. 6: 3), and in many other parts of the Old Testament Scriptures, the LORD distinctly sets before people that they will receive earthly prosperity as a reward for their obedience and loyalty to Him and His laws. This to some has been a stumbling-block; and not recognizing the fact of the dispensational change from the Jewish Age to the Gospel Age, they have applied this promise equally to Spiritual Israel, and their error has resulted in confusion of mind, for it is plain to be seen by any one that earthly prosperity in the present age does not attend the Spiritual Israelite, but rather, as the Apostle expressed it, “Yes, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3: 12). How important it is, as the Apostle suggests to Timothy, that we learn to “rightly divide the Word of truth.” Observing this rule, everything is plain. Fleshly Israel had earthly promises and not heavenly ones, while Spiritual Israel had heavenly promises and merely the assurance of bread and water as respects their earthly interests and no assurance beyond these as respects their temporal prosperity.

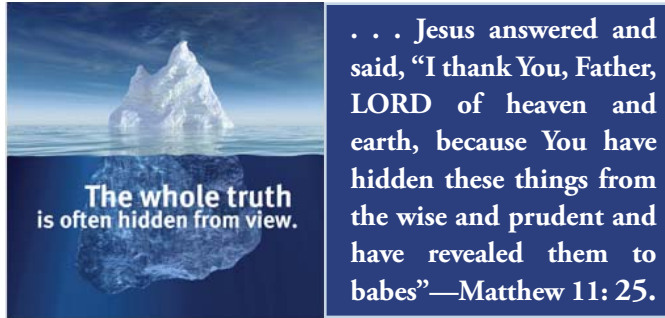


People will receive earthly prosperity as a reward for their obedience and loyalty to Him and His laws.
Deut. 6: 3

So far, therefore, as this teaching of earthly rewards is concerned, instead of reflecting against the book of Deuteronomy and its inspiration, it supports them. The promise to Natural Israel, that they would be blessed in basket and in store, in flocks and in herds, in long life and many children, finds its counterpart in Spiritual Israel on a higher plane. The heavenly Father was pleased to give Natural Israel earthly blessings because they were of the earthly seed, and because the dealings of their dispensation foreshadowed the Divine dealings with the world during the Millennial Age in rewarding every good deed and punishing every misdemeanor. To God’s people, begotten of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and since, belonged the “exceeding great and precious promises,” the heavenly glory, honor and immortality as members of the spiritual New Creation. Our Father is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him than are earthly parents to give earthly good

things to their children. Spiritual Israel was to seek to grasp, to appreciate, to enjoy spiritual things by faith and if faithful to the end, would enjoy these actually throughout eternity by participation in the First Resurrection as New Creatures.

As the opening statement of the most important of all truths, the great Prophet, Moses, cried to the people, “Hearken, O Israel!”



“JEHOVAH OUR GOD IS ONE— JEHOVAH”

If this statement was true at the time of its utterance, it is still true; if its importance put it at the very top of the list of injunctions, it should still be regarded as the most important among the doctrinal teachings of the LORD’S Word. Yet what do we see? We see as respects Fleshly Israel that they soon forgot the words of Moses, and time and again they were punished on the score of idolatry—for worshipping other gods, by forgetting the declaration that there is but the One, and His name is Jehovah. Quite similarly we find among Christian people a tendency to forget this great integral truth that there is but one God and His name Jehovah. Our Roman Catholic friends make many gods: the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, Saint Mary, all the Apostles and Saints, are gods of higher or lower dignity, with various degrees of reverence, and objects of adoration and prayer. And even Protestants, while rejecting many of the lesser gods of Romanism, yet, contrary to this Scripture and every other Scripture and without any reason, persistently declare that we have three Gods in one; nevertheless they reject this statement also and reverse it, saying, that there is one God in three persons! If we attempt to question them and to ask a reason for their hopes and beliefs on this subject they are silent, except to say that it is a great mystery, which neither they nor anyone else can understand—how there could be three Gods in one person or one God in three persons. No reasonable mind could grasp this; it would be a mystery indeed. But why should we make a mystery out of the plain, simple statement of God’s Word? Why not accept the inspired

statement of Moses that there is but one God, and that He has not three names but one name, Jehovah.

