

The Bible Standard

A dramatic scene featuring a lighthouse on a rocky island. The lighthouse is illuminated from within, casting a bright glow. The sea is turbulent with large, white-capped waves crashing against the shore. In the dark, stormy sky, a bright lightning bolt strikes down. The overall mood is one of resilience and guidance amidst adversity.

“LIFT UP A STANDARD FOR THE
PEOPLE”—ISA. 62: 10

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PEACE BE STILL

*“And there arose a great storm of wind,
and the waves beat into the ship .*

*And He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea,
Peace, be still.”*

MARK 4: 35-41; PSALM 107: 29.

WE ARE APPROACHING the subject matter of this article during a period of human history that is unprecedented in its scope of violence, social unrest, governmental corruption, anarchistic factions, religious and denominational deterioration, and all of these elements combined, adds to the stress and burden being placed upon the human heart and mind of everyone living in today's society. This scenario was prophesied in the Scriptures many centuries ago as the Great Time of Trouble by the prophet Daniel and by our Lord as a Time of Great Tribulation (Dan. 12: 1; Matt. 24: 21, 22). These world-wide conditions first arrived in fulfillment of Bible prediction in the autumn of 1914 with the outbreak of World War I and have continued and escalated to where we are now. It seems that we may be approaching the time described by Jesus when He said “except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.”

You may recall that in previous articles dealing with this special



Sea of Galilee

trouble time, it is set forth in 1 Kings 19: 11, 12 as consisting of three associated periods: war (wind), revolution (earthquake) and anarchy (fire). It commenced with the war phase and is gradually merging with its counterparts; revolution and anarchy, which are beginning to be more prominent and are taking center stage as the trouble continues to increase in intensity and in its destruction of human life and property.

Jesus calms the storm in this article and we look in faith to His great power and love to quiet the waves of human imperfection and insurrection during His 1,000 year reign of the Millennial Kingdom. Let us apply the principles set forth herein, to ourselves, our family and to all those we may be able to influence, both now and in the future. May we hold the Lord's “Peace be Still” on our hearts and minds through this New Year, 2006.

OUR LORD'S MINISTRY is supposed to have covered two years at the time of the miracle of the calming of the sea, recorded in this lesson. After the selection of the twelve Apostles and the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord returned to Capernaum and, soon after, began His second tour of Galilee. It was during this interim, that Jesus had awakened the son of the widow of Nain from the sleep of death—the first recorded miracle of its kind in our Lord's ministry. Then He presented various parables, and in the afternoon after a busy day of teaching, sometime after three o'clock, while still sitting in one of the boats, as on a former occasion, having concluded His instructions—He directed that the boat be taken to the opposite side of the lake. The crowds, after being informed that the discourses were ended, were dismissed, and, without delay,

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the boat was started. From the various accounts, we judge that all twelve Apostles were with him, and apparently other “men”—seamen, as Matthew’s account implies (Matt. 8: 23-27).

Visitors to the Holy Land tell us that the Sea of Galilee is quite subject to wind storms. Dr. Thompson, describing his own experiences on this little sea, says: “The sun had scarcely set, when the wind began to rush down toward the lake; and it continued all night long with constantly increasing violence, so that when we reached the shore the next morning, the face of the lake was like a huge cauldron. The wind hurled down every valley from the north-east and east with such fury that no efforts of rowers could have brought a boat to shore at any point along that coast. To understand the causes of these sudden tempests, we must remember that the lake lies low, 600 feet lower than the ocean; that the vast and naked plateaus of the Golan rise to a great height, spreading backward to the wilds of Hauran, and upward to snowy Mt. Hermon; that the water-courses have cut out profound ravines and wide gorges, converging to the head of the lake, and that these act like gigantic funnels to draw down the cold winds from the mountains.”

“WE ARE NOT IGNORANT OF HIS DEVICES”

Our own opinion is that “the prince of the power of the air” (Eph. 2:2) had something to do in the development of this storm—that it had more than natural causes, although the latter might have assisted or even been sufficient. We remember that the Adversary had already endeavored to induce our Lord to leap from the pinnacle of the Temple, but had not succeeded. Apparently now he would drown Him in the sea. But the Lord, who declares Himself able to make the wrath of man to praise Him, caused the wrath of Satan or the wildness of the elements, whichever it was that induced the storm, to praise Him—to show forth His mighty power.

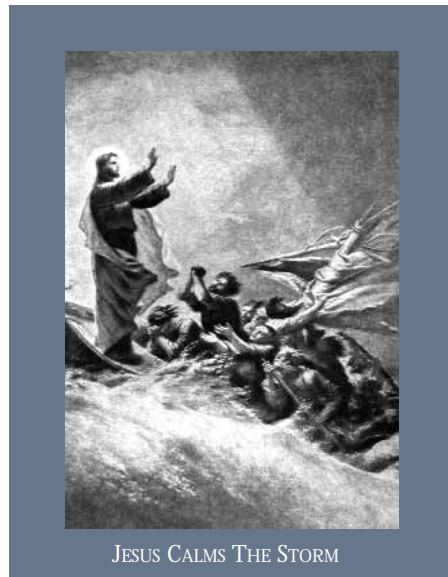
During the storm, our Lord lay asleep in the hinder part of the vessel on a cushion. Evidently He was thoroughly exhausted from the labors of His journey and ministry. Meantime, as the storm increased, the boat with its precious load began to fill with water

more rapidly than it could be bailed out. No wonder the disciples, and fishermen, acquainted with the unpredictable outcome of a raging sea, were alarmed. We cannot avoid the thought that, in some manner, the Lord’s providence had something to do with his prolonged sleep under such circumstances, and that the intention was to put the faith of the disciples to the test. They had seen His mighty works, His healing of the sick, and His awakening of the dead, and they had heard His teachings and had taken a miraculous catch of fish under His direction, where they had failed before, and by this time, they should have had considerable faith in His power every way. The fact that they approached him at all, indicates that they did have faith to some degree, though not implicit faith.

