

The Nature of the Church (5) — Discipline and Excommunication

—William Kelly

Kelly concludes his series on the Church with a discussion on Church discipline.

As to elders, then, an apostle chooses (Acts 14:23) or leaves a delegate for a season during his own life to appoint them (Ti. 1:5-9), or describes to another the requisite qualities (1 Tim. 3:2-7). In no case is the church invited to select them. The saints had no such authority, even in their brightest days. No epistle addressed to a church touches the question, and fitly so. It was not their mission. Titus was left in Crete expressly to set in order what the apostle had left undone, and to appoint elders in every city, as the apostle had appointed him and none else. Afterwards he was to come to the apostle in Nicopolis (Ti. 3:12). You cannot have the one without the other. This is the sum of what Scripture states, unless we add the "angels" of the seven churches in the Book of Revelation. But "angel" is neither a gift nor a charge, but a moral representative of each church, and only introduced for special purpose in this great prophecy. Hence all systems with almost equal unreality try to fit in the "angel" to suit their aim. It applies in fact to no such thing, but to the introduction of the judicial book. The apostle looked, and taught the Church to look, for the coming of the Lord as their immediate hope. This of course stimulated and in no way hindered present care for the sheep; but it was inconsistent with perpetuating official organs for ages to come. Accordingly we find no such arrangements in the Epistles.

But as for gifts they rest on quite another ground; not upon apostles who might be removed, but upon Christ, who never ceases to be the Head and Source of nourishment, and cannot but love and cherish His body, the Church. These gifts never needed man's sanction, even when apostles lived. Christ dealt them without the intervention of any; so that what Paul said of his own apostolate might be said in principle to them all, "Not of men, nor by men, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead." I speak of course of the manner and source of the gifts, not of their measure.

As regards discipline, it is of the utmost importance to bear in mind that it does not depend on gifts, offices, or any other thing than the blessed fact that the Church, Christ's body, is gathered in His name, and has the Holy Ghost present to guide and energize its movements. He is, we may say, the Soul of this holy and heavenly body. Hence the fullest directions respecting discipline, either in putting away or in restoring, were given to the Corinthian church, where it would seem there were at the time no elders. That there might be and were churches without elders is manifest from Acts 14:23 and Titus 1:5. The churches existed before any such charges were appointed. Elders were desirable no doubt for the administration of a church, but by no means indispensable to its being. Certain it is that at Corinth elders are not alluded to, and the disorders which broke out there are pressed home on the entire body. Nor does the Spirit, in correcting the abuses, suspend their functions as a church until elders were duly appointed. On the contrary, whether it be the extreme and solemn act of excision, or the worthy celebration of the Lord's Supper, it is the body which is addressed, rebuked, and charged with ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well, in all these grave particulars. And this is the more striking, as it is clear that there were among them those who came behind in no gift (1 Cor. 1:7); that at any rate, the household of Stephanas addicted¹ themselves to the ministry of the saints, and that the believers in general are besought to submit themselves to such. It is not the labourers, I repeat, but the body which is told to deal with these matters. Generally today, the fallen church has made such matters by common consent the peculiar and distinguishing province of the clerical and ministerial order.

Doubtless where overseers were, as at Philippi or Ephesus, they in their exercise of a godly care would naturally and justly have a large share of the practical details; and the more so as an appeal to the church is the last and most painful resort (Mt. 18:15-17), the urgent object being to restore the soul, if so it may be in the Lord. But the known sin of a Christian affects the conscience of the body, for it is one body; and if not judged, a little leaven leavens the whole lump. If the offender mourn and depart from the evil after a godly sort, he is restored, and all rejoice; if he continue in that which dishonours Christ, the body must be cleared at all cost. "Purge out, therefore, the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth... For what have I

¹ The word is *εταξαν*, and means that they set, appointed, or devoted themselves to the ministry. It is one of the words sometimes translated "ordained." Let those who like to ridicule "self-appointment" weigh this passage, and remember that what they despise, as some carnal Corinthians may have done, the Holy Ghost by the apostle distinctly and unqualifiedly commends. If they will obey God, let them be subject to such.

to do to judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Put away from among yourselves the wicked person."

