TIMELY GREETINGS

— The Only Peace of Mind —

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WHAT IS RELIGION? DOES IT PROFIT BOTH NOW AND HEREAFTER?

LIFE IS BUT WHAT WE MAKE IT

TEXT FOR PRAYER

Parables-Links in the Chain of Truth

"In Christ's parable-teaching the same principle is seen as in His own mission to the world. That we might become acquainted with His divine character and life, Christ took our nature, and dwelt among us.... Men could learn of the unknown through the known; heavenly things were revealed through the earthly; God was made manifest in the likeness of men. So it was in Christ's teaching: the unknown was illustrated by the known; divine truths by earthly things with which the people were most familiar.... Natural things were the medium for the spiritual; the things of nature and the life-experience of His hearers were connected with the truths of the written word. Leading thus from the natural to the spiritual kingdom, Christ's parables are links in the chain of truth that unites man with God, and earth with heaven."

Let us pray that we might understand Christ's teachings of the unknown through the known – the heavenly things as revealed through the earthly; that we emulate Christ's way of teaching, illustrating Divine truths by earthly objects; pray that we fully benefit by Christ's parables – the outstanding links in the chain of Truth that unites earth with heaven.

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WHAT IS RELIGION? DOES IT PROFIT BOTH NOW AND HEREAFTER?

TEXT OF ADDRESS BY V.T. HOUTEFF,
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SABBATH, JULY 12, 1947
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If humanity needs to know any one thing above another, it is the answer to these two questions: What is religion? Does it profit now and hereafter?

Many think that religion consists of going to church, of praying, of having good morals, not stealing, not killing, not playing games, not gambling, not attending shows, not eating certain things, of doing or of not doing this, that, and the other.

Others think religion is nothing more than some kind of a sociological order, and that the church is a place in which to get acquainted, etc., etc. Let us see:

Jesus was confronted by the rich young ruler, who said to Him, I have kept the commandments. What yet must I do to enter into life eternal? Here follows the answer:

Luke 18:22 – "Now when Jesus heard these things, He said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow Me."

To understand this scripture, we must read another

one along with it:

John 3:1-3 – "There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto Him, Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God."

Both the rich young man and Nicodemus were rulers, and though Nicodemus might not have been as rich as was the young man, he nevertheless was not poor. But why was the one asked to distribute his riches to the poor, and the other told to be born again? Why should not both pay the same price for salvation? Here are the reasons:

To avoid being seen in the company of Jesus, Nicodemus came to Him, not by day, but secretly by night, whereas the young ruler came to Jesus not only openly by day, but also while a multitude were with Jesus. The rich young ruler's basic hindrance, therefore, was his wealth, and Nicodemus' basic hindrance was his pride. Plainly, then, the one's ailment called for one kind of treatment, and the other's ailment called for another kind of treatment.

Jesus never asked anyone to take His religion, but He asked them to "follow" Him, to be one of His disciples. The rich young ruler could not follow the Lord because his heart was centered upon his own riches. And Nicodemus could not follow the Lord because he was too proud to be seen in the company of unpopular and hated Jesus followed by humble fishermen. To remove the hindrances, the one had

to get rid of his riches, and the other had to get rid of his pride. To eradicate pride, one must be born again, must become a new man. But to eradicate the love of money one must give his money to those who really need it.

The Scriptures bear record that Abraham was very rich. Yet he is called the "friend of God." Riches in themselves, therefore, can be a blessing, although they more often become a curse. Pride, however, is never good.

Remember that the Devil finds in every one of us at least one loop-hole. Whatever that loop-hole be, it must be done away with – be it riches or be it pride. Of course not all are rich and tied to their wealth, but everyone can be tied to himself, the "old man." And not all need give up riches, but all need cut loose from the "old man" who gets them into everything but what they ought to be in.

