

May 15

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

A117-124 "PERMISSION OF EVIL... Though, in the working out of his benevolent designs, he permits evil and evildoers for a time to play an active part, yet it is not for evil's sake, nor because he is in league with sin; for he declares that he is "not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness." (Psa. 5:4) Though opposed to evil in every sense, God *permits* (i.e., does not hinder) it for a time, because his wisdom sees a way in which it may be made a lasting and valuable lesson to his creatures...

God could have made mankind devoid of ability to discern between right and wrong, or able only to discern and to do right; but to have made him so would have been to make merely a living machine, and certainly not a mental image of his Creator...

God seeketh such to worship him as worship in spirit and in truth. He desires intelligent and willing obedience, rather than ignorant, mechanical service. He already had in operation inanimate mechanical agencies accomplishing his will, but his design was to make a nobler thing, an intelligent creature in his own likeness, a lord for earth, whose loyalty and righteousness would be based upon an appreciation of right and wrong, of good and evil...

God designed to *permit evil*, because, having the remedy provided for man's release from its consequences, he saw that the result would be to lead him, through experience, to a full appreciation of "the exceeding sinfulness of sin" and of the matchless brilliancy of virtue in contrast with it... So the final result will be greater love for God, and greater hatred of all that is opposed to his will, and consequently the firm establishment in everlasting righteousness..."

THE LITTLE FLOCK COME TO REALIZE THEIR NEED DURING TRIAL & DIFFICULTY

R4046 "Unbelief never gets beyond the difficulties, the cities, the walls, the giants. It is always preferring them, dwelling on them, pitting them against its own resources. Faith, on the other hand, though it never minimizes the difficulties, looks them steadily in the face, turns from them and looks into the face of God, and counts on him. This is what the people failed to do, and for this they lost Canaan." *F. B. Meyer...*

"I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST WHO STRENGTHENETH ME"

There are ⁽²⁾two important lessons for Spiritual Israelites to learn: (1) Their own inefficiency--their own inability to meet the trials, the difficulties, the hindrances in their way. As the Apostle says, We cannot do the things that we would. But our extremity is God's opportunity, and his encouraging words are, "My grace is sufficient for thee;

⁽²⁾ Note: "(2)" was not directly marked in the full article, but obviously, as lesson (1) was realizing our own inability, then lesson (2) faith & reliance on the Heavenly Father. We cannot do it on our own.

yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. Habakkuk 3:17,18

WE see that God permits evil in the world that the world may learn certain lessons of bitter experience as to the natural rewards of evil doing, but we see also a min-

my strength is made perfect in your weakness."

...Those, therefore, who can and will exercise full faith, full confidence in all of the divine promises may go from victory to victory, from blessing to blessing, from joy to joy, from one attainment to another, and have a glorious victory in the end over the world, the flesh and the Adversary, through the imputed merit and continued assistance of him who loved us and bought us with his precious blood.

To this class the giants of opposition and despair lose their power, even as did Goliath before the sling-stone of David. The pebble from the brook -- the message from the divine Word -- vanquishes the enemy's power to those who have the sling of faith. To these the fortresses of sin are not so strong as to be invulnerable, unassailable; entrenched depravity is recognized as being subject to divine power, and when attacked in the name and strength of the Lord and encompassed repeatedly with prayer, finally its strong walls fall down as did those of Jericho."

Precious Promises pp26 "*Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved. Psa. 55:22*

There are works of grace to be wrought out in us which only the hard experiences of life can accomplish. For instance, we would be inclined to lean too much to our own understanding, if we were not at times brought face to face with problems that baffle our skill. It is when we are "afraid to touch things that involve so much," that in our perplexity we come to Him who has kindly said, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He will sustain thee," and ask Him to undertake for us. Or we might be inclined to trust too much in the arm of flesh, if the arm of flesh had never failed us, and the disappointment driven us to the Lord to seek the shelter of His wing. Or we might learn to trust in uncertain riches, if moth and rust had never corrupted nor thieves stolen the little or much of our earthly possessions. Or we might have been satisfied with earthly friendships and loves had not their loss sometimes left us alone with God to prove the sweetness of His consolation."