Further, Scripture even more sternly deals with false doctrine; because it is subtle, more poisonous in its effects, and touches the Lord Himself more directly than a bad walk. It is ever a work of the flesh, and may be emphatically of Satan far more than a mere carnal spirit of action. (See Gal. 5:9-12; Rom. 16:17,18; 1 Tim. 1:18-20; 6:3-5; 2 Tim. 2:23-26; 3:6; 4:3,4; Ti. 3:9-11; 1 Jn. 4:1-6; 2 Jn. 10,11; Rev. 2:14,15,23,24).

As it is the body which puts away, so it is equally for the body, under the direction of Him who dwells therein, to restore. God may use the instruments He sees fit to rouse the body to a remembrance of Christ's holiness in excluding a wicked person (1 Cor. 5), and of Christ's grace in forgiving and restoring one who repents (2 Cor. 2). In either case it is the conscientious action of the body which the Lord expects. If everything fail to awaken — if, in spite of patient testimony, the assembly persist in doing or cloaking evil, tarnishing the Lord's name, the claim to be His body becomes null and void. It is an entirely corrupt lump, from which the Spirit, who loves Christ, would have us to separate, instead of wasting our energies in the effort to amend that which is irremediable, and only waiting for the judgment of the Lord.

There remains but one more difficulty for us to state and seek to remove. It has been supposed that the assertion of the failure of the church forces us first to say that we in these last days cannot have recourse to the Epistles to the Corinthians, and others; and therefore to fall back upon the promise: "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst." This article of itself is a sufficient answer to as hardy a charge as could well be made. It has been proved that national and dissenting churches cannot defend the principles of their membership or of their ministry by such scriptures as 1 Corinthians 1; 3; 10-12; 14; 16; Ephesians 4, and others besides. The great truth of the Church as being God's habitation through the Spirit, who is the sole energy and distributor of the gifts of Christ in the unity of the whole body, is recognized by neither; it could not be practically owned for one moment without condemning both in all their varieties. Are not all our brethren responsible to own this truth whatever may be the results of their confession? But if the Church once lived, rejoiced, suffered, in realising the blessedness of such a place, where and what are we? Are we not to feel, are we not to confess, are we not to have done with, all the evil known to us, which has overspread the professing body and made it a witness against Christ, not for Him? If I find myself honouring as the Church of God a society or system whose laws are inconsistent with the leading Scriptural principles of that Church, am I not to confess my sin, and come out from the unclean thing? or am I to abide and sin on, that grace may abound? This is the true question.

Today almost every Christian of moderate spirituality and intelligence admits that the existing ecclesiastical condition cannot be defended, if we compare it with the Word of God. Not merely in the detail is it wrong, but in its fundamental principles. Hence it is that some eminent names in the religious world boldly avow that the Word of God, though perfect as regards individual justification, leaves men to their own discretion in the formation and government of churches: virtually they say we ought not to have recourse to such Epistles as 1 Corinthians and others for the present direction. One party is satisfied with things as they are; another yearns for a church of the future, wherein man may have things on a grander scale.

But if the saint of God shrinks from so fearful a principle as casting away the Word of God which displays and demonstrates the infidelity of the church to its calling, what is he to do? Can a Christian hesitate? Is he not at once to cease from the evil he feels, and to humble himself before God for the failure of himself and the church? And if he knows two or three disciples meeting in Christ's name and opening the door wide that the Holy Spirit may act holily and fully, according to the blessed Word He has written and by whom He will, will he not gladly find himself there? Instead of using Matthew 18:20 as a licence to do what is right in their own eyes, will they not thus gathered, learn to their joy that Jesus is ever faithful? Will they not bless God for the authority and sufficiency of His blessed Word, and, if there be any difference, for the proved comfort and living applicability of the very Scriptures, which their adversaries say they cannot have recourse to? Will they not afresh thank Him for the Holy Ghost, who loves to act in the body as well as in the members, to the glory of the Lord Jesus?