Nothing in this need hinder us from recognizing our Lord Jesus as a mighty One also, a “mighty God.” The Scriptures describe Him, and clearly tell us of His greatness, His wisdom, His love, His power, His full harmony with the heavenly Father, Jehovah, and His full submission to His heavenly Father’s will in all particulars. As He Himself said, “I can of myself do nothing,” “My Father has sent me,” “I do not seek my own will but the will of my Father”; and again, “The Father is greater than I” (John 5: 30, 36; 14: 28). Is it not the part of true wisdom and faith to take the inspired Word on this subject as on every subject, and not to trust to wild theorizing of our own or those of other men, which admittedly make confusion and mystery and darken the counsels of the LORD’S Word? How beautiful the thought presented in the Scriptures in the language of the Apostle, “All things are of the Father and all things are by the Son” (1 Cor. 8: 6). How beautiful the thought that the Son was the very “beginning of the creation of God,” and that “by Him all things were made,” that He was the active agent and representative in all the great work, not only as respects man but angels also. The Bible teaching of the relationship between the Father and the Son honors both, does violence to neither Scripture nor reason, but leaves the teachable in a happy frame of mind, the more ready to be taught of the LORD on all subjects.

How beautiful the thought that Jehovah God presented to His only-begotten Son—our Lord Jesus, in His prehuman condition—the proposition that He should be the Redeemer of the world, and that this should be accomplished by the humbling of Himself to man’s nature, and then the further humbling of Himself even to death, even the death of the cross; and that as a result of this humiliation and this evidence of loyalty to the Father, He should be raised from the dead to a plane and nature above and beyond His original glorious estate, made partaker of the Divine nature, and share in all the glories of that nature. How grand the thought that the dear Redeemer did manifest His love and loyalty, and that He is now exalted and is set down at the right hand of the Majesty on High, awaiting the time when in the Father’s name He shall take possession of the dominion of the world to rule, to bless with light and knowledge, and to uplift the willing and obedient from the mire of sin and death to all that was lost in Adam and redeemed at Calvary. Truly all who really listen to the Word of the LORD are made both wiser and happier thereby. “The

secret of Jehovah is with them that reverence Him, and He will show them His covenant.”

“SHOW THEM HIS COVENANT”

That wonderful Covenant, shown to all who are seeking the Word in honesty and sincerity, assures us that as our dear Redeemer humbled Himself for our, and the world’s redemption and has been highly exalted, so, if similarly faithful, we may suffer with Him now and by and by have part with Him in the Kingdom which is to bless all the families of the earth. Oh, what riches of grace! What loving kindness! What tender mercy! What evidences of Divine wisdom, skill, justice, love and power! How this view of the Only Begotten of the Father shows Him to us as our Redeemer and also as our Lord and Head, who by and by, according to His promise, will present the church as His Bride, blameless and irrevocable before the Father in love. Viewed from this standpoint the recognition of Jesus, our dear Redeemer, the One sent of God, the Savior of the world, is not in derogation of the command of our text, “Jehovah, our God, is one”; for the Apostle assures us that, according to Divine authority, all should reverence the Son even as they reverence the Father—not reverence Him as the Father, or above the Father, but reverence Him as the Son whom the Father has appointed heir of all things, and who, as the Father’s associate, is to bless all the families of the earth, and who a thousand years later will deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father, that He may be all in all (1 Cor. 15: 25-28).