THE WORLD TOO WILL COME TO REALIZE THEIR NEED IN THE CLIMAX OF THE PERMISSION OF EVIL

(Psa 107:26-30 KJV) "They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble. {27} They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end. {28} Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. {29} He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. {30} Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven."

istry of evil in respect to the saints--in their testing and polishing and refining; making them ready, and proving them worthy, as overcomers, to inherit the wonderful things which God has in reservation for the faithful. Z.'03-94R3168:2

OV420-421 "The Bible intimates very clearly that just at the height of anarchy, when men get to the place where everything is going by the board, then will be the opportune moment for Messiah to intervene. Man's extremity will be God's opportunity.

In the 107th Psalm, verses 25-31, there is a picture given representing a great storm at sea when men are tossed about and in a terrible condition, and their souls melt within them. "Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He bringeth them out of their distresses; He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still."...

It will then be a prayer of real distress. They will not be boasting then, they will have become humble. For "The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that Day (the Day now begun.)" (Isa 2:11,12,17-22.) But the Lord will permit present civilization to go into destruction, because He has something far better for the world. He will not put a patch upon the old garment. He will have an altogether new arrangement. There will be a "new heavens," a new ecclesiastical arrangement, the Church in glory, and a "new earth," a new social and political order, under control of the Heavenly Kingdom then to take the reins of government."

THE LITTLE FLOCK

R5875 "There is a ministry of evil--of calamity, sickness, death, etc.--which has often been valuable indeed to the Lord's people, inculcating various lessons and developing various fruits of the Spirit--meekness, gentleness, patience, long-suffering, brotherly kindness, love."

F626-630 "We see that Satan himself, and the demons, his associates in evil, are really the great power working in and upon and through mankind, in opposition to God, and in opposition to the plan of atonement which he has designed and which began to be put into operation at the first advent and death of our Lord, as the ransom price for sinners. From this standpoint only can we comprehend clearly the significance of the words of the Apostle, "We wrestle not with flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high [exalted] positions." (Eph. 6:12) And seeing that fallen man is so incompetent to defend himself against this wily Adversary, and that the people of the Lord can escape from his machinations only in proportion as their hearts are thoroughly loyal to the Lord and attentive to his Word--and then because to such he will grant special assistance and deliverance from evil, which, if it were not for this assistance, would deceive the very elect--we are led to inquire, Why does God permit this great Adversary thus to compass man about with delusive errors, false doctrines, and, to some extent, with miracles in support of these?

The answer to this question, and the only satisfactory answer that can be found, is that God, in the present time, is not seek-

ing the reconciliation of the whole world, not attempting to bring all mankind into harmony with himself, but, on the contrary, is merely selecting out from amongst the redeemed race the predestinated little flock, the New Creation, who will make their calling and election sure, under divine providence, by becoming, in heart, copies of God's dear Son, their Redeemer, their Lord, their Bridegroom. The world's experience, under these delusions of the Adversary will, during the Millennial age, be thoroughly exposed. All shall then see and fully appreciate the delusive and ensnaring and degrading influences of every other course than the course of righteousness...

The Ministry of Evil

Meantime these errors and superstitions amongst men are serving, nevertheless, to hold them in a bondage of slavery, at a time when they would be incapable of using liberty aright; because only perfect men, only those who have the full "image of God," and who are guided by him, are properly prepared for a self-control that would be to their own profit. Meantime, also, these oppositions of Satan and his associates in evil, and the opposition of the

world, wrought upon through their errors and delusions, are directed against the Truth, against those who become its servants, in proportion as they are loyal to the Truth, and energetic in that service. It was our royal Master, the most faithful servant of the living God, who declared to those who would follow in his footsteps, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you..." (Jno. 15:18,19)... These persecutions and oppositions from the world, the flesh and the devil are the hammer and chisel and polishing implements of the Lord, which he is using in the development of the New Creation.

God is making use of these implements of opposition which the Adversary is himself furnishing, and is causing the wrath and opposition (both of men and of devils), to praise him, in that these very experiences and tribulations of his elect Church are *working out for us* "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." (2 Cor. 4:17) These are the implements by which the living stones of the great Temple of God are being shaped and fashioned, polished and prepared, in harmony with the great Architect's design—to the intent that shortly, in

R5383 (From Harvest Truth Database V10)

A PROPHECY NEARING FULFILMENT

"Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."—HAB. 3:17,18.