It is God we need, it is the living God we have to do with, and not principles merely. His presence only can give power and blessing, even when the principles are right in themselves. This is what we seek, knowing that the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

(Scripture quotations are from the KJV)

The End

This article appeared in the Bible Treasury in 1918, 12 years after Kelly's death. It was most likely written in the 1860s or 1870s and originally published in another magazine.

The Millennium in the Old Testament

—John van Dijk

Throughout the prophecies of the Old Testament we find the words "that day," in total some 107 times. Thirty-eight of these speak of a predicted time of distress, a great tribulation or judgment, and fifty-one of a period of great, promised blessing and prosperity. Not seldom the time of distress and the time of blessing are mentioned in conjunction with each other; the former is then seen to flow into the latter. In two articles we hope to highlight the characteristics of the day of blessing, and its setting relative to other events, particularly to the day of tribulation. We will seek to establish the time to which these prophecies refer, whether it is past, present, or future. We want to know for whom these days of blessing are particularly meant. We will do this by taking a brief look at every mention of "that day" in the Old Testament prophecies which refer to that day of blessing.

Introduction — Isaiah 1

Although this chapter does not contain the words "that day," it does speak of distress followed by blessing, clearly showing the character of what is found elsewhere in connection with the words *that day*. Isaiah begins with the Lord's observation that Israel has rebelled against Him (:2). At first, God challenges them; but then, in verse 24, the Lord speaks in a different way, He is going to judge them and do away with His adversaries among them. And what will be the result of this? "Afterwards thou [and He addresses the people of Israel, and Jerusalem in particular — :21] shalt be called, Town of Righteousness, Faithful City. Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and they that return of her with righteousness."

We see here this pattern: A rebellious people; the judgment of God bringing great distress and the removal of the ungodly; a time of blessing for the remnant. Elsewhere we will see that this pattern repeats itself, and that the time of blessing is characterized by the presence of the Lord.

Some take this prophecy spiritually claiming, that it refers to the Church. But we need to read carefully. What does the Lord Himself say? He says in verse 1 that it concerns Judah and Jerusalem; that should really settle it. But some continue to assert that the blessings in verses 24-27 refer to the Church. It is, however, unreasonable to apply the reprimands in this passage to Israel and the blessings in the immediate context to the Church. Besides, and this overrules all, the Lord knows how to address His message, and He clearly states it concerns Judah and Jerusalem.

If we wonder whether this has ever taken place, Israel's history gives us the answer. The people were exiled because they were not a Town of Righteousness. After the exile Jerusalem was certainly not a righteous city; Ezra, Nehemiah, and Malachi testify to that. And if these left any doubt, the Lord Himself shows what they are in the Gospels and the people themselves underline it by crucifying Him. Neither have they been righteous after the destruction of Jerusalem. So the only time left is the future. There is no escaping of the fact that there will be a time in which the Lord can speak well of Israel and Jerusalem. And if this seems hasty to conclude at this point, let us look at the 51 references to *that day*.

Isaiah 2

"The lofty eyes of man shall be brought low, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and Jehovah alone shall be exalted in *that day*... And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be brought low; and Jehovah alone shall be exalted in *that day*... In *that day* men shall cast away their idols of silver and their idols of gold, which they made each for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats." (2:11,17,20).

These verses are part of a prophecy directed again to Judah and Jerusalem. Verse 2 gives us the time when this prophecy will be fulfilled. It speaks of the *end of days*. A time of blessing is ahead in which the mountain of the house of the Lord, the temple in Jerusalem, will be more important than any other place on earth: "All the nations shall flow unto it." This will be in the end of days, when this world's history is about to close. Besides, it never has been so yet; it is not so now, so it is still to come. The character of that time will be this: "Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and Jehovah's word from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among the nations, and shall reprove many peoples; and they shall forge their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning knives: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (vv. 3-4).