THE CHIEF OR PRIMARY COMMANDMENT

After calling attention to the one true God, Jehovah, we are exhorted, “You shall love Jehovah your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind.” This is the summary of the first great commandment, as approved by our Lord Himself (Matt. 22: 37). It is not in conflict with this that we love our Lord Jesus also, for the Apostle declares, “Everyone who loves Him who begat him also loves Him who is begotten of him” (1 John 5: 1). He who loves the Father must love the Son also, who is the Father’s express image and who has manifested to us in His own flesh the glorious character of the Father. As the Son loved the Father, prayed to the Father, and felt that He must be about the Father’s business, and finally died in the accomplishment of the Father’s will—the work to which the Father had sent Him—so with us, we must have such a reverence for the Father and for His will as is here specified. The nation of Israel did not love the LORD with all its heart, with

its soul, with its might. Similarly the Church, Spiritual Israel, was called upon to love the LORD with heart, soul, being, and strength, who are the LORD’s and who are seeking to please Him, to serve Him, and in the forwarding of the Divine purposes, are called upon so to do.

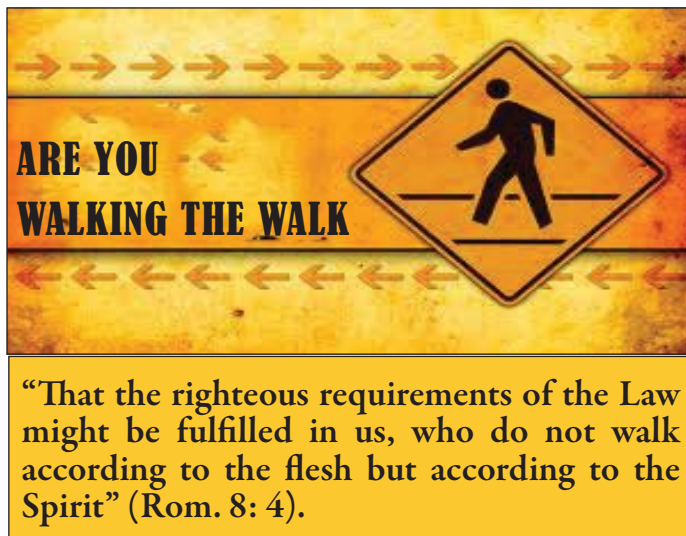
“And these words which I command you this day shall be in your heart.” It is not sufficient, as the LORD subsequently pointed out, that we should make a profession to be His people, for the “LORD looks on the heart.” The complaint of the LORD through the Prophet against Spiritual Israel is the same as against Israel of old—“Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths and honor me with their lips, but removed their hearts far from me”—not all, but apparently the great majority (Isa. 29: 13; Matt. 15: 8). The lesson to us as Spiritual Israelites is contained in the Apostle’s words that this command of chief love shall be in our hearts. If so, this love for God will permeate everything; we will love Him and His service better than we would love sin and its pleasures, better than we would love friends, kindred, houses or lands or any other thing; and whoever has this first great commandment in his heart and is living in harmony with it, will be sure also to have the second commandment, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”



THE FRUITS OF SUCH A LOVE

That the LORD and Moses, His mouthpiece, did not seek to inculcate the mere nominal professions of love for God is clearly attested by the next verse, which declares respecting these Divine commands, “You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise

up.” One whose mind and heart would be so filled with love for God and the glorious attributes of His character would indeed be a true Christian. What time would he have for sin or frivolity? What a model home his would be! How well instructed his children would be in the dealings of Divine providence and all the gracious promises of the Divine Word! What moderation of word and of act would result from this intimate fellowship with God, and yet how the light would shine out from such a life! The highest attainments under this exhortation were not reached under the Jewish dispensation, as the Apostle most clearly sets forth. The Jew did recognize grandeur in the Mosaic Law, but it was so far above him and all his abilities that he gradually drifted into mere outward and formalistic observance of its propositions. But the Apostle explains that the highest attainments under this Law may be made by Spiritual Israelites during the Gospel Age. He declares, “That the righteous requirements of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (Rom. 8: 4).