The slightly different accounts of the event given by Matthew, Mark and Luke, can be paraphrased as follows—Matthew: “Save us Lord, we perish” Mark: “Teacher, do you not care that we perish?” Luke: “Master, Master, we perish.” All three accounts are correct—one disciple cried out in one way and others in different words. It could be said this way: Little Faith prayed, “save us;” Much Fear cried, “We perish;” Distrust urged, “Do you not care?” More Faith said, “Lord; Teacher.” Faint Hope cried, “Master,

you with authority.” Jesus arose (awoke) and commanded peace and quiet, which immediately followed. The record mentions the cessation of the wind and additionally the calming of the sea. Some one might claim that a storm which came up suddenly might happen to stop with equal suddenness, but this would not account for the calming of the sea. Waters thus lashed to a fury could not be calmed quickly except by superhuman power. This, indeed, we may assume to be a prominent feature of the miracle.

It is rather peculiar that the Greek word used for “Be still” in this text is the same word used by our Lord to the demon. (Mark 1:25.) This corroborates the suggestion, given above, respecting the storm, being the work of the Adversary. In any event, this miracle shows clearly that storms should not be accredited, as they frequently are, to Divine hate; for if the Father had caused the storm, the Son would not have interfered with it. We do not wish



to intimate, either, that every storm is of Satanic origin; we do not dispute that many of them arise from natural causes; but we do hold that some of them are supernatural and of the Adversary, and as a Scriptural evidence along this line, we cite the whirlwind raised up by Satan, which smote the house in which Job's children were feasting.—Job 1:18, 19.

That our Lord intended this experience to be a lesson to the disciples, to have faith in Him, seems to be indicated by verses 40, 41. He said unto them, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" Has your faith not yet developed to such a degree that you can trust me, and realize the Father's favor and power ever with me for my protection, and that while with me, no harm could possibly overtake you—nothing that is, not wholly under my control? No wonder the Apostles gained additional reverence for the Lord as a result of this miracle. Apparently it came just in the right time and order to be their appropriate lesson. In fact we may conclude that every item of their experience and every item of our Lord's conduct, teaching and mighty works was especially for the instruction of these twelve, who were to be His instructors to us and to the nations of the earth respecting that ministry.

LESSONS FOR THE EARTHLY CLASSES

There is a precious lesson in this miracle for all of the Lord's followers outside of the apostleship, too. We also have need of faith and need of tests to our faith. Our daily experiences since we became the Lord's followers have been guided and guarded apparently by the power unseen, to the intent that, as pupils in the school of Christ, we may all be taught of Him and develop more and more of the graces of the Spirit, and particularly more and more faith. How important this item of faith is, we probably cannot fully appreciate now. It seems to be one thing that the Lord specially seeks for in those now called to be followers. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." "With faith all things are possible." Proper faith is understood, of course, not credulity, not reliance upon the words of men, but implicit faith in the Lord for all that He has promised. "According to your faith be it unto you."

So important a grace must of necessity require many lessons for its proper development, and it does not surprise us that, in our individual experiences as Christians, we find those which correspond to the experiences of the Apostles noted in this lesson. How suddenly the Adversary may at times bring against us a

whirlwind of temptation or of opposition or of persecution. How, at such times, our sky seems overcast, dark, foreboding; how the waves of adversity or affliction have almost overwhelmed us, and how the Lord seemed asleep and heedless of our distress and indifferent to our necessities! Such experiences are tests of our faith, as this one was a test to the faith of the Apostles. If our faith be strong enough under such circumstances, we would keep on with our proper endeavors to adjust matters corresponding to the bailing of the boat and the working of the oars; but meantime, with a strong faith in the Lord's promise that "all things shall work together for good"; we would be able to sing as did the Apostle Paul and Silas after being beaten while in the stocks, for their faithfulness to the Lord. They rejoiced that they were accounted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ. So according to our faith, will we be able to rejoice even in tribulation? We cannot enjoy the sufferings; we can enjoy the thought which faith attaches to them, namely, that these are but light afflictions working out for us salvation in Christ's Millennial Kingdom.

Each experience of this kind should be helpful to us. If, at first, we were fearful and cried aloud—by and by, we received the aid with perhaps the reprimand, "O, you of little faith"; but as lesson after lesson comes to us, the Master will expect—and we should expect of ourselves—greater faith, greater trust, greater peace, greater joy in the Lord, greater confidence in His presence with us and His care over us, and in His power to deliver us from the Adversary and from every evil thing, and to bring us eventually in safety, to the port we seek—the Kingdom.

THE CHURCH'S EXPERIENCES PREFIGURED

Some one has suggested, apparently on reasonable grounds, that this experience of Jesus and the Apostles in the boat, pictured, especially, the experiences of His spirit classes during the call of the Church of the Firstborn during the past age, and in a secondary sense, for the earthly classes of the present. The Lord assured His people, saying, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Then He promised that He would return in His Second Coming to the earth, in order to gather the elect bride, and they have now finished their earthly sojourn and are in the heavenly realm. He states this in the words: "I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, there you may be also," and "nothing shall by any means hurt you," etc. The Lord's faithful people all through this age have realized, with

more or less distinctness, the certainty of these precious promises; they have felt that the Lord indeed was with His Church; yet it has seemed at times as though He was not attentive to the prayers of His faithful, and inattentive to their cries and groans. For eighteen centuries His Little Flock have been tempest-tossed by the Adversary, and by those who have had Satan's disposition, who persecuted, afflicted, buffeted—all through this dark night, in which the only light available has been God's Word, "that I may walk before God" (Psa. 56: 13). The experiences of others in the past are similar to our experiences in the present. We, of today, represent the Lord's cause in the midst of the raging elements of human passions and oppositions; and as the Apostle declared of his day, so it is still true that "we wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high positions." The storms may seem to come from the world, but really, beyond the world, is the Adversary. "We are not ignorant of his devices"; our hearts would be at times dismayed except as faith is able to see the Lord with us in the ship, and able to grasp the thought of His mighty power, in His own time and way, to speak peace to the world. Soon the

time will come for Him who cares for us, to exert His great power for our deliverance into the kingdom and, to say to the raging elements, "Peace, be still." Then will follow the great calm, the great rest from the evil one for a thousand years, for he shall be bound that he shall deceive the nations no more. Then will come the eternal rest of the heart, to all who are, at this time, in the boat with the Lord, and then will the opportunity arrive for all, of the Elect and Quasi-Elect, to be collaborators with our Lord in the great and glorious work of blessing the world. It must not surprise us, however, if a dark hour is still with us—if the time will come when the stormy winds will be so fierce that many will cry out in fear and trembling. Let us learn well the precious experiences of the present time, so that then our faith shall not fail us—so that in the darkest hour, we shall be able to sing and to rejoice in Him who loved us and bought us with His own precious blood, and to sing the song of Moses and the Lamb.