But how can this possibly come about? "For there shall be a day of Jehovah upon everything proud" (v. 12). "He shall arise to terrify the earth" (v. 21). The Lord will use a time of terror to bring about this tremendous change.

As we saw before, a time of judgment will precede the time of blessing. The Lord will bring a time of great tribulation before establishing a time of peace during which He will judge from Jerusalem.

Isaiah 4

It seems best to give a somewhat annotated version of the first four verses of this chapter.

"And seven women shall take hold of one man in *that day*, saying, Our own bread will we eat, and with our own garments will we be clothed; only let us be called by thy name; — take away our reproach! [For these women to make such a request, there must have been a great calamity.] In *that day* there shall be a sprout of Jehovah for beauty and glory, and the fruit of the earth for excellency and for ornament for those that are escaped of Israel. [Just after the calamity, there is something beautiful found for the Lord.] And it shall come to pass that he who remaineth in Zion, and he that is left in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, — everyone that is written among the living in Jerusalem; when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have scoured out the blood of Jerusalem from its midst, by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning" (vv. 1-4). Now we fully realize what that calamity will be. The Lord Himself will cause all Israelites who do not serve Him to perish, only a few Israelites will remain, and those who remain will be holy.

Again we see that a time of blessing follows a time of great distress over Israel and especially over Jerusalem. Here we do not have a reference to the end of days or anything similar. Yet, at no time in history such things have taken place yet; it must therefore still be future.

Isaiah 10

In the beginning of this chapter the Lord shows that there was much unrighteousness in Israel (vv. 1-4). In verse 5 the Lord calls the Assyrian the rod of His anger. Their staff is the Lord's indignation. In verses 6-11 the Lord shows how He is going to use the Assyrian. But when the Assyrian has done the Lord's work, the Lord will punish him (vv. 12-19). As a result there will be a remnant in Israel that will only rely on the Lord. "And it shall come to pass in *that day*, that the remnant of Israel and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob shall no more again rely upon him that smote them; but they shall rely upon Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, in truth" (v. 20).

It is again the same picture: great distress in which Israel is decimated leaves but a few (vv. 20-23). But the result is that ungodliness has been removed from Israel (Rom. 11:26), and those who remain will be anointed with the Spirit. But then, "It shall come to pass in *that day*, that his [the Assyrian's] burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck: and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing" (v. 27).

Those who believe that this prophecy only refers to days gone by should take note of verses 16-17: "*The light of Israel shall be for a fire, and His Holy One for a flame.*" The Assyrian of the past was not destroyed by Israel, but by the Chaldeans. In the last days the Messiah will rule over Israel (who will be anointed with the Spirit) and destroy the Assyrian who will once more be active then.

Isaiah 11

"And in *that day* there shall be a root of Jesse, standing as a banner of the peoples: the nations shall seek it; and His resting-place shall be glory. And it shall come to pass in *that day*, that the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to acquire the remnant of His people which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea" (vv. 10-11).

The prophet begins with speaking of the shoot out of the stock of Jesse, a clear reference to the Lord Jesus. "The Spirit of Jehovah shall rest upon Him," and "He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth" (v. 4 — cf. Rev. 19:15). When He is introduced, the following result will be seen on earth: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatted beast together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the she-bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the adder, and the weaned child shall put forth its hand to the viper's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea" (vv. 6-9). Then follow our two verses.

To start with let us ask whether a thing like this has ever been seen? Has there ever been a time during which it could be said that the earth was full of the knowledge of Jehovah? Everyone will have to admit that so far there never was. Well

then, it must be future. Who can help but see the parallel with Revelation 19:11 to 20:4?

We also read that the Lord will "set His hand again the second time to acquire the remnant of His people." When God brought Israel from Egypt it was not a remnant, He brought them all. The first remnant came under Ezra and Nehemiah from Babylon. But the Lord says that He will bring *a remnant for the second time*, gathering them from everywhere. Then they will no longer have that spirit of envy that once prevailed, and they will rule over the adjoining nations, which is another feature never seen since their exile.