In other words, although we are not more able to accurately keep that grand law than were the Jews, we who are in Christ, having His righteousness tentatively imputed as a covering for our blemishes we can receive a measure of His Holy Spirit. And, although there are not many such true Christians in the world, we believe that Truth Readers represent a considerable number of those of whom the description in the verse before us is a fitting one (Deut. 6: 7). And a still larger number are awakening to a realization of the true standard which the LORD has set for those who are following in the footsteps of Jesus. These are more and more watching and praying for the fulfillment in them and of the LORD’S will as here expressed. They are seeking to teach the Divine

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statutes, laws of righteousness, etc., to their children by word and by example. They talk of them continually in their leisure moments, in the house, in the car and other places. Thoughts of the LORD and His wonderful plan of salvation come first into their minds on awaking in the morning and are last in their thoughts as they retire to rest at night.

We are glad to testify that our increasing knowledge of the readers of this Truth leads us to believe that they are in their hearts and in their lives seeking to approximate the condition of mind and heart here set forth as the ideal one, most pleasing to the LORD. At conventions this is particularly noticeable, and many have remarked that, when a hundred gathered from various locations, very rarely is there a word heard respecting business or pleasure or any other matter except as associated and connected with the LORD, His character, His plan and the service of His Truth. Strangers have commented upon this and marveled at it. Nevertheless, what else might we expect among those who are growing in grace and knowledge and love, among those who are coming nearer and nearer to an appreciation of the Divine standards and whose hearts are full of the desire to know and to do the Divine will.

Nor would we discourage those who have not yet attained to anything like this, the proper standard for the LORD’S people. Rather would we bid them be of good courage and continue the fight against the world, the flesh and the Adversary, and to continue to watch and to pray, and to strive to attain the conditions here set before us as those pleasing and acceptable to our Father in heaven. To have the desire of heart is the first condition, and to heroically carry this forward in all the affairs of life is the second step. The two constitute overcoming the world. First God works in us to will aright and subsequently as we become stronger in faith and knowledge and grace the spirit of the Truth works in us to do His good pleasure, so that in all our ways we acknowledge Him and request that He may direct our paths. The family worship, the Heavenly Manna at the table; if we give it as important a place as the earthly food; and the study of the Divine plan are channels through which the Divine blessing is more and more entering the hearts and lives of many of our readers, and we trust that the good work will continue to go on and progress. Proportionately, each one is a burning and a shining light in his home or among his acquaintances, whether they acknowledge this or make little of it. His testimony is pleasing to God and hopeful to himself and the LORD’S favor will be abundantly manifested.



*Jewish Phylactery
Deut. 6: 8*

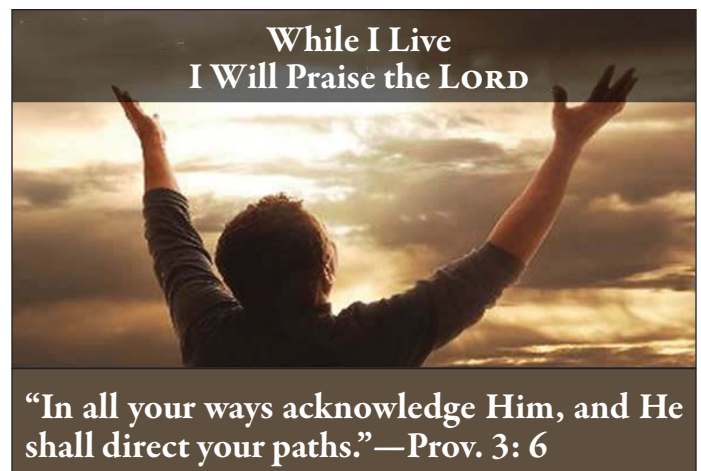
THE JEWISH PHYLACTERIES

Our Lord Jesus referred to a custom among the Jews of His day which still prevails—of binding the phylactery upon their foreheads and their arms, while making void the Law of God through their traditions. The eighth verse of Deut. 6 is the foundation for this custom. It says, “You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.” A phylactery is a little square leather box attached to a leather strap about a yard long. In the cubical leather box are placed parchments containing four passages of Scripture in four columns (Exodus 13: 1-16; Deut. 6: 4, 11, 13-21). These the Jews at times fastened upon the head, the box coming above and between the eyes; or again they fastened the box at the inside of the elbow, and wrapped the strap about the arm, holding the end in the hand. Poor Jews! They grasped with fervency an outward form, but, as the LORD pointed out, they missed the real kernel of the Law, namely, love out of a pure heart for God and for their neighbor. The wealthy and infidel Jews have of course abandoned this custom, but it is still in vogue among the most earnest or orthodox, who usually spend one hour in prayer every day and in putting on and off the phylactery.