May this motto text "Peace be Still" be a comfort to all in the coming year as we rely on the Lord for that inner peace of the heart, that our Faith may increase day by day as we approach Christ's Kingdom here on earth. * * *

HYMN FOR THE YEAR: NUMBER 128 "PRINCE OF MY PEACE"

The Lord reigneth.

I. Chron. 16. 31.



JESUS AROSE ... and SAID..

PEACE, BE STILL ...

There was a great calm.

Why are ye so fearful?

Mark 4. 39.40.

AN EVIL GOVERNMENT'S SUCCESS

THE OMRI DYNASTY OF ISRAEL was a successful one according to worldly standards, but a failure from the Divine standpoint. Omri, a great general, succeeded to Israel's throne after the death of Jeroboam. He was very successful and conquered the Moabites to the East of the Jordan, putting them under an annual tribute of the fleece of two hundred thousand sheep. He built a new capital, the city of Samaria, and successfully outranked Jeroboam as a misleader of his people along religious lines. According to Israel's Covenant with the Almighty there was but the one Levitical priesthood and the one holy temple of Jehovah's presence for the whole people of Israel and it was at Jerusalem. As worldly wisdom guided Jeroboam to completely separate the ten tribes from the two tribes by establishing new places of worship and simplifying the worship and symbolizing God by a golden calf, so the same spirit of worldly wisdom suggested to Omri a still further departure from God and a still closer approach to the customs and idolatry of surrounding nations.

Omri died, or, according to the records, "Omri slept with his fathers." We are not from this declaration to draw the inference that, as a wicked man, he went to eternal torment and that the nature of the torment is sleep. Neither are we to think of Omri as saint-

ly and going to heaven and to imagine that those in heaven are asleep. Neither are we to think of him as having gone to Purgatory and that the experiences there are drowsy. We must discard all such unscriptural ideas respecting the dead, good and bad. We must come back to the Bible and, from it, learn that all who die, like St. Stephen (Acts 7: 60), fall asleep to await

the morning of the resurrection when the Redeemer will call all forth from the tomb. (John 5: 28, 29, A.R.V.). Then, as Daniel declares, "Many that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake"; a few to glory and honor and many to shame and age-lasting contempt—from which they will be obliged to

purge themselves by obedience to the Divine requirements under Messiah's glorious reign of righteousness (Dan. 12: 2).

AHAB AND JEZEBEL

Ahab's name signifies, "Like his father" and surely he was! His name was appropriate. His was a reign still more successful in unrighteousness. For twenty-two years he devoted himself to the further undermining of true religion and to the introduction of the worst forms of licentious, heathen idolatry. He was greatly assisted in this course by his wife, Jezebel, the daughter of the King of the Sidonians. Her name signifies "chaste"; yet she used her great influence with her husband and

I KINGS 16:23-33

*"RIGHTEOUSNESS EXALTS A
NATION: BUT SIN IS A
REPROACH TO ANY PEOPLE."*

PROVERBS 14: 34

throughout the nation for the furtherance of unchastity in connection with the orgies known as the religious rites and ceremonies associated with the worship of Baal and of "Ashtoreth," the female divinity worshiped. In connection with this worship human lives were sacrificed, usually those of children, just as was found in Alaska when, in 1867, it came into the possession of the United States. Human sacrifices were frequent, particularly in connection with the laying of a foundation for a great building.

LESSONS FOR US

All civilized people are deeply interested in earthly governments and their success. We all crave social and financial prosperity. Nevertheless, it is still true that prosperity is injurious in proportion as it separates the people from the Divine arrangements and the blessings which are attached. Only righteousness can truly exalt a nation. However, it may at the time work contrary to the advancement of oneself and that of the country. Ours is the day of the greatest worldly prosperity this earth has ever known. But alas, it is not a day of religious prosperity. On the contrary, there never was a time when unbelief in a personal God and in the Bible as His revelation is so general amongst intelligent people. Our church edifices are becoming temples of fashion, concert and lecture halls, while the real worship, which alone is pleasing to the Almighty, is far removed and little thought of. The worship of material things, the bowing to the golden calf, the indulging of lives to the acquirement of wealth, belong to our day as truly as to that of Ahab, but on a more refined scale and therefore the more deceptive and insidious. It affects the poor as well as the rich. The poor often are merely the unsuccessfully ambitious, hence often bitter and discontented. We often find that God uses the wrath of man to praise Him. The effect of the prosper-

ity of Ahab and Jezebel was two-fold; it ensnared and degraded one class, while it aroused and separated from itself another class, those who worshiped God in spirit and in truth. These faithful ones left the ten-tribe kingdom and its idolatry and identified themselves with the two-tribe kingdom of Judah and its true worship. So it is today. The success of Mammon, the rejection of the Scriptures by the Higher Critics and their boasts of superior knowledge and ability to give us something better than the Word of God; the majority of society's preoccupation with attaining and retaining material things, is awakening the more saintly people of our day to separate themselves and to say in the language of Joshua; "Choose . . . this day whom you will serve . . . as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

ANTITYPICAL AHAB AND JEZEBEL

Most Christian students know, Jezebel, Ahab and Elijah were used of the Lord as types, and their experiences foreshadowed much greater things in the experience of the Church, spiritual Israel, during the Gospel Age.