Let us read again from John three–

Verses 4-8 – "Nicodemus saith unto Him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

Nicodemus' acknowledgment that Jesus was the

Son of God made his case exceedingly bad. Knowing who Jesus was, he should not have been ashamed to be seen in His company, nor should he have been afraid of His enemies. He should have considered it a privilege to associate with the Son of God, with a Heavenly Being. But inasmuch as Nicodemus was ashamed to be seen with Him, and was proud to be with Pharisees, he needed to bury the "old man," and to arise in newness of life – needed to be born again.

To the question, "How can a man be born when he is old?" Jesus answered, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God." Nicodemus had to be baptized, had to publicly acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God, and receive the Spirit of Truth.

And the illustration, "the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit," definitely points out that to really know what it is to be born of the Spirit is to have the experience of being one of His disciples, of being filled with the Holy Spirit, and of proclaiming His Truth. Jesus, comparing His followers, those who are born again, with the wind, makes this fact still clearer; for if His disciples are like the wind, if no one knows where they come from and where they go to, then the only way to find out is to become one with them.

For Jesus to become one with us He had to be born again; He had to become an earthly man. And for us to be one with Him, we have to be born again, born of the Spirit. The difference is that Jesus was first born a spiritual, a Divine being, and second a human

being; whereas we are first born human beings, and second spiritual beings. Prophetically speaking of Jesus' birth, the prophet Isaiah wrote:
Isa. 66:7 – "Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child."

The Jewish church, the church into which and by which Jesus was born, Inspiration declares, neither travailed nor had pain; that is, she felt neither need of nor burden for a Saviour, and yet in spite of it, He was born.

But speaking of the children that are to make up the Kingdom, we read:

Verses 8 – "Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children."

Although the Jewish church in Jesus' day travailed not, yet she brought forth the Son of God! But when Zion travaileth she brings forth all her children at once, a whole nation! A miracle in each instance.

How may Zion travail? – Let us turn to the natural realm: In nature, the mother carries a child, then travails and gives birth to it. How else, then, in the spiritual realm can Zion travail without first carrying her children before they are born? To be specific, when one joins the church, she is pregnant with him so to speak. When she is thus carrying her children, then they shall all be born at once, – they shall all at once receive their second birth, the birth here mentioned.

And as Inspiration makes it clear that they must be born again, they all at the outset must be in the same state of mind as was Nicodemus – ashamed to be seen in the company of present Truth believers, ashamed to be associated with believers of unpopular Truth.

Plainly, then, our efforts to reach the people with the message of a "second birth" shall not be in vain: Zion shall bring forth all her children, as it were, in one day. And that is why we cannot be driven to despair or to discouragement. We are assured that "revival and reformation" will take place among all God's people, that His word will not return unto Him void.

Now, who could the children be? – To be children of Zion, they must some day stand on Zion. They are therefore none other than the "firstfruits" of whom the Revelator says: "And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Sion, and with Him an hundred forty and four thousand, having His Father's name written in their foreheads." Rev. 14:1.

From the Scriptures it is now clearly seen that in this instance when one joins the church, the church becomes pregnant with that member. Thus it is that from the time one becomes a member of the church to the time he is "born again," he is spiritually developing for the hour of this second birth. Then, after he is "born again" he is still to keep on growing until he becomes a full-grown, matured, spiritual being – a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of Christ, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Accordingly, this state of being no one has as yet reached, but the time is now at hand when a multitude shall reach it, for says the Lord: Isa. 66:9 –

"Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the Lord: shall I cause to bring forth, and shut the womb? saith thy God."

This scripture endeavors to remove all doubt. Let us believe the Lord and know for certain that the time for this particular new birth is here and that the Lord can and will make it possible regardless how it may appear to us.

