

Remember Jesus Christ Raised From Among The Dead (2)

Some thoughts on 2 Timothy 2

—A. E. Bouter

In the first part, the author, after a brief comparison of First and Second Timothy, reviewed the Lord's grace to us, and the distinction between truth and orthodoxy. He then presented eight resources for our walk in these last, dark days before the Lord's coming. The author now continues to review the path of the overcomer.

The overcomer

Paul, realizing the serious decline that had come in, wrote in 2 Timothy of attacks by the enemy: false doctrines (2:16f; 4:3f), superstitions, and general defilement. In the midst of it, the Lord used Paul to show the path for the overcomer, just as He Himself has shown in Revelation 2 and 3. Timothy, as a true disciple of our Lord, is a model for today's overcomer. In the time of the apostles there already existed certain conditions in midst of the Christian profession which the Spirit of God addressed through epistles with apostolic authority. Today these writings give us adequate help to face these issues. They indicate God's mind for the Christian's path in a day of ruin.

In 2 Timothy 2 Paul looks at this path from seven different aspects, giving seven clear and helpful illustrations describing the overcomer as: a child, a soldier, an athlete, a farmer, a workman, a vessel, and a bondman. With the Lord's help we like to study these different relationships and functions.

Paul's objective was for Timothy to be a man of God (3:17), and now we may apply the same lessons and instructions to ourselves so that we also may be true men and women of God.

My child

a. Conversion and formation.

Timothy had received the gospel through the apostle Paul on his first missionary journey; in this sense Timothy was Paul's child. For the same reason Paul spoke of the Thessalonians as his children to whom he was a mother, a nurse, a brother, and a father (1 Thess. 2). The same relationship existed between the Corinthians and the apostle Paul (1 Cor. 4:15), and between the Galatians and him. With the latter this relationship existed even in a double sense, as we may conclude from Gal. 4:19, "My children, of whom I again travail in birth until Christ shall have been formed in you." This would suggest that also the father-child relationship between Paul and Timothy had this double aspect: conversion and formation of Christ. How intimate, how precious for God and man, how encouraging for believers this is in a day of the so-called generation-gap!

b. Its application to us

Are we in such a real and practical sense children of the apostle Paul? Have we accepted from the heart the doctrine of Christ? Are the truths of Him who died, was buried, rose again, and was glorified (1 Cor. 15:1-8) — subjects so characteristic for Paul's ministry — a reality for us? What a privilege it is to belong to this new generation, which is linked, both as to life and consciousness, with such a Christ, united with the glorified Head!

The second question to ask ourselves would be whether this blessed Person is also formed in us. Do we have a real appreciation for Him and is there a visible result in us of this association with the Son of God? Are we really, as true sons, free from the influences of the (religious) world?

c. Be strong in (or: by) the grace which [is] in Christ Jesus.

Literally it says in verse 1, "be strengthened" (compare 4:1 Eph. 6:10; Phil. 4:13). This is what a child needs, both physically and spiritually. We find this growing process mentioned in several cases; each of which contains spiritual lessons. Think of Samuel (1 Sam. 1-3), or Samson (Jud. 13), or John the Baptist (Lk. 1), but most of all of our blessed Lord (L 2:40-52). How

encouraging, because the Lord Jesus, in His perfect humanity, is *the Model* for every Christian.

Now He is in heaven while we are left on earth as His disciples and as "children" of the apostle Paul. As such we need to grow! How? First of all in the power of the grace which is in Christ Jesus; being attracted to Him, we find marvellous resources in His grace (2 Cor. 12:9). In Him are remedies against all the evils which surround us.

By the grace of God we are strengthened:

- through His Word (1 Pet. 2:2): we grow by feeding on spiritual food which God has abundantly supplied to us in His Word;
- through the love between children and parents in Christ (1 Thess. 2; Gal. 4:19; 5:6);
- through discipline (Hebr. 12:5-11), which trains us and causes us to grow; the grace of God being mentioned in v.15;
- through prayer (Eph. 6:10-20), whereby we maintain a healthy, spiritual condition.