Ahab typified the civil government. Jezebel typified a religious system. The improper marriage of Ahab and Jezebel, contrary to the Jewish Law, typified the marriage or union of Church and State. The progress of evil under this union is portrayed in the Book of Revelation, where Jezebel is specially mentioned by name. (Rev. 2: 20-23.) The Lord charged that antitypical Jezebel, the church system, was permitted to teach and seduce His people from the proper course of Christian living. The same Scriptures represent Elijah, who was persecuted by Jezebel, through her husband, as a type of true believers of this Age persecuted by a false church through the arm of civil power.

ANOTHER YEAR FOR THEE

*Another year we welcome!
Dear Master, may it be,
In thought and word and action,
Another Year for Thee!
Another year of leaning
Upon Thy loving breast,
Where heartache, pain and sorrow
Are lost in happy rest.*

*Another year of proving
Thy holy, blessed will,
To find my joy in doing,
And in Thy hand hold still;
Another year of service,
To prove to Thee my love;
Another year of training
For greater works to do.*

*Another year of trials
And the blessings that they bring;
Another year's protection
'Neath the shadow of Thy wing.
Another year of gladness!
Dear Master, may it be,
In living and in dying,
Another year for Thee.*

I HOLD THE KEYS

DEATH IS SPOKEN of throughout the Bible as an enemy. Erroneously, hymn book theology often presents it as a friend, supposedly as an angel sent of God. Death is introduced to our attention in the Bible as the penalty for sin, with the distinct understanding that had Adam not transgressed the Divine commands, he would not have died; neither would he have been cast out of his Eden home. St. Paul emphasizes the fact that death is the penalty of sin and that the resurrection of the dead will come to the human race as the result of the redemptive work of Christ. He says, "For since by man came death, by man also shall come the resurrection of the dead. For as all in Adam die, even so all in Christ shall be made alive; but every man in his own order" (1 Cor. 15: 21-23).

DEATH THE PENALTY FOR SIN

As Genesis introduces death as a penalty for sin, Revelation concludes the great drama by pointing out Christ's victory and the destruction of sin and death; the release of all the members of Adam's family from his sentence and eventually the bringing of all the willing back to fellowship with God and to eternal life. Between these two extremes of Divine revelation are the assurances of the Prophets and the words of Jesus and His Apostles, explaining the processes of redemption and reconciliation. St. Paul summarizes these with the statement, by one man [disobedience] sin entered into the world, and death as the result of sin, and thus death passed upon all men because all are sinners... As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so

by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous—Rom. 5: 12-19.

The Divine proposition is that whoever would meet the requirements of Justice, that were leveled against Adam and his race, might ransom and purchase them, and have full right to deliver them from the prison house, the tomb. For four thousand years there

*I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.
Rev. 1: 18 NIV*



were promises looking forward to this great Messianic Deliverer—such as the inspired words of Moses recorded in Deut. 18: 15, "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren, Him you shall hear." But such were only promises—nothing of fulfillment was then accomplished. Finally, in due

time, God sent forth His Son. The Scriptures assure us that the sacrifice that Jesus offered (Himself) was a satisfaction, ransom-price, for the sins of the whole world. They tell us that the Heavenly Father manifested His approval of the sacrifice when He granted the Pentecostal blessing, and that Jesus is, even now, at the Father's right hand, waiting (Heb. 10: 12, 13) until the time shall come when the heathen and the uttermost parts of the earth shall be given to Him, that He may establish His reign of righteousness, blessing the world and releasing all the prisoners of Sin and Death. The delay is not in any sense an indication of weakness nor does it indicate the need of any change in the Divine program. It merely indicates that there is another feature of the Almighty's purpose which we did not for a time discern.

A GREAT WORK

The work is to be a great one. Upwards of one hundred twenty-six billion are to be delivered from death's prison-house. And all of them will need instruction, uplifting, chastening and schooling to prepare them for the Divine blessing of life everlasting. The time for instruction and uplifting is declared to be a thousand years. The power for the instruction is the Messianic Kingdom, the Rulers of which will be The Christ, head and body—Jesus and His Bride who will, together with the Great Company, the Bridesmaids, comprise the heavenly segment of His Kingdom (Rev. 7: 9-17). During the past nineteen centuries God, by His Word and providences, called and drew a little flock to Christ to be His Bride (Luke 12: 32). And now all of these have been tested and proven faithful unto death as followers in the Master's footsteps and are now complete and glorified with their Lord, and are working in the great task of slaying the two great monsters, Sin and Death. The Lord is, and has been for some time, present in the earth in His Second Coming. If you are wondering if this is so, just observe the signs present in today's society. It is this present Great Time of Trouble with Christ in control—with its war, revolution, terrorism, and anarchy, that is in the process of bringing about the destruction of Satan's evil empire. The Apostle Matthew vividly describes this time, "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no nor ever shall be. And unless those days are shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened" (Matt. 24: 21, 22).

St. Paul points us to the great Deliverer, the glorified Messiah, at the time when He shall take the Kingdom under the whole heavens and begin the fulfillment of the prayer He taught us, "Your Kingdom come. Your will be *done on earth*, as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6: 10). He tells us He

must reign until He shall have put all enemies under His feet— "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1 Cor. 15: 25, 26). The meaning is clear. Messiah's Kingdom will address itself promptly to the rectifying of every form of unrighteousness, whether it is found in the financial, political, social, or religious world. He will rule the world with a rod of iron, and every nation and every system or element contrary to the Divine standards of righteousness will be broken to shivers with His iron rod (Psa. 2: 9). Thereby will righteousness begin to be established in the earth in the midst of a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation. But such putting down of organized sin will be but the beginning of Messiah's work. Satan being bound, and the organized reign of sin thus stopped, each transgression will receive a just penalty and each good endeavor a just reward. Gradually mankind will rise out of sin and, therefore, proportionately come out from under the power of death, until all the willing and obedient shall be fully delivered from all danger as respects the monster which has devoured our race for over sixty centuries. Not only so, but the estimated one hundred twenty-six billions who have gone into the prison house of death will be released—not all at once, but gradually, as the Apostle declares, every man in his own order.