What we see today in Israel does not answer to this. They still are envious of each other. They do not rule over Edom and Moab. Today some of Israel have come back in unbelief and arrogance; generally speaking, they have no use for God, and there are only very few among them who believe in the Lord Jesus, their once rejected Messiah.

Isaiah 12

"And in *that day* thou shalt say, Jehovah, I will praise Thee; for though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou hast comforted me... And in *that day* shall ye say, Give thanks to Jehovah, call upon His name, declare His deeds among the peoples, make mention that His name is exalted... for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee" (vv. 1,4,6).

When all these things have taken place Israel will praise the Lord. It is no wonder, for all who opposed Him have been removed, all that remain have bowed down in repentance. No individual receives God's grace without repentance. God's miracle toward Israel is this: that *all* who remain will have repented. A future marvel of His grace.

Isaiah 17

In this chapter God speaks mainly of Damascus. Yet there are some remarks about Israel. "In *that day* it shall come to pass, that the glory of Jacob shall be made thin, and the fatness of his flesh shall become lean... a gleanings shall be left in it... two, three berries above, in the tree-top; four, five in its fruitful boughs" (vv. 4-6).

Again it speaks of a devastation that will come. But then verse 7 continues: "In *that day* shall man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have regard to the Holy One of Israel." That is a change from what we see today! Today we hear of evolution, not of a Creator God, but this will change in a coming day. For the "*that day*" referred to is the same "*that day*" referred to in the passages we have already looked at. It shows that there will be a time in which, not only in Israel but also outside of it, God will be honoured. Finally the Lord shows how He will deal with Syria, for "in *that day* shall his [Damascus] strong cities be as the forsaken tract..." (v. 9). The Lord Himself will deal with Israel's enemies.

Isaiah 19

"In *that day* shall there be an altar to Jehovah in the midst of the land of Egypt... and the Egyptians shall know Jehovah in *that day*, and shall serve with sacrifice and oblation... In *that day* shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria... in *that day* shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria" (vv. 19, 21, 23, and 24).

This chapter deals with the fate of Egypt in the last days. Again we find the words "*that day*" repeated. They first refer to the day in which judgment comes over Egypt (v. 16), but then to the day that follows. These latter verses speak of blessing that will also come over Egypt and Assyria, the two antagonists of Israel in the last days. Yes, the day of blessing will extend from Israel to the whole world.

Isaiah 25

"And it shall be said in *that day*, Behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is Jehovah, we have waited for Him; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation" (v. 9).

The chapter starts with the people's acknowledging God, recalling the days of destruction God brought over them. But now the people trust Him and call Him "My God." It is because God has given shelter to those who in their distress called on Him, He has become their Defender (vv. 1-5).

Then the feast begins. God begins by removing the veil from the face of His people's face and of the faces of all nations, so that they may see clearly the things of God. Death will be swallowed up in victory, tears will be wiped away. In Revelation 21:4 these things are said of eternity when there will be a new heaven and a new earth. Here it is a time on earth that foreshadows eternity, for Moab is still trodden down under the feet of the Messiah (this is our God). As before, we see Israel ruling over its neighbours during that time.

Isaiah 26

If our reasoning in the last paragraph seems a little hasty to some, the next chapter (and chapter divisions do not belong to the inspired text, but are man-made, and at times most unfortunate, as it is here) strengthens the argument by saying, "In *that day* shall this song be sung in the land of Judah." It is the song of rejoicing in the day of blessing. The contents of the song and the place where it is sung indicate clearly that it is still on earth, but the earth under the rule of the Messiah: "When Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness" (v. 9).

Isaiah 27

"In *that day* there shall be a vineyard of pure wine; sing concerning it... And it shall come to pass in *that day*, that Jehovah shall beat out from the flood of the river unto the torrent of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, ye children of Israel. And it shall come to pass in *that day*, that the great trumpet shall be blown; and they shall come that were perishing in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and they shall worship Jehovah in the holy mountain at Jerusalem" (vv. 2, 12-13).