HABAKKUK'S entire prayer, recorded in this chapter of his prophecy, is so symbolical that it would be scarcely in keeping with it for us to give the words of our text the plain, simple interpretation that we would be otherwise inclined to give. This simple interpretation would be that although the conditions were such that famine stalked everywhere, and there was nothing of earthly hope, nevertheless God's people at any time and in any place would rejoice in God and give Him the glory.

It would seem very strange, however, if the Prophet should wind up the whole chapter, so highly symbolical, with anything so plain and literal as we have suggested. With so much imagery in his mind, it would seem but reasonable that the words should be interpreted in keeping with their context, and that we should regard it as the Prophet's expression of some deep truths. Much of the language of the Bible is figurative; and in our common conversation we also use many figures. For instance, in the Scriptures a vine is a figure used for the Church: As our Lord said, "I am the Vine; ye are the branches."—John 15:5.

The flock of God—the sheep—are common figurative expressions for the same class. Our Lord speaks of the Little Flock. We are His sheep. The Jews were also referred to as God's sheep, by the Psalmist David, in Psalm 74:1; 79:13, etc.

So with the word olive. The olive tree is mentioned by St. Paul in referring to the special people of God, His peculiar people—those in relationship with Him. He speaks of the natural olive tree—shows that the Promise applied originally to the Jewish nation: "In thee [Abraham] and in thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." He says that because of unbelief the natural branches were broken off. Thus we locate the vine and the olive both as representing the Church of Christ, from different points of view.

When the Little Flock shall have passed beyond the veil, there will still be the Great Company of the Lord's people left here. Many of these will apparently continue in Babylon until the time of trouble shall cause Babylon to fall. And by the fall of Babylon these will be set free. Before all this is made plain to them, they may use the language of our text, and later come to see clearly. In the *19th of Revelation* this company are spoken of as rejoicing in the fall of Babylon and saying, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him; for the Marriage of the Lamb is come, and His Wife hath made Herself ready." (Vs.7.) All things had seemed to them to be failures; and now they see that God's Plan has not failed, but has been fulfilled.

EARTHLY GOVERNMENTS A FAILURE

The Church has not yet blessed the world. The fruit of the Vine will feed the world in the coming Age. Neither the olive nor the vine will give life to the world at the present time. This will come in the New Dispensation, during the Messianic reign.

and through this living Temple, all the families of the earth may be blessed...

Our hope for many of those who have come in contact with the light of Truth throughout the Gospel age, and now in the end of the age, is that their opposition to it has been at least partially one of blindness, as the Apostle declares with reference to those who crucified our Lord: "I wot that ye did it ignorantly, as did also your rulers." (Acts 3:17) From this standpoint we may entertain a measure of hope for some of the most violent opposers of the Truth—Evolutionists, Theosophists, Spiritualists, Christian Scientists, Romanists and Protestants. Our hopes for the future are necessarily less in the case of those who have been enlightened on these subjects by the Present Truth, but who, for the sake of ambition or jealousy or pride in their desire to be somebodies, have become opponents of the Lord's work. Such fall generally into the errors of Universalism, having become blinded as respects the Lord's presence, and even as respects the ransom. It is not for us to pass judgment upon these yet it is for us to fear on their behalf..."

The Lord has used the word *field* to represent the world: "The field is the world." The world have been hoping to better their affairs. They have been hoping to manage matters successfully. And so the various universal empires have sprung up. First the Babylonians tried to give the world a better government, but their efforts were of no avail. Then the Medes and Persians tried, and also failed. Next the Greeks and later the Romans took the reins of universal government, and likewise failed. Finally Papacy came forward, claiming to be the Kingdom of Christ that would rule the world. She failed. Of late years Socialism has come to the front, saying that it can better the world, but the prospects for social improvement are no better.

"NO HERD IN THE STALLS"

The expression, "herd in the stalls," seems a little obscure. The Scriptures liken our Lord Jesus to a bullock—and in the coming Age mankind, on reaching perfection, will be symbolically represented by a bullock. The suggestion of the Prophet David is that mankind then shall offer *bullocks* on God's altar. (Psa. 51:19.) This cannot refer to the Church in the present time; for in the Atonement Day *type* the Church is represented by a *goat*, and our Lord—a perfect Man when His sacrifice was made—is represented by a bullock. But in the end of the next Age, when the world shall be *perfected*, they shall offer *bullocks* on the altar. This represents how mankind will make a full consecration of themselves, their *perfect powers*.