From this study we see that religion is not made up of must's and don't's; that no one is to be tied to a man, but to God's ever unfolding Truth; that religion means to be following the Lord, and to be doing those things which He leads one to do; that from the time one accepts the Lord as his Saviour, – from that very time he is to begin to grow spiritually, first to be born again, then to become a full-grown spiritual being, not all at once, but to be growing daily. To reach such a high state of perfection, one must therefore be perfecting himself daily and be in keeping with the Truth of God, that each spark of Truth might add the amount of spiritual growth the season requires, or else one will fall behind in reaching spiritual maturity. Only thus can one be reaping all the benefits which religion affords.

No, religion is not something extra, something optional. It is something which everyone must have. A true and up-to-date religion is something as essential as the eyes in your head.

For examples let me take you through the stream of time, beginning with Noah. His religion not only saved him and his family from drowning in the terrible flood, but also made him become the progenitor of the world after the flood, – yes, the progenitor of our

world. The world in his day, though, perished because it felt no need of an up-to-date religion, no need of present Truth. What a shame! What nonsense for one to try to get along without religion, without God's counsel, and without the message of the hour!

Let us take a look at another highlight in Bible history. The mother of Moses believed in up-to-date religion. She believed that the time had come for the deliverance of the Hebrew race, and she did all she could to make it possible. When she saw that she could no longer hide her infant son from the hand of Pharaoh, she let her religion do the rest. The results were great, not only did she receive her son again in her arms forever saved from being thrown into the Nile, but also a guarantee for his support, education, and all – the best Egypt could afford – were paid from Pharaoh's treasury! The right kind of religion, you see, does great things.

Eighty years later Moses' religion led the whole Hebrew nation from the brick yards of Pharaoh to the Red Sea. The sea parted for their sake, and as soon as they passed through, it closed in on their taskmasters. What a deliverance! What a victory!

Moreover, as those millions of men, women, and children, also their cattle, came into that forbidding desert place where there was neither food nor water, religion made the rocks gush with streams, and the clouds drop down manna – not for a day, nor for a month, but for forty long years! Then the miracle of the Red Sea was repeated at the river Jordan, and the emancipated brick-makers became prophets, kings, and priests!

Notwithstanding all these great happenings, when they became careless and indifferent, when they felt no need of prophets, no need of present Truth, no need of meat in due season, they again became slaves and captives! That is why we need the right kind of religion, and that is why we need to stick to religion and to grow with it.

The Jews were taken captive and carried into Babylon. Nevertheless, those who were faithful to their religion were well taken care of even in their captivity. Daniel, for instance, rather than serving as a slave, was instead treated as a lord, and was at last made a ruler by both the Chaldeans and the Medo-Persians. And when he was for spite thrown into the lion's den, he was spared, while his enemies were eaten up by the wild beasts.

When the three Hebrews, for faithfulness to their religion, were thrown into the fiery furnace, the Son of God came and rescued them and not a hair of their heads perished. Their enemies, though, were burned to death, but the Hebrews were made rulers in the kingdom.

Gideon had to win a war. After recruiting 22,000 soldiers, he was told that they were too many! Consequently the time-killers were removed, and finally there were but three hundred left to fight against a multitude that covered the plain! In spite of his small army, Gideon did win the war overnight, and without the loss of a man! Religion, Brother, Sister, when lived up to, is a paying proposition.

All could have been Daniels and Gideons. Yes, even the Jews of today could have been something, but what are they? – A nation hated by all the people

in the world, a nation without a king, without a flag, without a land, – the only such nation on earth.

Now let me tell you of an experience that is strictly personal, and news to most of you. Several years ago while I was crossing one of the busy streets of Los Angeles, California, a woman from my left drove squarely into me. She then became so nervous that she could not stop her car but kept going for a half block. The car, though, did not tip me over; an unseen hand carried me ahead of it. And when the car stopped right at the alley which crossed the street, I stopped, too! By that time hundreds of spectators including news reporters and three motor cops, had gathered around the car. As they found no one lying in the street, dead or wounded, they then decided the victim must have been pinned under the car. When I told them that it was I who had been hit, they wondered. As I told them that I was not hurt, and as I refused to be taken to the hospital, they made me raise up my hands and legs, and they asked dozens of questions. The pencil in my coat pocket had been crushed by the impact of the car into about a dozen pieces, but my ribs were untouched! Then one from among the crowd said, "He must be made of rubber."