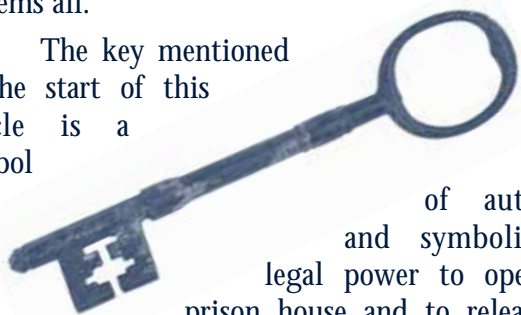
*"I will ransom them from the
power of the grave:
I will redeem them from death..."*
Hosea 13: 14



Then will be brought to pass the Divine prophecy, "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" (1 Cor. 15: 55). Let us notice when this great change will take place. It is not now. The sting of death is in all of us; for, as the Apostle explains, sin is the sting of death. And because all have been stung by sin, all are dying. It will require the entire 1,000 years of the Messianic Age to extract fully from humanity the virus, the sting, of sin, by bringing mankind to perfection. Only as the sting of death is removed

will the power of death relax, because it is a part of the Divine Law that, the soul who sins shall die (Ezek. 18: 4). Death now has its sting. But when that which is perfect shall have come, the sting will be gone; the imperfection and weakness will be gone; and the cause for sin will also be gone. Not now, but then, will be brought to pass the saying, "O grave, where is thy victory?" *Hades, sheol*, the grave, has been having a victory over Adam's race. And its victory will not be entirely overthrown until the Redeemer shall have delivered from the power of the grave the last member of the human family for all of whom He died, the Just for the unjust, to bring us back to God. Thus, as the Apostle says, with the culmination of Christ's Kingdom, with the deliverance of all mankind from the power of sin and death; death will be swallowed up in victory. The Apostle probably quoted from Hosea 13: 14, where we read, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave [*sheol*]; I will redeem them from death; O death, I will be your plagues [gradual destruction]; O grave [*sheol*], I will be your destruction; repentance shall be hid from mine eyes. "The Almighty will never change or turn from this decision. Death and the grave, *sheol—hades* (the Bible hell), are to be destroyed. Every member of Adam's race is to be ransomed by Him who redeems all.

The key mentioned at the start of this article is a symbol



of authority and symbolizes a legal power to open the prison house and to release the prisoners. Adamic death has been a legal penalty upon our race—a just penalty. But although all shared the condemnation and weakness, God foresaw that some of the race, if granted the opportunity, would gladly return to loyalty to His just laws. He has, therefore, made provision through Jesus for every member of the race, great and small, rich and poor. World-wide redemption will be provided; and world-wide opportunity for coming to the knowledge of the Truth and for being uplifted to perfection will be afforded. The right or power to release mankind from the power of death and from the prison-house of the tomb, *sheol—hades*, the grave, is represented by the key in the hands of Messiah. He

gained that key, that rightful authority to set us free from the grave, by the redemption which He accomplished for us by His death on Calvary's cross. This figure of the prison house was used also by the Lord through Isaiah the Prophet. Is it **not** written that the Lord was anointed to preach a message of good tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives of sin and death and the opening of the prison house of death to those that are bound? Jesus applied this very prophecy to Himself? (Isa. 61: 1; Luke 4: 18). Our Lord opened no earthly prison doors at His first advent. But just as foretold, He would open the prison doors and set all the captives free by His death; *the Just for the unjust*, which was in order that He might have the rightful authority to release the prisoners—when He secured the key. Eventually this glorious work will be finished at the end of the Millennial Age. The elect Church of the Gospel Age was invited to have a special part in this work. Hence the Church was called out from the world first, under a special Covenant of sacrifice; and she is now with her Lord, the Redeemer, in glory and has become part of the Seed of Abraham on the spirit plane—Gal. 3: 29.

THE LAKE OF FIRE

"And death and hell [*hades*] were cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20: 14). In the symbolic language of Revelation, Messiah's reign is described as a glorious opportunity for all mankind to come back into harmony with the Almighty and to attain everlasting life through the great Mediatorial Kingdom. The symbolic picture, of which this text is a part, describes the establishment of Messiah's Kingdom; the saints now being with Him in His throne, in His Kingdom, reigning with Him—a Royal Priesthood (Rev. 20: 4-6). The context further describes that period, in which all mankind shall be brought to knowledge of the Truth, when all will stand before the great White Throne, Messiah's Judgment Throne, to be tried, to be tested, to be proven whether they will accept or refuse the perfection and eternal life which Divine mercy will then make possible for them. During those thousand years of Messiah's reign, as we have seen, death will be gradually swallowed up in victory. And as the prisoners of the tomb are gradually released, the grave will be destroyed, and will be no more. The statement, **death and hades were cast into the lake of fire**, is merely another way of explaining to us that Adamic death (the curse of death that comes to us as

the result of original sin) and the grave connected therewith, will be no more. In addition, let it be remembered that the Valley of Hinnom, outside of the earthly Jerusalem, where only the vile refuse was destroyed, will find its antitype in the Second Death, symbolically represented as a lake of fire outside the New Jerusalem. In it will be consumed utterly, completely, (not preserved in eternal torture) everything out of harmony with the Divine will (Rev. 2: 11).