We know nothing better in the application of the bullock than that suggested by the Psalmist. At the close of this Gospel Age, when all the Church shall have passed beyond the veil, there will be no perfect men. In other words, there will be a point of time when the Church will be glorified and when the Ancient Worthies will not yet have appeared. The people will stand amazed, not seeing any way out of their troubles. Only those who have the light of the Lord's Word will be able to appreciate the condition at all.

Those who will then understand—the Great Company—will rejoice in the Lord. They will be able to trust in God, even though conditions in the world are distressing, and the Ancient Worthies not yet here to take hold of matters. They will see that the conditions are really leading up to the great blessing—that the great Time of Trouble is the necessary preparation for blessing. And they will say, Let us rejoice and give glory to the Lord, for the Bride hath made herself ready! We see in this glorification of the Church the beginning of the great blessing. Soon we may expect to see the Ancient Worthies here. Then will come the fulfilment of all God's gracious promises. So we will not lose heart, but will trust in the Lord.

Our Lord Jesus spoke of the Great Company—the foolish virgin class—in His Sermon on the Mount. (Matt. 7:21-23.) After the last member of the Little Flock has gone beyond the veil, the Great Company will be thoroughly awakened and will say, "Lord, Lord, may we

not come in? We are ready now, dear Lord; we see where we have made our mistake. We see matters differently; we realize what privileges and opportunities for sacrifice we once enjoyed, but missed. May we not enter even now?" But the Lord will answer, "Depart from Me. I do not recognize you." This word *depart* does not mean that they will depart into eternal torment, as we once thought. The Lord does not say, "Depart, ye cursed," for *cursed* means to be set apart for punishment. He merely says, "Depart from Me."

The Kingdom of Heaven is elsewhere (Matt. 25:1-12) likened unto ten virgins who took their lamps and went forth to meet the Bridegroom. Five of them were wise and took oil in their vessels with their lamps; but five were foolish virgins and took no oil with them. When the Bridegroom came, the foolish virgins said to the wise ones, "Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out." But they could not do so, they had enough only for their own lamps. After the wise virgins had entered with the Bridegroom, the door was shut. Then came the other virgins saying, "Lord, Lord, open unto us!" But he answered, "Verily I say unto you, I know you not."

These words of our Lord, "I know you not," do not mean that these were not virgins. What do they mean? He means that, having recognized His Bride, He does not know any other woman. These were desiring to be recognized as a part of the Bride. And the Lord says, I do not recognize you. My Bride is complete. So the foolish virgin class are rejected from a place in the Bride class, but they are received as associates and assistants. Their rejection will give them cause for grief. Realizing that the *door of opportunity* is closed to them, they will cry, Oh, we have lost the great prize! They may become despondent. We do not know.

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ABLE TO COMPREHEND WITH ALL SAINTS

"PROCRASTINATION is the thief of time," is an old proverb and a true one: and time lost means opportunities lost, and the advantages and privileges which went with the opportunities, also lost. If Christian people (all the truly consecrated) could get the proper view of the divine plan, and could see clearly, with the eyes of their understanding, the great work which God is now doing amongst mankind, and could see their privileges in connection therewith, life would become much more real, much more earnest, to them than it is. We do not mention the world in general, but recognize it as having no hearing and no sight for divine things now;--being blinded by the god of this world, and deafened by the babel and clamor, which he induces and perpetuates for this purpose. Thank God for the gracious promises of the Word: that in the new dispensation, under Christ's Millennial Kingdom, all the blind eyes shall be opened, and all the deaf ears shall be unstopped. (Isa. 35:5.) But, seeing that the world is blind and deaf, we pause not to attempt a miracle with its children; but follow the Lord's injunction, and speak, so far as possible, only to those who have ears. "He that hath an ear, let *him* hear."