There is a lesson for us in this failure of Natural Israel to catch the spirit of the Divine command. Our Lord said that while they made an outward show their hearts had vicious thoughts, unloving, unkind thoughts and they were merely drawing nigh to God with their lips in a formal manner and were not acceptable. The Spiritual Israelites do well to remember that, while we do not use the same outward forms, we might bow the knee and pray long and much and yet be far from acceptable to the Lord unless we allow His spirit of grace and truth to enter into our hearts and there produce that transformation which He tells us is alone pleasing and acceptable to Him, a transformation which will make us less selfish, more generous, less proud, more humble, less children of this world, more the children of the Kingdom, seekers less of the things of this present time and more of the Kingdom of God and of the righteousness which it represents and will in due time enforce.

OUR OUTGOINGS AND INCOMINGS

“And you shall write them upon the door-posts of your house and upon your gates.” It is doubtful if the LORD meant this to be understood and practiced literally. It is probable that, instead of introducing to the people phylacteries, the meaning of the LORD’s word was that they should consider the Divine laws as overshadowing everything that they saw and as affecting everything that they did with their arm (strength) and as affecting every affair of life, in the home and outside of it. However, if the spirit of the matter could have been retained by the Jews, their phylacteries, we presume, would have proved no interference to the Divine blessing. They complied with the letter by fastening in a prominent place in the doorway what they termed “mezuzah.” This is a square piece of paper or parchment inscribed with Deuteronomy 6: 4-9; 11: 13-21. It is then rolled and placed in a small cylinder usually of wood or tin. It is the custom of the pious Jew to touch this with his finger on each occasion of his passing it, and say in Hebrew (Psa. 121: 8), “The Lord shall preserve your going out and your coming in,” etc.



The real thought which we attach to this injunction is that everything pertaining to us who are the LORD’s, especially everything pertaining to the Church, which is the house, the family of God, is sacred to Him and under His blessing, and we must confess Him in every matter, “In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths” (Prov. 3: 6).

Next (Deut. 6: 10-12) Moses exhorts on the blessing and prosperity soon to come to them in the LORD’s providence should they not turn their hearts away from the source of their blessing. And those as Spiritual Israelites—especially those who at this time are enjoying so much refreshment at the Lord’s hand in spiritual understanding—should never forget while enjoying these as they have all come through the Father. True,

the Father, now as ever, uses means, agencies, Pilgrims, Colporteurs, books, tracts, etc., for bringing His grace and truth to His family, and everything that God is pleased to use for our blessing should be appreciated by us if we are in the proper attitude of heart and truly thankful to Him. But neither the good things themselves nor those who bring them to us are to distract our attention from the great fact that all these blessings are of God, who gives to us liberally, richly, and upbraids us not for our seeking of them, but rather rewards us richly. As Israel was exhorted continually to remember how God had brought them out of the house of bondage, so we should continually remember how the Lord brought us out of the house of bondage—bondage to sin, error, and death that this was accomplished through the great antitypical Moses, who pictured our Redeemer.



The closing verses of the lesson are exhortations again in reverence for the LORD and His name, and the repudiation of all other gods or rulers, and the assurance that instead of Divine favor would come reprobation if, after having been recipients of His favors and blessings and the spirit of adoption, we should forget our obligations or turn from Him to sin. These lessons, so appropriate to Natural Israel, we recognize as still more appropriate, and important, to us. Let us then take a valuable lesson, gird up the loins of our minds and strive patiently to the end of the way, when we shall be rewarded if we faint not.



THE MOUNT OF OLIVES THE KINGDOM OF BLESSING

“And His [Jehovah’s] feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south” —Zechariah 14: 4.