This chapter begins with the punishment of the serpent which is clearly a future event (cf. Rev. 20:1-3). When Isaiah wrote these lines all was still future. But some have thought that the time God could bless Israel had come to a close with the crucifixion. This portion helps to refute that thought. No one will contend that Israel has ever filled the face of the world with fruit since these days. It is clearly a prophecy of things to come. And let us not forget, we have already seen in this study that such a time of blessing is coming. Finally we read how they will be gathered and will worship Jehovah in Jerusalem. Surely, the time of Israel's blessing is still to come.

Isaiah 28

"In *that day* will Jehovah of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the remnant of His people" (v. 5).

Once again judgment is mentioned first, now over Ephraim. It is again remarkable: the Lord will be a crown to the remnant of His people. We see again the same pattern, judgment through which only a remnant escapes, and then the blessing to be enjoyed by that remnant under the Lord Himself.

Isaiah 29

This chapter speaks largely of the rebellious nature of Israel (we in ourselves are not any better). They dishonour God. Therefore God will do marvellously, and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish (vv. 1-14). But the Lord says that in a little while things will be changed entirely around (v. 17).

"In *that day* shall the deaf hear the words of the book" (v. 18). The Lord is going to cause the deaf (i.e. the nation Israel) to hear. Jacob will see his children, the work of the Lord's hands, in the midst of him. Then they will hallow the Holy One of Jacob. What an unbelievable change that will be! But nothing is too wonderful for our God. After all, He saved me too, and I trust, you as well!

Isaiah 30

Again there is a description of Israel's waywardness in the opening verses (1-14). Then the Lord gives some sound advice and a warning to Israel (vv. 15-17). This He follows up with the remark that Jehovah will wait, that He may be gracious to them (v. 18). Adversity is forecast till they throw away the things that separate them from their God (vv. 20-22). It is the pattern that we have seen before. And then comes the change: "And He will give the rain of thy seed with which thou

shalt sow the ground; and bread, the produce of the ground, and it shall be fat and rich. In *that day* shall thy cattle feed in large pastures; and the oxen and the asses that till the ground shall eat salted provender, which hath been winnowed with the shovel and with the fan... in the day that Jehovah bindeth up the breach of His people, and healeth the wound of their stroke" (vv. 23-26).

The whole picture repeats itself again and again in a manifold variety of ways. Yet ever again with the same recognizable features: because of rebellion against God, there comes severe tribulation followed by a time of great blessing under the rule of the Messiah.

Isaiah 31

Verses 1 to 3 give warning to those who seek help from Egypt, from man. Then verse 4 and onward show the Lord as One who is besieged by those who want to rob Him of Israel. And the call goes out to His people: "Turn unto Him from whom ye have deeply revolted, ye children of Israel." And then again comes the day of the changed heart (v.7), "For in *that day* every man shall cast away his idols of silver and his idols of gold, which your sinful hands have made unto you." What a change, what a mercy of God who has touched their hearts! And once more we read of the Assyrian, who, now that the end is achieved, will fall by the sword. Jehovah's fire will be "in Zion, and His furnace in Jerusalem. Behold, a King shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment" (v. 9-32:1; cf. Rev. 19:15-16; 20:4-6).

There is no denying that the Lord Himself will rule this earth in righteousness, not in the way He now providentially keeps all in His hand, but by being directly and publicly involved, so that He is seen by all as KING OF KINGS.

Isaiah 52

Though we want to look at chapter 52, for clarity our remarks must begin with the previous one. In 51:9 we read, "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of Jehovah." These words plead with the Lord to begin to rule over the earth directly rather than providentially as He had done for so long. This will cause His ransomed ones to return to Zion with singing. Then, in verse 17, the appeal goes out to Jerusalem, "Arouse thyself, arouse thyself, stand up Jerusalem, which has drunk at the hand of Jehovah the cup of His fury." This call goes out after the Lord's terrible judgment has gone over them, the details of which are recounted in the verses that follow.