Those who have heard in any measure,--who have seen to any extent,--who have tasted to any degree, that the Lord is graciously extending his favor toward all those who come unto him through the Redeemer, and who have thus come into the household of faith,--are privileged far beyond the masses of our race who are still aliens and strangers and foreigners to God. But one difficulty is, that through false doctrines instigated by the Adversary, believers have gained so wrong a conception of the divine plan, and of the divine character formulating that plan, that they not only do not love God with all their heart, but, on the contrary, they desire to have as little to do with him as possible;--as little as will secure their everlasting escape from an eternity of torture, which they have been taught to believe he has prepared for the great mass of his creatures.

We cannot blame people, who view God and his plan from this false standpoint, if they take comparatively little interest in studying the Bible, which they believe is the revelation of these horrible preparations, --predetermined before the world was made. Our first effort in approaching the average Christian professor should be to anoint the eyes of his understanding with "the oil of joy," by briefly explaining to him the way of the Lord more perfectly. It is well to begin where God begins, and where the apostles begin the story of salvation; viz., with the cross of Christ. It is well to impress, first of all, that as a race we are all under condemnation through original sin, and that there is no escape for any, except through the Redeemer whom God has provided. Next, it is well to show just what the penalty is, that it is not eternal suffering,--torment; but eternal death, a death from which there could be no recovery,--annihilation. Next, it will be in order to show God's compassion in providing the Savior, who paid for us the very penalty against us-- that in his flesh he "suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (1

SORROW TURNED INTO JOY

But this Great Company are afterward pictured as saying, Let us be glad! Let us rejoice! Let us glorify God, because the Bride has been taken! Should any one say to them, But *you* are not of the Bride class, their reply might be: Nevertheless, the blessings are coming to all-- *even* to us! The Bride class are the First-fruits of God's people. It is our own fault that we failed to get into the Bride class. If we had seen a while ago as we now see, we would have striven harder and we should not have failed. We would not have listened to what Babylon had to say, We would have "run with patience the race set before us." We were stupefied by the "doctrines of demons." (1 Timothy 4:1.) We are glad that we are now awakened. We rejoice that God's Plan is being so gloriously outworked. Our lamps are burning now. We are blessed as never before. Let us be glad and rejoice in that the Bride is glorified.

"CUT OFF FROM THE FOLD"

"The flock shall be cut off from the fold." As applied to the elect Church, this is viewed from the earthly standpoint. There is an earthly fold and a Heavenly fold. We are now in the fold on earth. We must die in order to enter into the glory that is promised us--to enter into the Heavenly fold.

Our Lord Jesus was cut off from the earthly fold when He died. And as with our Lord, so with us. We must be cut off from the fold here before we can enter into the fold above. It may appear to the Great Company for a time as though all things are *failing*, and not *coming to pass*; but from God's standpoint the fig tree will be budding and the *olive* will be bringing forth her fruit. There will be no miscarriage of God's purposes. The Church will reach her full glorification, and then the vine will bear glorious, ripe fruitage for all mankind.

Pet. 3:18): that he did not suffer eternal torment, but the very penalty against us; viz., eternal death. Next, it will be in order to show that although the flesh of Christ was thus given up eternally, as man's ransom price, God nevertheless raised him from the dead, giving him a new life, a new being,--making him a "new creature;" and that accordingly he is no longer a man in the flesh, but is again a spirit being, now of the divine nature, far above angels, principalities and powers.--Eph. 1:21; 1 Pet. 3:22.

Next in order it will be proper to show *how* the death of Christ could effect *all* mankind;--that it was because Jesus took the place of father Adam, and thus redeemed his life;--and because the whole race was condemned in Adam, therefore his personal redemption would imply, legally and justly, that the penalty was sufficient for the sins of the whole world condemned in him,--and not condemned on their own account. Next in order we should show that the object in this purchase of the world, was, and still is, that every member of Adam's race might have an opportunity, as Adam had, of showing the Lord his willingness to be obedient to him and to his laws, and thus to obtain at his hand the great gift of everlasting existence. To Adam only this will be really a *second* chance, as his race has had no chance yet;--being born in sin and under its penalty of death.