THIS TEXT REFERS TO THE CLOSING OF THE DAY OF TROUBLE and the manifestation of God’s Power in connection with that trouble. The literal Mount of Olives may have, and probably will have, somewhat to do with the matter. It is referred to here as experiencing a great earthquake. Possibly the Israelites will be gathered at Jerusalem at this time, and possibly the LORD’s favor will be manifested to them there. This will be at the close of “Jacob’s Trouble,” from which the Lord will be present to deliver them. The execution of what is here described seems to be a part of the work of the glorified Church.

We understand that the Ancient and Youthful Worthies will then appear, and God’s favor will have returned to the Jews, and that Israel’s temporal blessings will there begin. This would imply that the Jews will then be under the New Covenant arrangement, and that the Church must have been completed.

Symbolically, a mountain represents the Kingdom. The Scriptures elsewhere declare that Jehovah will

make the place of His feet glorious. The word olive always associates itself in the minds of the people of the Orient with the thought of light and nourishment. The olive oil they use regularly instead of butter. As the olive furnishes both light and food, the Mount of Olives would represent the Kingdom of God. Olive oil was poured upon the head of the Jewish kings and priests, and symbolized the Holy Spirit. God’s Kingdom will be for the blessing of mankind. It will be of two phases—the heavenly and the earthly—and all people may eventually come under its blessed condition. First it has been for the Church, and eventually its influence will embrace the world of mankind.

See Studies in The Scriptures, Vol. 4, pp. 649-656, for more information on this subject.



“Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”—Matt. 6: 10

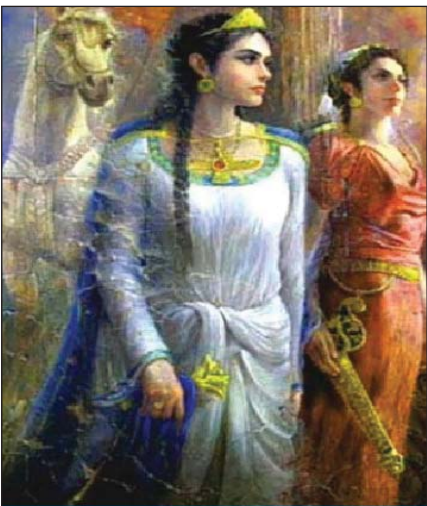
GOD'S PROVIDENCE REGARDING TWO QUEENS

ESTHER 4: 1—5: 3

Vashti & Esther a study in contrasts

“The LORD preserves all them that love Him” Psalm 145: 20. This study has Queen Esther for its topic. She was a Jewess, noted for her beauty, and on this account she was chosen of Ahasuerus, King of Persia, to be his queen. It is presumed that she received the name Esther, which signifies a star, because of her beauty, Hishtar being the Chaldaic equivalent for Venus. She succeeded

Vashti, the former queen, who had displeased the king and been divorced.



*Queen Vashti refused King Ahasuerus' command and lost her royal estate.
Esther 1: 19*

We find a lesson in the opposite course of these two queens. The king had a banquet with the lords of his empire. It may be assumed that it was a revel, and that the king and his guests, at the height of the revel, were more or less under the influence of wine.

Giving Queen Vashti the benefit of the doubt, this was probably her reason for ignoring the king's request.

Many will say that she did just right in asserting her womanhood, in “standing up for her rights,” etc. We will not dispute that all women have rights, and that Queen Vashti had hers and that she exercised them. We merely offer the suggestion that in a question of “rights,” along lines of force and compulsion, Queen Vashti won a victory which cost her dearly.

In Queen Esther's procedure, which is the subject of this lesson, we see the opposite course pursued—the queen won a great victory with happy results by a totally

different procedure, and one which in our judgment recommends itself to be the wisest and best of men and women.