In the New Testament, as we have seen, *hades* stands for the grave or state of death, which results from Adam's transgression; while Gehenna represents the Second Death, which will come only upon those who shall first have been delivered from the Adamic sentence, or shall have had at least a full opportunity for deliverance and who will manifest their love for sin more than for righteousness and who, therefore, will be

sentenced to the Second Death. But in the Old Testament there is no distinctive word used to represent the Second Death, the extinction which will be the penalty of personal, willful transgression. To meet the difficulty, the word *sheol* is used a second time. For instance, we read of some who will be wilfully wicked after enjoying a knowledge of the Truth, not merely inheritors of imperfection and weaknesses which they have not overcome, but incorrigible, willful sinners—the wicked return to the grave, together with all people who forget God (Psa 9: 17). "The wicked" are only those who sin against full light, knowledge and opportunity; and only those can be said to forget God who have once known Him—who have been brought to a knowledge of the Truth and turned from it (2 Pet. 2: 21, 22).

* * *

SEEKING GOD'S APPROVAL

2 SAMUEL 6: 1-12

"BLESSED ARE THOSE THAT DWELL IN YOUR HOUSE"

PSA. 84:4

AFTER David had been voluntarily chosen king of all the tribes of Israel, not as a result of his conquest, but as a result of his patient waiting for the Lord's time to put him into the position of king, he took possession of Jerusalem and made it the capital city of the kingdom. Then followed wars with the Philistines, who again sought to invade the land of Israel. In these wars, under the Lord's blessing, the Israelites were successful. It was after seven years had passed under such conditions—after the kingdom of Israel had become quite settled, and was not likely to be molested by enemies—that the scene of this lesson opens. King David, at this time about forty-four years of age, recognized the fact that religious matters had been at a low ebb in the nation for many years and that the Lord having now blessed them by reuniting them and giving them peace, an appropriate time had come to do what he

could in the way of reviving the religious sentiments of the people. His own heart, ever loyal to the Lord, he desired that others should more fully appreciate the Lord as their light and their salvation. So it is with all who truly reverence the Lord and trust in Him; they are desirous of telling their joys abroad, and helping others into the same condition of peace and rest in the Lord.

The Ark of the Covenant, it will be remembered, was the chief article of furniture in the Tabernacle service which the Lord instituted at the hand of Moses in the wilderness. We have no certain knowledge of the regularity of the Tabernacle worship during the period from Joshua to this time. Quite probably the services were maintained with more or less regularity. It is possible that, since the Ark was the chief center of interest in connection with that service,

its movements, etc., may have included the movement of the other articles of furniture of the Tabernacle, its boards, curtains, lamp, table, altars, etc.

Shortly after Israel entered Palestine, Joshua located the Ark at Shiloh, twenty miles north of Jerusalem (Josh. 18: 1). That it was still there at the close of the period of the Judges, and while Samuel lived with Eli, is shown by 1 Sam. 1: 3. The sons of Eli took the Ark with them into battle against the Philistines, thus evidencing their faith in the Divine institutions, although their lives were corrupt; but as a result of this misuse of the Ark, the Lord permitted it to be captured by the Philistines. However, while they possessed it, a curse seemed to accompany it. In the temple of their god, Dagon, his image fell down before the Ark, and the people of the cities in which it was located were afflicted with plagues. The Philistines were glad to get rid of the Ark, and loading it upon a cart started the oxen in the direction of the Israelites. From the time of its return, the Ark was in the custody of Abinadab, the priest, and his sons, one of whom was Uzzah. The Ark had thus been with the house of Abinadab in the hill Gibeah and Kirjath-jearim, otherwise called Baale, seventy years.

Any religious movement amongst the Jews must necessarily center in and about the Ark of the Covenant, for it was the symbol of the Lord's presence and of His mercy and grace toward them as a people. We remember that, when in its place in the Most Holy of the Tabernacle, a bright light, called the Shekinah glory, represented the Lord's presence between the two Cherubim of its golden lid; which lid was called the Mercy Seat, because upon it the blood of atonement was sprinkled each year, covering the sins of that people for a year, and was repeated year after year continually, as a foreshadowing type of the blood of Christ, by which the real atone-

ment is made. In the box under this lid or Mercy Seat were the golden pot of manna, Aaron's rod that budded and the two Tables of the Law, symbolizing the gracious arrangements and promises of the Almighty to His people. Spiritual Israel (the Church), thank God, inherited the realities which were thereby typified. Christ is the Ark of the Covenant. In Him the Law has full satisfaction. In Him is vested the priestly office, represented by Aaron's rod, and in Him is provided the heavenly manna, typing the Word of Truth. All these things were made applicable to the Church by the Mercy Seat, and they had access to and were accepted before the Mercy Seat (justice) as members of the High Priest's body, by virtue of the blood of atonement shed by their Redeemer as a satisfaction for their sins, and

not for the Church only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

King David realized that the Ark of the Lord, representing His presence, should be in the capital city of the nation, making it the city of the great King, and directing the minds of Israel, not only to their earthly king and his laws and regulations, but through him, to the Heavenly King whom he represented. To have this event notable—to arouse the religious sentiments of the whole nation—the king realized that they must all to some extent participate in the movement, and hence he gathered from all quarters thirty thousand of the chief men of the nation—not only its military representatives, but the heads of the tribes. There is a good lesson here for all spiritual Israelites who have any prominence in the carrying forward of religious work. It is not sufficient that a leader, a representative, shall attempt some

prominent service for the Lord and for the Truth. It is wiser, better every way, that all of the Lord's people be invited to join directly or representatively in any prominent matter connected with the Lord's service.



“So they carried the ark of God on a new cart...Uzza and Ahio drove the cart. And when they came to Chidon's threshing floor, Uzza put out his hand to hold the ark...the Lord was aroused against Uzza, and He struck him because he put his hand to the ark; and he died there before the Lord.”

1 Chron. 13: 7, 9, 10

Even in the affairs of a small congregation it will be found disadvantageous to have one person do all the speaking, all the leading, all the serving. Far better, far wiser is it, far more in harmony with the Scriptural direction, that each should endeavor to take a part in the service, and be encouraged so to do along the lines of his natural talents and in proportion as he shall be found humble, faithful and helpful.