All this is in full harmony with the character of the present dispensation. We are strengthened in Christ Jesus! Not in ourselves, nor in any kind of human resources, but in a living relationship with Him who has been anointed by God. We find our strength in a Man in whom God has found His delight; in the lowly, humble Man of Nazareth, Jesus, who is now exalted at God's right hand. What a glorious Person to find our strength in, to be attracted to, to be formed after, to have reproduced in us, and to represent here on earth! All that belongs to the first Adam is set aside practically when we are strengthened in Christ Jesus.

d. A faithful child

In 1 Timothy 1:2 Paul calls Timothy "[my] true child in faith." Timothy had shown himself to be faithful to his spiritual father while maturing spiritually. When sending Timothy to the failing Corinthians, Paul could say, "My beloved and faithful child in [the] Lord, who shall put you in mind of my ways [as] they [are] in Christ, according as I teach everywhere in every assembly" (1 Cor. 4:17). The Corinthians were also Paul's beloved children (1 Cor. 4:15; 2 Cor. 12:14-15, 19), but they were not faithful in the Lord. Therefore Paul sent them this Epistle (1 Cor.) by means of a "living illustration" of his teachings, Timothy (whose name means "honouring God"). Could this be said of you and me? How important would this faithfulness be in a scene where Christ is rejected in so many ways! Paul could rely on Timothy, even in a day as described in 2 Timothy, when the situation was far worse than in Corinth. Could he rely on me, on you? In a sense we are left here also to represent our "father" Paul, who has encouraged his "children" time and again to be his imitators and followers. (For a further study on "faithfulness" see e.g., 1 Cor. 4:2; Rev. 2:13; Mt. 25:21, 23; Lk. 12:42).

e. The third and fourth generation

Often we hear negative things about the third and fourth generation (see e.g., Jud. 2). But God would always have His generation, "a seed of God," even in a day of ruin. With confidence in God, Paul could say, "And the things thou (second generation) hast heard of me (first generation) in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men (third generation), such as shall be competent to instruct others (fourth generation) also." Timothy, Paul's child, is to be a "father" to the next generation, of Christians. Such a faith in God, in a day of utter darkness and ruin, is very encouraging.

In a similar way Peter and John cared for the generations to follow. Do we see it as our responsibility to pass on to the next generation the things we have received? "Entrust" (v. 2) is related to the word used in 1:12 and 14 for the entrusted deposit. This is how the truth is to be communicated from one generation to the other. Timothy was the next link in the chain, today it is you and me. Are we a faithful "second" generation which has received the truth from our spiritual fathers? Do we pass it on to others? This would be real "apostolic succession", a moral succession or communication. (For further study on this subject see also 1 Thess. 2; Gal. 4; Acts 20:18-38; 2 Pet. 1 and the Epistles of John).

As faithful successors we ought to pass on, "the things heard" (2:2). These things are linked with the person of Christ (2:8, see also 1:13; 2:15; 3:10, 14-16). It is the truth as seen and worked out in a living way in the life of the apostle Paul. His are reliable, verifiable teachings, with many witnesses. They stand in contrast to the gangrene of false doctrine (2:16-18), and ancient and modern myths (4:3f). Gnosticism, theistic evolutionism, and modern theology oppose sound doctrine today.

Even those belonging to Christian families which can trace their roots back for many generations need to become like Timothy if they want to be able to transfer the essential things of God to the next generation. If the second generation in Judges 2 would have been really faithful, they would have had an impact on the next one. Of course, God is over all, but we have to realize our responsibility.

Such moral succession cannot be guaranteed by any official, human-arranged, and external organization. The right spiritual attitude, moral condition, and God-given ability are requisites. These needed qualifications can be seen in the

different metaphors (child, soldier, athlete, farmer, workman, pure vessel, and slave) the apostle uses.

f. Children of God

Not only do we have the relationship of child to those who brought us to Christ, we are also children of God. To look in detail into this would lead us too far from our present study for it is a study in itself and many Scriptures speak of it (e.g. Jn. 1:12f; Rom. 8:16; Phil. 2:15f; Eph. 5:1; 1 Jn. 3:1ff). There is, however, a certain link with our present subject. Like Timothy represented his "father," Paul, so we as children of God represent our God and Father in this world, as a testimony of what He is, in a world-system of darkness and hatred. God is light and God is love.

g. John's children

Writing about the family of God, John also addresses the believers as (his) little children, and he distinguishes babes, young men, and fathers. Just as Paul to Timothy, so John writes to the believers in a day when evil in the Christian profession has progressed beyond repair. (1 Jn. 2:1,12,28; 3:7,18; 4:4; 5:21 — seven references where the same word is used in the Greek).