Vashti could have taken a similar course but did not. However much she might have felt that the king's requirement of her presence would expose her to jest or rudeness, she should have relied upon her charm and tact and purity and upon her husband's love and care. While it was not hers to intrude into the banquet, once invited, her presence should have been a hallowed one, a sweet perfume, a rebuke to any immodesty. Like many other well-meaning women, Queen Vashti was unwise; she abandoned the most potent defense of pure womanhood when she met command with refusal. But then we must remember that Vashti was neither a Christian nor a Jewess, and was therefore without any Divine instruction or guidance.

ESTHER STOOPED FOR VICTORY

When invited to become the queen Esther did not decline. She did not seek to stand—on the same ground as Vashti. She accepted her accession as of Divine providence. She clothed herself with humility and with the most becoming of her fine apparel. She made herself as agreeable to the king as possible. It is presumed that at this time she was in her fifteenth year. Haman, the king's favorite, took a dislike to the gate-keeper of the palace, Mordecai, a Jew, because the latter did not bow before him, as did others. Mordecai was so faithful that Haman could not hope to find a fault with him, and to cause his removal. His hatred extended to the entire Jewish race. He prevailed upon the king to issue a decree that all the Jews of his kingdom should be set upon and killed as enemies of the country. This, of course, would include Mordecai, his special enemy, whom he would then feel free to kill.

As the time for the enforcement of the decree drew nearer and nearer, Mordecai and all the Jews throughout the empire were in great distress and fear, yet not without hope that their God would work some deliverance. This matter is detailed in our lesson.

Queen Esther was cousin to Mordecai, although the latter was old enough to be her father. She was, indeed,

his adopted daughter. He appealed to her to use the influence of her position to have the king rescind the order. She delayed because, strangely enough, at this very time, the king had shown coldness toward her, and had not called for her for a month.

LOVE AND BEAUTY CONQUERED



Queen Esther charmed the king, who extended to her his royal scepter, which she touched (Esther 5: 2).

Mordecai pressed the matter more urgently, assuring her that she was about to lose a great privilege of service for her people; that God had evidently raised her to this position in the kingdom for this very hour and for this very purpose of bringing to the Jews relief and

that, if she failed to note and to use the privilege, God doubtless would use some other agency and still bring deliverance in harmony with His promises. The appeal was sufficient. The queen merely delayed for three days more, requesting that Mordecai and all the Jews of the royal city join with her in a three-day fast before God, which of course included petitions to God for the deliverance of His people, and for wisdom to guide Esther in her endeavor to use her talent and opportunity wisely.

Queen Esther risked her station and even her life in going into the king's presence without a summons; but, attired in her royal apparel, she risked everything for her race. She charmed the king, who extended to her his royal scepter, which she touched. He perceived that she had a request to make, and urged her to speak. Wisely she refrained and asked the king and Haman, his prime minister, her enemy, to partake of a special dinner with her in the court garden. After the visit the king again urged her to say what wish of his attractive queen he could gratify. This was Queen Esther's opportunity, and she replied, asking why, if he loved her, he would issue an edict that she should be killed, and all of her race, the Jews.

Her case was immediately won. The king perceived that he had been inveigled by Haman into making an unjust decree. A bad law stipulated that no decree of a Persian king could be changed. This decree had been stamped with the king's seal, and the king, angry at Haman, made another decree, namely, that Haman should be hanged, and that the Jews everywhere should be notified that they had royal consent to use force against their enemies in defending their lives.