The holy joy and rejoicing of the journey with the Ark from Kirjath-jearim toward Jerusalem was suddenly interrupted by the jolting of the cart, which Uzzah, who had it in charge, feared would overthrow it. When he put forth his hand to steady the Ark, he was smitten dead for his error. Consternation took the place of rejoicing. The thirty thousand who had come together specially to honor the Lord, and David, himself also, were alarmed. Fear fell upon all, and David at once determined that this was either a mark of Divine disfavor concerning the bringing of the Ark to Jerusalem, or that increasingly disastrous experiences might come to him and to the city by reason of the presence of the Ark. All were in fear, and the question now was, what to do with the holy oracle. A courageous man of the tribe of Levi, Obed-edom, was willing to receive the emblem of the Lord Jehovah's presence into his premises—probably the Ark was set up with the Tabernacle, etc., in his yard or court or appropriate place.

GOD'S INSTRUCTIONS

"David was displeased because the Lord had made a breach upon Uzzah"—not displeased with the Lord, we may be sure, from what we know of the man, for David's reverence for the Lord and his confidence in His righteous dealings are clearly manifest in all of his writings. We may properly understand this to mean, then, that David was displeased with his former determination to take the Ark to Jerusalem; displeased that his good intentions respecting the revival of religion and the honor-

ing of the Lord had thus gone astray through a lack of particularity on his own part and on the part of the priests who had charge of the move, in that they did not obey the direct and explicit instructions of the Lord concerning the manner in which this sacred emblem of His presence should be moved. See Num. 4:15; 7:9, where it is specified that the Ark was to be carried upon the shoulders of the Levites by poles running through certain rings arranged for the purpose. That this was David's attitude of mind is evident upon the reading of the ninth verse: "David was afraid of the LORD that day, and said, How shall the Ark of the Lord come to me?" We can imagine the disappointment and chagrin, not only of David, but also of the thirty thousand representative Israelites, when they scattered to their homes, disappointed respecting their good intentions, which apparently had not been fully approved by the Lord.



"And the children of the Levites bare the ark of God upon their shoulders with the staves thereon, as Moses commanded according to the word of the LORD."

1 Chro. 15: 15

The statement that "the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah" is not to be understood to signify violent passion on the Lord's part, but evidently is an accommodated expression to bring down to human comprehension the fact that the Lord was displeased with the action of Uzzah, and thought it proper to punish him for his neglect. Quite possibly long association with the Ark had bred in Uzzah a familiarity and loss of respect for it as representative of God; and his open violation of the Divine regulation on the highway, and in the sight of the representatives of all Israel, would have brought the Divine commands and threatening respecting the Ark and the various holy things of the Tabernacle into disrespect. The Lord resented this in the interest of his people, and incidentally took the opportunity to teach all Israel, through their representatives there assembled; a great lesson on the propriety of reverence for the Lord and for the particularities of His commands.

THE REVERENCE OF THE LORD IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM

Whoever has not learned this primary lesson in reverence has not made a proper start in his worship and service. Unless he learns this lesson, he is not likely to accomplish anything that will be pleasing to the Lord—he is apt to be a stumbling-block, rather than assistance in the Lord's service. Indeed, those who are the Lord's consecrated people, and who have been privileged to handle holy things and who can rely on the precious blood of Jesus, and to approach God in prayer through the merit of Christ, have continual need to remember the appropriateness of reverence as they approach the Lord or engage in any service for Him. All such should learn from this lesson how they touch holy things, and to do so according to the Divine direction and not otherwise. The poet has noticed this tendency of some to "rush in where angels fear to tread." Such irreverence sometimes manifests itself conspicuously in prayer, where the one who should be a worshiper, overflowing with thanksgiving for mercies received, undertakes to give direction to the great King of kings concerning the management of his work far and near and in all particulars. The Lord does not smite down such today, and make public examples of them for their irreverence; but we may be sure that, as the Apostle says, such petitions will receive no favorable consideration of the Lord (James 1: 7). A lesson in this matter to us is that obedience is better than sacrifice (1 Sam. 15: 22). The carrying of the Ark upon the shoulders of the four Levites might not have been as majestic a procedure as the one attempted with the cart; it would nevertheless have been more pleasing to the Lord, because it was according to his directions. Let us apply this lesson carefully, and see to it that we not only desire to do the Lord's will, but that we so desire to do it in His way that we will give close attention thereto, hearkening to the statements of His Word, or, as the prophet expresses it, let us be amongst those who tremble at His Word—who are extremely careful to note and particularly follow the Word of the Lord in every matter.

DEATH THE CESSATION OF LIFE

To those who discern the Scriptural teaching that death is the cessation of life, and not an entrance into life more abundant, there will be no need to explain that Uzzah's conduct not only justified the Lord in making him an example before the nation, instructing the whole people in reverence, but also that no injury was done to Uzzah's eternal future. He lived before the

redemption was provided. He was one of many members of the human family for whom Christ Jesus our Lord gave His life a ransom. As a consequence, he will be one of billions of members of the human family who shall ultimately hear the voice of the Son of Man and come forth from the sleep of death—to have it testified for him, in the Lord's due time, that God has been gracious to our entire race, and has redeemed us with the precious blood (1 Tim. 2: 4-6). It is to those who have gotten the mistaken idea which ignores the resurrection and claims that there are no dead to be resurrected, but that the dead are more alive than they ever were before, and who, therefore, think of Uzzah as being dropped immediately into the hands of devils for eternal torture—it is to these that this narrative seems perplexing and unjustly severe. Thank God for the clearer light now shining upon His Character and Plan!