But then chapter 52 opens with the call, "Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion." It is the same appeal that went out to the arm of Jehovah. Zion can now respond for it has been aroused, i.e., life has come into its people. And now they are told, "Put on thy beautiful garments, Jerusalem, the holy city." Their time of blessing has come.

Some may think this to refer to the Church, the bride of the Lamb, which is also seen in Revelation 21:10. But although there is a resemblance, it is not the same, for in verse 2 we read, "Shake thyself from the dust." This is clearly impossible to say to "the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of the heaven from God, having the glory of God." But why the similarity? That is really not so difficult either. God always wanted to display on earth the things that are found in heaven. And so when all is under the reign of Christ, then Israel may reflect on earth what is found in heaven. The Church, the bride of Christ, is the heavenly Jerusalem, and Israel mirrors many of its glories in the earthly Jerusalem. So the things of God are seen on earth in those blessed days.

Then follows the last reference in Isaiah to "*that day*." So far the name of the Lord has been scorned continually, but the Lord will do a new thing in the earth. He, in His grace to His people, will glorify His name through them on the earth. "Therefore My people shall know My name; therefore they shall know in *that day* that I am HE, that says, Here am I." God will cause them to know Him, and they will glorify Him. They shall know that their Messiah, whom they had rejected, is the very Jehovah, the I AM, who is their God. That is the glorious end of Isaiah's references to "*that day*."

Isaiah speaks more than any other prophet about *that day*. But the others join him in this. And from their words too, it is clear that they have a time of blessing in view which will be in the last days. We hope to look at this in our next issue.

To be cont'd.

Outline for Bible Study (48)

99. ESTHER — Esther 1-4

Outline

1. Ahasuerus and Vashti Est. 1
2. Esther Chosen to Become Queen Est. 2
3. Haman's Plan Est. 3
4. Esther's Plea Est. 4

Explanation

1. The events in Esther took place in the period between Ezra 6 and 7. Just as in Ruth, a woman plays the leading role. Vashti refuses to obey the king and is set aside as queen.
2. When the king looked for a new queen, Esther was brought into the king's house and he selected her. On her cousin Mordecai's advice, she did not tell that she was Jewish. Mordecai discovered a conspiracy against the king, and via Esther he warned the king. The traitors were hanged.
3. Because he was a God-fearing Jew, Mordecai refused to bow before Haman. This so enraged Haman that he obtained the king's permission to destroy all Jews.
4. Esther was told of Mordecai's mourning. Mordecai convinced Esther to plead before the king for her people. Esther's courage to go uncalled to the king was great: If I perish, I perish. All Jews fasted three days.

Lesson

In a book full of trust in God, His name is not mentioned once. The providential care of Jehovah is evident throughout. Although kings and authorities may plan (Prov. 21:1), God providentially guides all decisions. Before Haman came to power, Jehovah prepared the way of salvation. In risking her life for her people, Esther became a type of our Saviour (4:16).

100. Mordecai and Haman — Esther 5-10

Outline

1. Esther and the King; Haman And Mordecai Est. 5
2. Mordecai Rewarded; Haman Humbled Est. 6
3. Haman Exposed and Hanged Est. 7
4. The Deliverance Est. 8:1-9:19
5. Feast of Purim Instituted Est. 9:20-10:3

Explanation

The king accepted Esther who invited him and Haman for dinner. Haman boasted about the invitation. The sight of Mordecai enraged him, and he erected a high gallows for him.

The king's sleepless night and Haman's pride caused Haman to become the herald extolling the king's pleasure in the man he hated most.

After the second dinner at Queen Esther's house, she exposed Haman's evil plan. Haman's plan and behaviour caused the king to order him hanged on the gallows that Haman had erected for Mordecai.

The Jews were allowed to defend themselves and Mordecai was elevated to the position Haman had previously held.

The feast of Purim became a yearly time of remembrance of the delivery of the Jews.

Lesson

Again we learn how pride comes to its end. Haman is an example of the adversaries of God's chosen people. He is also a type of Satan, who loses the battle when he thinks he has gained the victory. Mordecai is a type of the Messiah, at first humiliated but finally exalted.