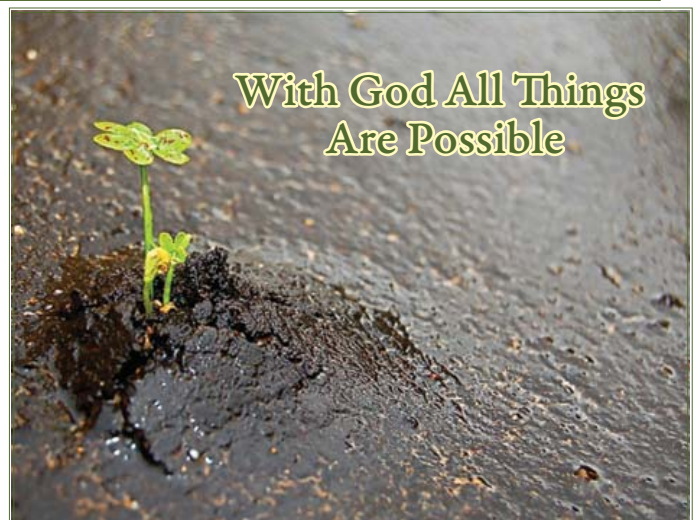
Moments of Inspiration

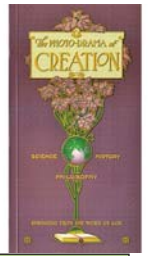
We hear cliches and quotes all the time but never really think of the truth embedded in them. Sometimes we have to look closer and read between the lines to see the real meaning in the words. Stop and think the next time you hear one of these sayings

Where there's a will there's a way

"Jesus said unto him, if thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth"

Mark 9: 23





King Saul's Life Spared (Jealousy of Saul)—1 Samuel 14 and 15

King Saul was the first of Israel's kings. He was tall, head and shoulders above his brethren, and from the human standpoint was rather ideal. He had considerable wisdom, too. Indeed, that was his failure. He overlooked the fact that his Kingdom differed from all other kingdoms, and he attempted to rule after the manner of other kings. In the case of Israel, God declared Himself King, and the person upon the throne was really His representative, and should be guided by Him in everything. Because David at heart was anxious to do all these things, and very repentant whenever he learned that he was wrong, he was spoken of as "a man after God's own heart." His heart was right.

The anointing of David was kept a secret, but Saul nevertheless began to see that God's favor was with David, and that the people of Israel loved him, especially after he delivered them from Goliath, and won a number of battles. King Saul selfishly desired that his own family should be perpetuated upon the throne, and hence he was bent upon destroying David. He made him an outlaw, and on every occasion sought to kill him, and thus thwart God's purpose.

David, on the contrary, on two occasions had King Saul's life at his disposal, yet did not take it. In this he was a man after God's own heart. God had caused him to be anointed, and would give him the throne. Until God's time should come, David would wait. In sparing King Saul's life, David acted in harmony with the LORD's will: "Touch not Mine anointed, and do My Prophets no harm." King Saul was God's anointed, and it was for God to depose him and to give the throne to David in His own time. And He did.

How valuable it would be to all of us to learn this lesson of patience and waiting upon the Lord, for Him to direct in His own time and in His own way. This was the spirit of Jesus: "Not My will [as a man], but Thine [Father Divine], be done"—Luke 22: 42.

Questions for Lesson 40

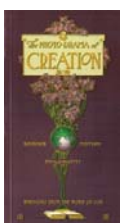
- 1* Who was the first King of Israel?
- 2 What was his father's name? 1 Sam. 9: 1
- 3* What was the appearance of this son who later became King? 1 Sam. 9: 2
- 4 When Saul became King, what did he overlook? What did he attempt to do? How did he try to rule?
- 5* Who was the real King of Israel?
- 6 What was the person upon the throne?
- 7* How was David different from Saul?
- 8* What was David called? What kind of a heart did he have? Par. 1
- 9 What anointing was kept secret?
- 10 What did Saul begin to see?
- 11* What did the people think of David? What notable victory did David win? 1 Sam. 17: 49
- 12* What sword did David use? 1 Sam. 17: 50, 51
- 13* What made Saul angry at David? 1 Sam. 18: 6-9
- 14* Why was King Saul bent on slaying David? Par. 2
- 15* How many times was the life of Saul in the hands of David?
- 16* Why did David not kill Saul? Par. 3
- 17* What lesson may we learn from this picture?
- 18 Who manifested a similar spirit? Luke 22: 42. Par. 4

p. 40—*50

* The questions marked with an asterisk are especially for children.

ERRATA: In the May/June 2013 BS #876 Two typographical errors need to be corrected.

On page 38, col. 1, par. 1, line 11 change, Tewish to Jewish; On page. 44, col 2, line 2, change Cod to God.



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