To be cont'd

A Child's Praises

Father, Thy sovereign love has sought
Captives to sin, gone far from Thee;
The work that Thine own Son hath wrought,
Has brought us back in peace and free.
And now as sons before Thy face,
With joyful steps the path we tread,
Which leads us on to that blest place
Prepared for us by Christ our Head

Thou gav'st us, in eternal love,
To Him to bring us home to Thee,
Suited to Thine own thought above,
As sons like Him, with Him to be
In Thine own house. There love divine
Fills the bright courts with cloudless joy;
E'en Christ, of God the pow'r and light,
Our title is that light to share.

J. N. Darby — Spiritual Songs # 331

Outline for Bible Study (50)

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An overview of events recorded in the Old Testament (1)

After the seventy-year captivity of the Jews and their return to the Promised Land, Israel remained divided into two parts:

- (1) The two tribes, living in Palestine,
- (2) The ten tribes, remaining dispersed among the nations to this day.

After the return of the two tribes, Ezra and Nehemiah, men of God, had restored the worship of Jehovah, but the Jews remained a dependent province under a gentile power, not an independent nation as before. That was gone for good.

Only under Christ, the promised Messiah of the House of David, will Judah and Israel, the nation of twelve tribes, be gathered and reunited. He will restore the kingdom with greater magnificence and glory than under king Solomon.

Between Malachi, the last prophet of the Old Testament, and the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, lay a period of approximately four hundred years.

In this time of waiting, most of the Jewish nation estranged more and more from God and their service became a mere outward, legal form. Yet, in the midst of apostasy, a small remnant anticipated in living faith and with expectant hearts the coming of the promised Messiah. We read for the first time of this remnant in the prophecy of Malachi: "Then they that feared Jehovah spoke often one to another" (Mal. 3:16). Zacharias and Elizabeth (the parents of John the Baptist), Mary the mother of the Lord, the prophetess Anna, old Simeon, and many others who were waiting for "the consolation of Israel," belonged to this remnant at the time of our Lord's birth.

Some historic details

But let us return to history. As we have seen, Daniel was shown the four world empires in various visions and images. During their dominion, Israel, Daniel's people, would be set aside for their unfaithfulness.

During the first world empire, the Assyrian-Babylonian, of which Nebuchadnezzar was the head ("the head of gold" — Dan. 2:32,37-38; "the lion" — Dan. 7:4) the Jews were carried into captivity. After 70 years, in 536 BC, during the second world empire, the Medo-Persian, under king Cyrus of Persia ("the breast of silver" — Dan. 2:32,39; "the bear" — Dan. 7:5; and "the ram" — Dan. 8:3,4), about 50,000 Jews returned to Jerusalem under Joshua and Zerubbabel (Ezra 1 and 2).

In the seventh month after their return, the Jews built "the altar of the God of Israel" (Ezra 3:1-7) and "in the second year of their return" laid the foundation of the temple of Jehovah with hearts full of joy (Ezra 3:8-13). When the adversaries of Judah (the Samaritans) — who had wanted to help, but had not been allowed to do so by the Jews — sought to frustrate their purposes, all building stopped for fifteen years. The Persian king Ahasuerus (Cambyses, son of Cyrus, who reigned from 529-522 BC) ordered them to cease the building of the house of God. This interruption resulted primarily from their unbelief. When in the second year of king Darius (Hystaspes, who reigned from 522-485 BC), the prophets Haggai and Zechariah (Hag. 1; Zech. 1; and Ezra 5:1) encouraged the people to start rebuilding, king Darius gave his permission (Ezra 6). The second phase of rebuilding the temple was from 521 BC to 515 BC.

Not long after that, still under Persian rule, the Jews throughout the empire were threatened with annihilation. Ahasuerus the son of Darius had allowed a protégé, Haman the Amalekite, to attempt to destroy the Jews (474 BC). God, however, thwarted the plan through Mordecai and Esther (see Esther).

Then, during the reign of king Artaxerxes I (Longimanus 464-424 BC), a second journey took place under Ezra (447 BC), followed thirteen years later by one under Nehemiah (445 BC), these brought Jews to Jerusalem to build the city, the walls, and the gates of Jerusalem. This event is the starting point of the seventy year-weeks (Dan. 9:25), and the last recorded historic event of the Old Testament.

During the Persian rule, which continued for many years, the Jews were allowed to have a high priest of the house of Aaron as head. Then came the world conqueror, Alexander the Great, the founder of the third, the Graeco-Macedonian empire ("the belly and the thighs of brass" — Dan. 2:32,39; "the swift leopard" — Dan. 7:6; and "the he-goat" — Dan. 8:5-8).