By this time your hearer should be ready to see that the trial which God proposes to give mankind is not such a trial as comes to a felon, a convict, before a criminal court,--to determine whether he is guilty or not guilty; for, on the contrary, in the case of mankind God already has determined that "*all are guilty*," that "there is none righteous, no not one." It is because such a trial would be a useless mockery, that nothing of the kind is proposed by the Lord, though this is the unreasonable thought common among his people. Seeing that we are hopeless as respects clearing ourselves, God has by his own plan and arrangement already paid the penalty for every man, --through the sacrifice of his Son. Hence, the whole world of mankind, when put on trial for life everlasting, will not stand trial as convicts, but as redeemed freed-men whose release from the original death sentence has been fully paid by the ransom-sacrifice of Christ. Their trial will be to determine their choice of lasting life or death--on God's terms--as Adam made choice in his trial;--to determine which they would choose after gaining a knowledge of sin and its penalty, everlasting death,--and a knowledge of righteousness and the reward of righteousness, life everlasting; --their choice being indicated by their obedience or disobedience to the divine mandates.

Whoever follows the plan thus far, is prepared to see that God has not yet given to mankind in general the great trial, or opportunity secured for all by the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus,--for testing their worthiness or unworthiness of life everlasting. All who are not grossly blinded by error and prejudice can see that a full, fair opportunity for judging between right and wrong, and for choosing the right and rejecting the wrong, has not yet come to the world as a

whole. They can see that ignorance, prejudice and superstition are blinding the world still; and looking back along the aisles of history they can see that such blindness has been in the world for centuries;--since before the redemption price of the world was paid.

If your hearer be of an inquiring mind he will now be questioning when or how a full knowledge and opportunity, or trial will, or could be extended to mankind; and this will be the favorable opportunity for reminding him of the Apostle's words, "God hath appointed a day [still future] in the which he will judge the world [not condemn the world, for the world is condemned already, for which reason Christ died for the ungodly;--but he will judge the world in the sense of granting all a trial] in righteousness [under righteous, favorable, just, reasonable conditions] by that man whom he hath ordained [the great Messiah, the Royal Priest, whose reign is to bring blessing and uplift to whomsoever will of all the families of the earth]." (Acts 17:31.) It is of these times of blessing and restitution that the Apostle Peter declares that all the holy prophets since the world began have spoken. (Acts 3:19-21.) And no wonder, since they spoke as oracles of God; for God has had this very purpose from the foundation of the world;--knowing in advance the course that sin would take, and the course which man would take under the delusions of sin, because of experience.

BEGINNINGS OF COMPREHENSION

As the mental eyes and ears of the believer begin to take in this fullness of God's provision for his creatures, his former fears begin to subside; and he begins to get a realizing sense of the goodness and love of God, as never before. But still he will have queries. He will want to know when this day of which the Apostle speaks will begin;--the day of the world's judgment, or trial in righteousness, under favorable conditions. He will want to know why it did not begin immediately after our Lord's death and resurrection, --if it waited for and was dependent upon his atoning work. This will be the proper opportunity for opening before the eyes of his understanding another department of our heavenly Father's gracious plan; --showing him what is so clearly set forth in the Scriptures; viz., that the Father has purposed an elect and select Church to be as a Bride joined to Christ, her Lord and Redeemer and Bridegroom;--as a special illustration of divine mercy and goodness, sharing his glory, honor and immortality;--"changed" to the divine nature in the first resurrection.

He now will begin to understand faintly what the Apostle meant when he declared, "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared [in reservation] for them that love him; but God hath revealed them unto us by his spirit." (1 Cor. 2:9,10.) He will begin to appreciate the fact that when we enter the Lord's family and become members of the household of faith, we are only on the threshold, of knowledge and appreciation, and have need of progress and growth. He will begin to understand the force of the Apostle's words when he said, speaking to Christians, and not to worldly people, "I bow my knees unto the Father...that he would *grant you...* that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height; and to know the love of Christ." (Eph. 3:14-19.) As again he says, "I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers, that the...Father of glory may *give unto you* the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints."--Eph. 1:16-18.

It requires time for heart and head so to expand as to take in a glimpse of such a wonderful blessing as this which God has provided for the "elect." But whoever gets even a faint glimpse of the greatness of God's favor toward the Church, will not be surprised that in the divine plan so liberal an allowance as nearly nineteen centuries was made for the calling and chastisement and perfecting of the saints for the great and glorious work to which they, as joint-heirs with Messiah, are called. Neither will they think strange, the fiery trials which try all of these whom the Lord our God calls, and accepts as probationary members of the elect Kingdom class. They will perceive, readily enough, that if it was expedient, yea, necessary, that our Lord Jesus, with all of his experience in the heavenly courts, must "learn obedience by the things which he suffered," and prove his loyalty to the Father by faithfulness even unto death, much more must his followers --whose previous history was that of sinners-- be tried and thoroughly tested in respect to their loyalty to the Lord.