Religion, you see, is better than an insurance policy.

From our study we perceive that God's power that protected life even in the fiery furnace and in the lion's den, is still at work; that God is still as much interested in His people today as He was in Daniel's or in any other day. We therefore need an up-to-date religion every day. We cannot afford to be without it, – no, not even for a moment.

Timely Truth not only saves our souls for eternity,

but It protects us from day to day. It supplies our needs today and gives us hope for hereafter. There is safety in nothing else, and faith in God is our only peace of mind, especially in this day and age.

Religion obviously is profitable not only for hereafter, but certainly for today as well. Do not play the fool by trying to get along without it.

Don't Miss Out On This

If you have not already sent for your copy of the publicized and much discussed little 96-page health book (The Entering Wedge) that has made the big stir throughout the Adventist world and that has put The E. W. Society in the limelight, do not miss it if your health, home, and happiness mean something to you. In our opinion this book is the best we have ever seen on the subject. We actually feel that it is God-sent, and that a copy of it should be in every home. We are informed that you may now obtain it without the coupon. Send your name, address, and the name of the church to which you belong (you are requested to print), as noted on back cover page.

TEXT FOR PRAYER
Reveal God; Do Not Conceal Him

I shall read from "Christ's Object Lessons," page 18, beginning with the first paragraph–

"In His teaching from nature, Christ was speaking of the things which His own hands had made, and which had qualities and powers that He Himself had imparted. In their original perfection, all created things were an expression of the thought of God.... The earth is now marred and defiled by sin.... God's object lessons are not obliterated; rightly understood, nature speaks of her Creator. In the days of Christ these lessons had been lost sight of.... The sinfulness of humanity had cast a pall over the fair face of creation; and instead of manifesting God, His works became a barrier that concealed Him.... So in Israel, man's teachings had been put in the place of God's. Not only the things of nature, but the sacrificial service and the Scriptures themselves, – all given to reveal God, – were so perverted that they became the means of concealing Him."

I wonder if the world is not about the same today as it was in Christ's day. The Jews were given a great opportunity to reveal God to humanity, but instead they concealed Him. Christians that are quarreling and bickering, bringing doctrines of man into the doctrines of God, are not revealing God to the heathen but are concealing Him, turning them against Him. Such are not making converts to Christ but are driving souls away from Him. We must pray that we do better; that we do not conceal Christ but reveal Him in all our works and through our lives.

LIFE IS BUT WHAT WE MAKE IT

TEXT OF ADDRESS BY V.T. HOUTEFF,
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To find out that life is really what we make it, I shall bring to attention seven examples, beginning in Noah's day and ending in our day:

Example No. 1: Noah was commanded to build an ark, and to tell the world that a flood was to cover the earth, that only those who would get into the ark would escape alive. One hundred twenty years later the animals were strangely seen to march two and two into the ark! Noah and his family also went in, while the rest of the world laughed and ridiculed. But when the rain began to pour, the situation ceased to be "funny." Those outside the ark cried, mourned, pled. But all perished as fools only because they had failed to give heed to present Truth, had failed to feed on "meat in due season." What folly! What disaster!

One would think that after the deluge, the world would have had great respect for religion and for the prophets of God. But that was not the case. The antediluvians did not believe Noah's prediction that there was to be a flood, so they refused to go into the ark! But the flood came and they perished. The postdiluvians did not believe his prediction that there was not to be another flood so they set about to build the tower of Babel! But when God saw the tower sky-rocketing,

He blasted the top of it, and confounded the builders' language. That is, He blotted their own language from their minds and carved into them the languages of today. Thus he caused the birth of various races and languages which we today find even in the remotest parts of the earth.