In 332 BC Alexander made Palestine a province of Macedonia. In a solemn procession the high priest welcomed the young conqueror, who during his rule remained on friendly terms with the Jews, to Jerusalem. Alexander introduced Greek in Asia and it became the language throughout his realm. Alexander died suddenly at an early age without leaving heirs. His vast empire was divided among his generals and in 320 BC Palestine came under Egyptian rule for almost a hundred years. A time of peace followed, during which a large number of Jews migrated to Egypt and other trading posts in the Mediterranean area where they founded their congregations and built synagogues. In Alexandria, the city founded by Alexander, lived thousands of Jews. Greek became the generally accepted language of the Jews living in diaspora and Hebrew was more and more forgotten. From that time (286 BC) dates the Greek translation (the well-known Septuagint) of the Holy Scriptures (i.e., the Old Testament). It got its name, which means "Seventy," because the Egyptian king, Ptolemaeus Philadelphus, ordered seventy-two Jewish scribes to work separately from each other on the translation. The Septuagint enabled the Jews all over the world to retain access to the Word of God, and many Gentiles were able to read it as well. Thereby, the number of proselytes, mentioned in Acts 2:10, grew steadily. There were two kinds of proselytes:

1. "Proselytes of the Gate" (addressed with: "ye, who fear God" — Acts 13:16). These did not entirely adopt Judaism, but did visit the synagogues. They had to keep seven commandments (prohibitions) which Jehovah supposedly had given to

Noah. They had to refrain from idolatry, blasphemy, murder, incest, eating of blood and that which was strangled, and robbery.

2. "Proselytes of righteousness" were circumcised and kept the entire law. These were eventually entirely accepted as Jews.

The victorious campaign of Alexander and the dispersion of the Jews became later a great asset for the spread of the gospel. The Word of God, and later the gospel, could find its way through the world at a much accelerated pace.

To be cont'd

Questions and Answers (8)

Q19. Isaiah 55:6 says "Seek ye the Lord while He may found, call ye upon Him while He is near." When can the Lord not be found? And when is He not near, seeing He is omnipresent?

A19. You are right in saying that the Lord is omnipresent and therefore near to everyone at all times. This verse obviously needs to be understood in a different way. You have, I suppose, also read, "Jehovah is nigh to those that are of a broken heart" (Ps. 34:18). This is the nearness in the verse you quoted. It means that the Lord is available; one has but to call and the Lord is ready to help. This is true for most of us. But sometimes the Lord hardens the heart of one that has repeatedly refused to listen to Him, like Pharaoh's in Exodus 10:1; then the Lord is no longer near to such a person. Pharaoh could no longer find Him, all opportunity for repentance was gone. Several times Pharaoh had hardened his own heart. Had he instead called on the Lord, he would have easily found Him, for then God was still near him. But all this changed once God hardened his heart. This shows the sense of Isaiah 55:6.

Q20. Do we have to do good or have mercy toward people? (Mt. 5:7; Lk. 6:30; Gal. 6:10; Prov. 3:27 all seem to indicate: Yes). Why then did the five wise virgins refuse to share their oil with the five foolish (Mt. 25: 1- 13)?

A20. The lights of the virgins were not for themselves but for the bridegroom. Had the five wise shared their oil, neither they nor the foolish would have had shining lights when the bridegroom came. Here Proverbs 3:27 applies. They could not give their friends light that would shine when the bridegroom came. We should be prepared to give our life for our neighbour. If we can swim we must make an effort to rescue, but if we cannot, it is only foolishness to jump in and drown beside our neighbour. This is what would have been the case with the wise virgins, their sharing wouldn't have helped.

But besides, this is a parable, and the oil speaks of the Holy Spirit. As you know, no matter how much we would like to share, we cannot share the Spirit we possess with others. Each must personally go to the Lord Jesus who gives the Spirit. The parable answers perfectly to this. The verses you mentioned all relate to things we are able to give, not to those things which are beyond our ability to give away. When there is a sinner beside me, I cannot give him forgiveness of his sins, only God can do this. It is not in my power to do.

Q21. Does Luke 6:26 mean that we should never speak well about any man?