During the three months that the Ark was at the home of Obed-edom the Lord's blessing was especially with the family, to such a degree that their neighbors took knowledge of it, and the matter eventually reached the attention of the king. We think it not unreasonable to assume that there was something in the character of Obed-edom, and what was conducted in his home, in his reverence of the Lord and his confidence in Him, that had to do with the blessing accompanying the possession of the Ark; because we have no record of any special blessing coming to the house of Abinadab during the seventy years that the Ark remained there. We might draw a lesson from this applicable to God's people of today. The Bible in some respects represents the Lord to us, as the Ark represented Him to natural Israel. To it we go for the settlement of our questions. From it we hear the message of the Lord speaking peace to our souls, the forgiveness of sins, etc. The Bible has been in many homes in Christendom for more than seventy years without bringing any special blessing to those homes; yet to some, even in a few months, it has brought inestimable favors. What is the difference? We reply that very much depends upon the genuineness of the true Christian and the degree of reverence he has for the Lord and His Word, and his carefulness to consult that Word in respect to all his affairs. Those who have the blessing of the Lord's Word, and especially those who have any light upon its pages in this dawning of the Millennial morning; if they are not receiving great blessing from it in their own hearts, peace, joy, comfort, courage, strength, and finding such blessings also upon the members of their households, would have

reason to inquire to what extent they are responsible for their failure to profit as a result.

Hearing of the blessing of the Lord upon the home of Obed-edom, King David took fresh courage, and realized that these different experiences of Uzzah and Obed-edom taught the lesson that, those who reverently and carefully sought to know and to do the will of the Lord would have a blessing in proportion to their nearness to Him, while the careless and the irreverent need only to expect the Lord's displeasure. Again the king assembled the representatives of the nation from all quarters, the chief men of the tribe and the chief representatives of the army, etc., and apparently this day of the bringing of the Ark to Jerusalem was the most joyful and the most notable day in David's

entire experience. See an account of this in 1 Chron. 15: 15, 16. On this occasion care was taken to follow the Divine direction, and the Ark was borne on the shoulders of the Levites, frequent stoppages being made, during which sacrifices were offered to the Lord.

On the whole, we discern that the Lord's dealing in this matter taught David and all Israel a great lesson, and was very advantageous to the nation as a whole. Therefore, it is with all the corrections in righteousness which the Lord may at any time give to those who are truly His; if rightly received they will bring forth peaceable fruits of righteousness, reverence and obedience.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

MEMORIAL DATE FOR 2006

Monday, April 10, after 6:00 p.m.

Our Lord's Memorial is Monday, April 10, after 6:00 p.m. This is calculated as follows (all times Greenwich Mean Time): The vernal equinox is March 20, 6:27 p.m.; the new moon nearest this equinox is March 29, 10:16 a.m.; add 2 hours 21 minutes to get Jerusalem time which is March 29, 12:37 p.m.; therefore Nisan 1 is March 28, 6:00 p.m. to March 29, 6:00 p.m. Nisan 14 begins 13 full days later on Monday, April 10, 6:00 p.m. ending Tuesday, April 11, 6:00 p.m. The Memorial should therefore be observed after 6:00 p.m. Monday, April 10. May God bless you in your preparation for, and commemoration of, this wonderful event. Please send in reports promptly.

SERVICES BY VISITING MINISTERS

Robert Herzig

New Haven, CT January 15

John Wojnar

Boston, MA, March 26

Leon Snyder

Muskegon, MI, February 26

Robert Steenrod

Cincinnati, OH, February 19

EVANGELISTS' SERVICE

Robert Branconnier

Pittsfield, MA, February 12

Jon Hanning

North Canton, OH February 12

David Lounsbury

New York, NY March 19

Roger Mullen

Boston, MA, January 22; New Haven, CT, March 19

William Sturges

North Canton, OH, January 22;

Athens/Nelsonville, OH, March 26

Michael Williams

Athens/Nelsonville, OH, January 22

GENERAL CONVENTIONS 2006

GERMANY: Velbert, JUNE 03

Altleiningen, OCTOBER 20-22

PLEASE NOTE: A CORRECTION OF THE DATES FOR THE JACKSONVILLE, FL AND THE CHESTER SPRINGS, PA CONVENTIONS.

UNITED STATES

Jacksonville, FL

MARCH 10-12

Muskegon, MI

MAY 19-21

Chester Springs, PA

JULY 21-23

Tulsa, OK

SEPTEMBER 22-24

FLORIDA, MARCH 10-12 (FRIDAY-SUNDAY)

Site: Oceanfront Comfort Inn, 1515 N. First St., Jacksonville Beach, FL, 32250. Telephone: (904) 241-2311. Rates and Reservations: \$74.00, for 1-4 guests, plus 13% tax; this price also includes breakfast. Reservations must be made directly to the hotel by February 1, 2006. **State you are attending the Laymen's Home Missionary Movement Convention** to secure the special rate. Inquiries can be sent to B. Blaine (Class Secretary), 3569 John Anderson Drive, Ormond Beach, FL, 32176; Telephone: (386) 441-9836.

MICHIGAN, MAY 19-21 (FRIDAY-SUNDAY)

Site: Comfort Inn Muskegon, U.S. Route 31 at Sherman Boulevard, Muskegon, MI 49444. Telephone: (231) 739-9092. Rates: \$54.00 + 11% room tax; children 18 and under stay free with parents. Continental breakfast included (served in motel lobby). Reservations must be made directly to the hotel by April 26, 2006. **Request the discount rate for the LHMM, and for a confirmation number.** Each room must be guaranteed as early as possible by credit card or check; you may cancel with 48 hours notice. For further information contact C. Olson, (Class Secretary), 1503 Carleton Street, Whitehall, MI 49461-1903. Telephone (231) 894-4131

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“CLOSE YOUR EYES FOR A MOMENT

...to the scenes of misery and woe, degradation and sorrow that yet prevail on account of sin, and picture before your mental vision the glory of the perfect earth. Not a stain of sin mars the harmony and peace of a perfect society; not a bitter thought, not an unkind look or word; love, welling up from every heart, meets a kindred response in every other heart, and benevolence marks every act. There sickness shall be no more; not an ache nor a pain, nor any evidence of decay--not even the fear of such things. Think of all the pictures of comparative health and beauty of human form and feature that you have ever seen, and know that perfect humanity will be of still surpassing loveliness. The inward purity and mental and moral perfection will stamp and glorify every radiant countenance. Such will earth's society be, and weeping bereaved ones will have their tears all wiped away, when thus they realize the resurrection work complete.”

FROM:

“ THE DIVINE PLAN OF THE AGES ”