To be cont'd.

Questions and Answers (6)

Q15 On several occasions I have tried to witness and also win souls for Christ, but anxiety, my set-backs, and fear of past things trouble my mind and hinder me to do so. Does this mean that I lack the authority of believers? And what can I do to overcome this?

A15. It is good that you have a desire to testify of your Lord and Saviour. I trust you know that your sins are forgiven on the basis of His finished work on the cross (Eph. 1:7). So you can share this with others. But there is more to being a Christian than to know that your sins are forgiven. That is but the first and fundamental thing. You have to learn more! And for this you must attentively read your Bible. You must learn that God sees you even now as being in Christ. When God looks at you he sees the old man in you as dead and He sees a *new* man, a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17), who has Christ as his life (Col. 3:4). God wants us to know and believe this too.

This knowledge should become part of our faith, for without it we will not be able to live a truly Christian life while here on earth. Therefore we read in Romans 6:11 "Reckon yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus." This means: count on it that your old sinful nature is dead, God sees it so; count on it that you are now alive to God in Christ for you have received a new life that will never sin. True, you may find that you still sin, because your old nature is still with you, and if you fail to count it to be dead, you will sin. So all sin comes from your old nature and not from your new. This means too that you are for ever secure. That new life of ours is fit for heaven, for it is Christ's life. We have been born of God, have become children of God and this can never be undone.

When you know and believe this, all anxieties will disappear, you will have peace in your heart, and will be able to testify of your Lord in a new way. For this, you don't need to receive authority from any believer.

Q16 "The Father is greater than I" (Jn. 14:28). How can God be greater than Jesus if they are equal and one? (Jn. 10:30).

A16. The word *God* is not identical to the name *Father*, for it can also refer to the Son or the Holy Spirit. So your question should really read: How can the Father be greater than the Lord Jesus? Keep this in mind, it will help you to understand some things better. Here it does not matter too much.

You know that the Lord Jesus, in becoming Man, humbled or emptied Himself. You know that the Father is greater than man. Thus, when the Lord Jesus was on earth as Man, the Father was greater than He. The Lord said this when He was about to return to the Father, to be glorified, not only with the glory He once had, but the glory of the resurrected Man. He rejoiced in this, and so should His disciples.

In John 10 there is no reference to the Lord's Manhood and ascension, but to His ability to safeguard His own. His abilities have not been restricted in any sense by His becoming Man. He is and remains the eternal Son of God, one with the Father in ability and purpose, because they are One.

The following may help. In a business the father is president, the son is plant-manager. The son will acknowledge that the father is greater in position than he is. When, however, it is a matter of taking action, the son can act just as well as the father, since he fully knows his father's thoughts, agrees entirely with him, and is in no way inferior to his father. This weak example may help you a little to understand these two statements of the Lord Jesus.

To be cont'd.

The Bible

The Bible *is*, we plainly see,
Then it must have a pedigree.
It either is a Book divine,
Or men, to make it, must combine.
Suppose the latter, then they must
Either be wicked men or just.
Take either side and you will see
A proof of its divinity.

If wicked men composed this book,
Surely, their senses they forsook,
For they the righteous man defend,
And curse the bad from end to end.
If righteous, then they change their name,
For they the authorship disclaim,
And often say, "Thus says the Lord,"
And testify it is His Word.
If it be *not*, they tell a lie,
And all their righteousness destroy.

Could Moses, and could Malachi,
Unite together in a lie?
Could Job and Daniel, with the rest
Spread o'er the world from East to West,
Unite together and confer
When oceans rolled between them, Sir?
Not only seas, but ages too,
Numbers of years and not a few.

Anonymous

You see, no matter how you test
The Bible, it is manifest
That only God can be its Source,
For it brings sinners to remorse.
As to the righteous, they are told
That all their sins, both new and old,
Have been forgiven through the blood
that flowed from Christ, the Son of God.

The Editor