A21. The verse says: "Woe, when *all* men speak well of you, for after this manner did their fathers to the false prophets." You should not overlook the little word "all." If one lives right before God and one speaks the things of God, he will soon find out that there are some, if not many, who will not speak well of him. False prophets have no such problem. They follow more or less what we call today "situation ethics." False prophets give to each hearer the advice he wants to hear. So everyone is pleased about the advice they received and speak well of the false prophet. Not so the true prophet or true Christian. When he speaks, he speaks the things of God which means that at times he has to rebuke or admonish, or speak of the coming day of judgment to unbelievers. The hearers will frequently not speak well of that Christian. This is what the Lord has in mind. If *all* speak well of you, you must be one that seldom speaks the truth. And the Lord can only pronounce woe over those who fail to speak the truth. So there is no harm in speaking well of men, provided they have truly brought you the truth of God, there even is no harm if others speak well of you, as long as you have given honest advice.

Q22. What is the interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9 concerning braided hair? Is that verse saying that a woman should not plait her hair?

A22. Some would indeed say so. The verse reads this way: "The women, in decent deportment and dress, adorn themselves with modesty and discretion, not with plaited hair and gold, or pearls, or costly clothing, but, what becomes women making profession of the fear of God, by good works." The key words here are adorning, modesty, and discretion. A Christian woman should not attract attention to herself with her make-up, her hairdo, her jewellery, or her clothing, yet she must do her hair, and not dress distastefully. She should rather attract attention through her whole deportment as a Christian. See also 1 Peter 3:3. I do not believe the verse outright forbids the braiding of the hair or the wearing of gold or pearls, but rather the use of any of these to stand out. A woman who dresses so plain that all heads turn when she passes is just as much failing in her walk as one who uses braiding of hair, gold, or pearls to be seen.

To be cont'd.

The Church of Your Choice (1)

—*J. van Dijk*

Introduction

All Christians are initially faced with the problem of choosing a church fellowship. Many simply go with those who led them to the Lord, others follow the advice they got, "Go to the Church of your own choice." But is this right? Well, perhaps they can hardly do different initially, but this whole question deserves some thorough reflection which it seldom gets.

Eve fell when she failed to seek God's will. To do what is right in one's own eyes was the bane during the period of the judges. Saul lost a kingdom by sparing Amalek's flock for sacrifice. David got the shock of his life when Uzzah was struck down as a result of his not asking for God's ways in returning the ark. All of them, in various degrees, did what they thought best, but failed to ask: What does God say about this? Today many fail to ask this when it concerns church fellowship. Though it should be our first question, it is seldom considered.

How do I know that this is so? Well, that is demonstrated by two things. First, you ask people why they go to a particular church. They may give many reasons, but hardly ever will they say that they decided that on the basis of God's Word. Secondly, the practical circumstances show it. In each church fellowship we rub shoulders with others, some we like, some we tolerate, and some with whom we can but difficultly get along. Have a talk with those who have recently moved to another church because of an abundance of the latter category in the church were they used to go. Most will tell you that the fellowship in their new church is so much warmer and shows so much more vitality; they may even tell you why they could not stand many in their previous church. But few will tell you that they have understood from Scripture that the church they now attend is based on God-given principles. In short, most make the choice guided by their perceived, emotional needs, rather than by God's Word.

As with all things, we need to look at Scripture for a spiritual answer to this matter. What does God say about all of this? Does it matter how a church is organized? What is the Church all about?

God's thoughts about the Church

When we read Matthew 16:18 we note that the Lord Jesus spoke in the singular about "My Church," or "My Assembly." In John 13:35 the Lord said, "By this shall all know that ye are disciples of Mine, if ye have love amongst yourselves." And in a similar verse the Lord said, "That they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me" (Jn. 17:21). Paul writes "There is one body" (Eph. 4:4). Summarizing we note that God meant the Church to display a world-convincing oneness — not only a spiritual oneness, for the world cannot see the latter and cannot come to believe on the basis of what is not seen.

Then Paul wrote, "There are strifes among you...each of you says, *I* am of Paul, and *I* of Apollos, and *I* of Cephas, and *I* Christ. Is the Christ divided?... Ye are yet carnal. For whereas [there are] among you emulation and strife, are ye not carnal and walk according to man? For when one says, *I* am of Paul and another, *I* of Apollos, are ye not men?" (1 Cor. 1:11-13; 3:3-4). Clearly, the gist of this is: denominations are the outgrowth of the Christian company's carnality. This undeniable fact we need to face squarely, and unless there is a willingness to confess this, there is little hope any benefit will be derived from what follows.