From this standpoint, the experiences of Christians take on a totally new meaning; and those who have made consecration of themselves to the Lord realize that they are running for a mark, and for a

prize; --no longer are their steps so unsteady, no longer are their hearts so faint and so careless, no longer do the world's baubles prove so enticing and ensnaring. God is thus working in them through the Word of his grace, through its exceeding great and precious promises. Through these he works in them to *will* to be faithful to him; and then to *do*;--conform their lives to the requirements of his Word. The same truth becomes also a power, a strength of God, in them, enabling them more and more to do those things which they should--the things pleasing in God's sight.

In this view, all is clear and plain; not only do ⁽¹⁾we see that God permits evil in the world that the *world* may learn certain lessons of bitter experience, as to the natural rewards of evil doing, but we see also a ministry of evil in respect to the *saints*--in their testing and polishing and refining; making them ready, and proving them worthy, as overcomers, to inherit the wonderful things which God has in reservation for the faithful. This will be, to the intelligent believer, a full explanation of why God has not yet undertaken the blessing of the world;--of why the promises, made through the prophets, of a coming time when the knowledge of the Lord will fill the earth, and the curse be rolled away, have not yet been fulfilled. They can see that it is the rolling away of this curse, the wiping away of all tears, the bringing of blessings to mankind, that is the very work for which God has commissioned his glorified Son, and for joint-heirship in which he is selecting the Bride, the Lamb's wife.

From such a vantage point of view, the most sluggish intellect will catch wonderful and refreshing glimpses of glory and blessing that are to follow, as soon as the present "ministry of evil" shall have accomplished its work. Looking into the future they begin to realize something of the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of the divine plan, and they will be ready to exclaim, "Oh, if God's plan is so great that it has required such a broad foundation, such great preparation, in the person of our Lord, and in the persons of his people who will be joint-heirs with him in the Kingdom, how very great must be the blessing that shall be ministered to the world through these, when the appointed time shall come!"

At first, the thoughts of the blessing coming to the poor groaning creation, and of the glories coming to the faithful and loyal and suffering saints, will overwhelm your auditor; and he can see and think of nothing else, for a while, than the stupendous grace of God manifested in this wonderful plan of human salvation. But, by and by, he will begin to think of himself, and what part he is privileged to have under the divine arrangement; and, as he sees a possibility of joint-heirship with the Lord amongst the faithful overcomers, he will find that all the exceeding great and precious promises of God's Word, and the new hopes inspired thereby, will be an energy and a power in his soul which he never before knew;--a purifying energy, a sanctifying power. "He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." Instinctively he will begin to heed the Apostle's exhortation, to "lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us; and to run with patience the race that is set before us in the Gospel."-- Heb. 12:1.

Soon after, various exhortations of the Word will have a new and a deeper meaning to him. As for instance, when he reads the Apostle's exhortation, "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, perfecting holiness in the reverence of the Lord" (2 Cor. 7:1), his words, his thoughts, his actions, his clothing, his personal appearance, will all come under inspection from a new standpoint;--he is no longer a condemned sinner, but a justified and sanctified son of God;--his representative;--his ambassador. It will be a new thought to him, to some extent, that cleansing the flesh is a part of the sanctifying work; and that a cleansing of the spirit or mind or thoughts or intentions, is equally necessary,--in order to the attainment of a condition of heart pleasing and acceptable to the Lord. And although he will never attain the perfection in the flesh, because of inherited blemishes, he will, nevertheless, assuredly make considerable progress in this direction; and not to see some progress should be a cause of disappointment, and should lead to self-examination at the mercy-seat. (Heb. 4:16.) He will hear, moreover, the Apostle Peter's exhortation to the same class, saying, "Add to your faith virtue [fortitude]; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge self-control; and to self-control patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things be in you and abound they make you that ye shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ...For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."--2 Pet. 1:5-8,11.

⁽¹⁾ May 15 Manna, Hab. 3:17-18