The Importance of the Church

In Ephesians 3:9-11 we read, "God... has created all things, in order that now to the principalities and authorities in the heavenlies might be made known through the Assembly the all-various wisdom of God, according to [the] purpose of the ages, which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." This verse spells out that God had an object in creation, He created so that *now...*, and then follows a most precious revelation. Now — that is in the day of grace in which Paul writes — the Assembly is to make known to the spirit world the all-various wisdom of God. That idea (reverently spoken) was with God in eternity, it was an inherent part of His eternal purpose in Christ Jesus. We see then that the Church, and all it is in its display and conduct today, touches directly on God's eternal purpose. That being so, the Church better act right!

But how can we be the means whereby God makes known His all-various wisdom to the spirit world? First of all: Only by doing all things according to God's Word! This passage reminds me of 1 Kings 10:4-5, where the Queen of Sheba acknowledged that the behaviour of Solomon's servants was breath-taking. And that is indeed the case, as we will highlight later, when the assembly practically conducts itself as God intends it to do, it will be something so out-of-this-world, so unlike what creatures, left to themselves, would accomplish, that in it, the devil and his angels, as well as the holy angels, will see what God's wisdom has been able to accomplish in man who was once lost in sin, in rebellion and violence. Yes, it is of utmost importance how the church behaves itself on earth, and an inquiry of this kind is worth every bit of time and effort. For one thing is certain, so far we have failed bitterly! We Christians have a lot to confess!

Old Testament Instructions

Let us begin by going for help to the Old Testament which is given for our instruction in spiritual matters (1 Cor. 10:6,11). What parallel is there in the Old Testament to the Church? The church is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23). In the Old Testament we find the relationship between Adam and Eve, the two being one flesh. The Lord always showed his displeasure with those men who married two wives. Though they did not know it then, they spoiled the picture of Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:22-33). What we do today in the church is rather similar. We give the world the impression that Christ has many brides; we could fill uncountable pages if we were to list all denominations. That is one point that needs attention.

The Church is also the house, the temple of God. "Do ye not know that ye are [the] temple of God, and [that] the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16). Going to the Old Testament with this thought, we learn how Moses was to construct the tabernacle, the house of God in his days. "See that thou make [them] according to the pattern, which hath been shown to thee in the mountain" (Ex. 25:40; Heb. 8:5). I doubt that any would disagree that the Church is of greater significance and import than the tabernacle. We saw this earlier.

Would the details of the tabernacle be carefully prescribed, and God not care about the details of the Church? Of course not! But to know God's desires for our conduct in His house takes reading the Scriptures in communion with Him (1 Tim. 3:15). His thoughts are revealed on the mountain! Our quest is not merely one of relationships between men — a question touching our soul, but one that concerns our relationship with God — the question involves our spirit.

Let us weigh the following. Where God's pattern is truly followed, all will be right in our relationship with God, and all will be well between believers. It is quite possible that our relationships with men are right, and that we still are out of step with God. On the other hand, when harmony among believers is lacking, we may perhaps have God's pattern for our "tabernacle," but our service for God is somewhat along the lines of that of the Pharisees: strong on detail and void of heart. Yes, following God's pattern in love can only be done as long as we remain in deep dependence upon Him.

A non-remedy

I can just imagine that at this point some are eager to point out that this is just why the ecumenical movement has come about. Many denominations have sat down together and have agreed that they should improve their relationship. They are willing to receive each others members and to undertake many things together that further the well-being of man and his religion.

I must admit that on the surface of it they seem to achieve some of the things we have seen as desirable. But is this of God? Basically what is happening is this. The denominations have, as we have seen, sprung from man's carnality, and now we align these products of our failure to create something that from the outside appears to be a oneness. Yet, each member remains a member of his denomination, each creed remains as is, each church structure goes on as before. And, what is worst of all, there is no separation between those who truly are the Lord's and those who are not. Is this the oneness God speaks of? Is that based on acknowledged failure? Am I too hard when I suggest that it is rather based on making room for each other's departure from the Word of God?

Whatever your answer on that one may be, I have another question: Where should I go? To be part of this "remedy," I would have to join one of the participating denominations, which means that I would have to join something that I have understood to be wrong. If we want to follow God's Word, we will not find this to be a remedy at all, popular as this idea may be with many.

A good solution must be based on all that we learn from Scripture about the Church. It must do justice to the oneness of the body, to the Headship of Christ, to the working of the Spirit, to the priesthood of all believers and the holiness of God's house. This then are the areas to be further considered in our inquiry. In our next issue we will begin with a look at the oneness of the body of Christ.

To be cont'd.

The Pre-Millennial Second coming of Christ

—T. Smith

Hundred and fifty years ago, great interest was aroused in Britain and elsewhere concerning the second coming of Christ. Many started to search the Scriptures intently to see what they teach about this important subject. Two such Bible students, W. Trotter and T. Smith, joined together to give a series of ground-breaking "Eight Lectures on Prophecy." These few pages we give the substance of the second lecture by Smith.

He will come personally for us — John 14:1-3

The Lord does not say here, "If I go and shall prepare you a place, *I will send for you,*" although this has been true throughout the centuries, as His people have one after the other passed on to eternity. But He declares, "I am coming again and shall receive you to Myself." He has gone away to prepare a place for the Church in the Father's house, and He will personally come to receive us.

He will return in like manner as He went — Acts 1:11

How seasonable then, and cheering were the words uttered by the angels, immediately after the departure of our blessed Lord, "This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven, shall thus come *in the manner* in which ye have beheld Him going into heaven." It will be a personal return, as it was in person that He was seen to go away.

He will come before the restoration of all things — Acts 3:21

When would this personal return of the Lord take place, before the Millennium or after it? Peter preached, "Repent. ...and be converted,... and He may send Jesus Christ, who was foreordained for you, whom heaven indeed must receive, *till [the] times of restoration of all things.*" What is this time of restoration? That time is referred to throughout the Old Testament when things would be restored to their rightful condition under the reign of the Christ, the Millennium. Mark well that it does not say that Christ will be received or retained in heaven *during those times, or until the end of those times, but "until those times," that is until those times arrive.*

The wheat will be gathered out from the tares —Matthew 13:1-23

We now return to the parables recorded in Matthew 13. What was the result of the seed being sown? Did it ultimately produce a universal crop? Did the sowing go on until the earth was one vast field of wheat? No! Some fell upon rock, and the sun burnt it up. And some among thorns, and by them it was choked. Only some of it fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit unto perfection. And that fruit — that wheat when ripe — as we learn from the parable which immediately follows, was gathered out from among the tares into the garner.

There will be no Millennium before the harvest — Matthew 13:24-30

The parable of the tares and the wheat explicitly teaches that there will be no Millennium *before* the harvest. The world is to be a *mixed* field until the harvest. "Therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world" (v. 40 — KJV). Never, previous to the harvest, will it be purely a wheat-field. Where then is the Millennium to be found before the harvest? This parable certainly excludes it.

But it will be argued "the harvest is the end of the world," and therefore there is no room for the Millennium after the harvest either. However, a simple understanding of Greek will show the difference. "The harvest is the end of the world (the age — *aion*)," while "the field is the world (*kosmos*)." Therefore, while excluding a Millennium before the harvest, it leaves room for it in a new "*aion*" in the same "*kosmos*." (Note the distinct usage of these two Greek words in Heb. 9:26).

The declension of the present Christian era — Matthew 13:31-32

The third parable shows the same decline, not a Millennium that will precede the return of the Lord. The seed sown becomes a great tree, and the birds of the air, the unclean vultures, come and nest in its branches. The Lord Himself tells us who the fowls or birds are in the first parable, for he uses the same Greek word. They come from "the wicked one" (v. 19). Thus Christendom becomes a vast and monstrous worldly system, as is said in Revelation 18, "a hold of every unclean spirit, and a hold of every unclean and hated bird." Such then and not the world's conversion, is to be the result of present dispensation.

The evil preceding the Lord's second return — Matthew 13:33-34

The fourth parable talks about the leaven which leavened the whole lump of dough. A common interpretation, which says that the leaven represents the gospel which continues to grow until the whole world is evangelized, is clearly wrong; the leaven does not mean the gospel. Leaven everywhere in Bible means something evil. We read of the "leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy," or "the leaven of malice and wickedness," and of "the old leaven" which must be purged out. In the twenty places in the New Testament leaven always typifies evil. This parable, then, is entirely consistent with the teaching of the previous parable that decline and evil, not great spiritual growth will precede the Lord's coming.

His return will put an end to the evil — 2 Thessalonians 1:2

The working of this "mystery of lawlessness," this leaven, will only be brought to a close by the personal return of the Lord Jesus. In 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8 we read about "the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven, with the angels of His power, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who know not God, and those who do not obey the glad tidings of our Lord Jesus Christ." In 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12 the apostle tells us about the "mystery of lawlessness" already at work, which will come to a climax in the "man of sin," the antichrist, who will then be at his zenith. How, then, can there be a Millennium of universal blessing before the Lord's return?

He will return after a time of great tribulation — Matthew 24

A careful reading of this chapter shows that He does not return after a period of harmony and blessing but after a time of great tribulation. Talking to the Jews about His return, He says, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened... and *then* they shall see the Son of man coming." How clear is this chapter, and the corresponding one in Luke, that the return of the Lord is pre-millennial!

The professing church will fall asleep — Matthew 25:1-13

The parable of the ten virgins may be taken as further distinct proof that there will be no Millennium before the return of the Lord. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. Then was the midnight cry of the bridegroom heard. There can be no Millennium while the professing church remains asleep in worldliness and sin.

His return will be like Noah's day — Luke 17:20-37

"As in the days of Noah, thus also shall it be in the days of the Son of man." Surely Noah experienced no millennium before the flood. And just as the flood took away all but a few who formed the nucleus of the people on the new earth, so will the coming of the Son of man take away the peoples in judgment leaving but a remnant to begin the Millennial repopulation of the earth. This is surely what the Lord intended to teach us by comparing His return with the days of Noah!

The true remnant is but a little flock — Luke 12:32-48

This passage is often used to teach that the kingdom is now. "Fear not, little flock, it has been the good pleasure of your Father to give you the kingdom." However, not a word is said about the kingdom being the conversion of the world. It is not said, "Fear not little flock, for all the wolves which surround you shall shortly become sheep." No, the consolation is that He will soon return and take the little flock to Himself. Therefore, "Let your loins be girded about, and lamps burning; and ye like men who wait their own lord."

The sufferings and the glories to follow — 1 Peter 1:11; 5:1

We now pass from the Gospels to the Epistles. What was the nucleus of the apostles teaching? The "suffering which belonged to Christ and the glories after these." Between these two events they consistently placed the Church. We look backwards to the sufferings and forwards to the glory. The world's conversion is not the subject of the Epistles, but the Lord's coming.

The whole creation groans until then — Romans 8:17-21

Here we read of the glory which shall be revealed "at the revelation of the sons of God." As to the present, "the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now." And this universal groan will only cease when "the creature itself also shall be set free from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God." The Millennium therefore, must follow His appearing in glory, and the manifestation of the sons of God.

Christians waited for His coming — 1 Corinthians 1:7; 1 Thessalonians 1:10

The Corinthians came behind in no gift, "awaiting the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ." They were waiting, not for the commencement of an intervening thousand years of blessing without Him, but for His return. The Thessalonians had "turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to await His Son from the heavens." It was a present hope, not a distant accomplishment.

Christians look for that day — Philippians 3:20-21

This is another striking illustration of the hopes of the early believers. "Our commonwealth has its existence in the heavens, from which also we await the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, who shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to His body of glory."

Christians are patient to that day — 2 Peter 3; James 5:1-8

Peter teaches the fact that until the advent of Christ evil will continue; and that only that event would bring it to a close. In James we find the same truth. The rich have "heaped up treasures in [the] last days." The Christians are exhorted to be patient till the coming of the Lord. All this shuts out the possibility of an intervening period of the universal cessation of crime, and of the removal of evil.

This expectation is a purifying hope — 1 John 3:1-3

John points to the appearing of the Lord Jesus as the blessed and purifying hope of all sons of God. No previous Millennium is even glanced at. "If He is manifested we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." What a glorious prospect! What glorious hope! May we know its purifying power! "Every one that has this hope in Him purifies himself as He is pure."

Unbelievers will be judged — Jude

Instead of depicting a period of universal righteousness, Jude describes the very reverse as prevailing in the last days. The grace of God would be turned into lasciviousness, ungodliness would be universal, and the Lord Jesus would come in judgment with ten thousands of His saints.

We shall reign with Him a thousand years — Revelation

Revelation from beginning to end is one vast proof that the advent of Christ will be premillennial. Its great burden is the judgments which precede and usher in the millennial reign of Christ. The climax comes in chapter 19 when Christ comes from heaven to put down the evil powers on the earth. Chapter 20 tells us, in words as explicit as language can furnish, that after Satan is bound so that he can deceive the nations no longer, and when the righteous dead are raised, "they shall reign with Christ a thousand years." This book, indeed the Bible itself, closes with the sweet words of parting comfort to the Lord's waiting saints, "Surely I come quickly." May our hearts in unison reply, "Amen, Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

The End