It was not God's purpose that the people should stack themselves in the plains of Shinar, but that they should spread out and replenish the earth. And so when they refused to obey His command He gave them the next best He had for them, and that they had to obey.

Man's work independent of and contrary to God's, you see, is certain to meet with disaster. A house that is built on sand cannot survive a storm, and no man can possibly defeat God's purpose for men. Do not make a fool of yourself by trying.

It takes years in the schools of men to learn a language, but in the school of God, it takes but a moment. He can blot out one language from man's brains and carve in another, and at the same time change the features of his face and the color of his skin. Yes, God can do all this more quickly than a dentist can pull a tooth. But whether a change be made for better or for worse, all depends upon the individual.

Example No. 2: Nebuchadnezzar was given a dream. Being troubled with it he summoned the wise men of his realm to tell him the interpretation of it. They came but there was nothing that they could do. At last Daniel was brought before the king. After hearing the king's story of the dream, Daniel said:

Dan. 4:24-26, 28 – "This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which is come save."

upon my lord the king: that they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will. And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule....came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar."

The king heard the interpretation of it, and he understood the decree. Nevertheless he was not willing to admit that there was One greater than he. Then it came to pass that–

Verses 29, 30 – "At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?"

What a statement to make after having heard God's decree! The king had yet to learn that God rules the nations, sets up kings and deposes kings. Let us now hear God's answer to the king's folly:

Verses 31-33 – "While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth

it to whomsoever He will. The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws."

Some even to this day do not realize that God rules, that men are not independent of Him although they are permitted to choose whether or not to serve Him. It was not necessary for the Chaldean king to live with the beasts of the field, but as he could not learn his lesson by words, in the easy way, he was removed from his palace and put into a corral, there to learn by experience, in the hard way. In the end of seven years, after he had graduated, so to speak, from God's school of hard knocks, the king walked back into his palace, and said:

Verses 34-37 – "And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honoured Him that liveth for ever, Whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His Kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou? At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me. Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all Whose works are Truth, and His ways judgment: and those that walk in

pride He is able to abase."

Through pride and disloyalty to God Nebuchadnezzar made life miserable for himself, but at last he did awake.

Example No. 3: Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom continued until the reign of his grandson, Belshazzar. Belshazzar knew his grandfather's history and his experience with God, but he failed to profit by it. He made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and commanded that the vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem, be brought to the feast, so that the king himself, and his princes, wives, and concubines might drink therefrom.

As soon as this revelry took place there came forth fingers of a man's hand, which wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace. Belshazzar was greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were astonished. Then was Daniel brought before the king. And Daniel emphatically declared:

Dan. 5:18-31 – "O thou king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour: and for the majesty that He gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down. But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him: and he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet

with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the Most High God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that He appointeth over it whomsoever He will. And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this; but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of His house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in Whose hand thy breath is, and Whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified: Then was the part of the hand sent from Him; and this writing was written. And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom. In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old."

What a difference there would have been in the scroll of history if Belshazzar had profited by the priceless lesson which his grandfather had learned. Yes, what a difference it would have made! This is the needful lesson for us all, kings and peasants alike.

Example No. 4: The Chaldean empire became a Medo-Persian empire, not because the Medes and the Persians were stronger and mightier, but because

God had so decreed. Let us see:

Isa. 45:1 – "Thus saith the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut."

Cyrus, under whose command the Medo-Persian army marched into Babylon, had not yet been born when the prophet Isaiah wrote of him. But God remembered His promise and when Belshazzar felt perfectly secure on the night of revelry and fatal debauchery, God opened before Cyrus the two-leaved gates and made possible the capture of the kingdom. There the Medes and Persians met Daniel and his companions, who called Cyrus' attention to the Scriptures which not only predicted his victory, but even foretold his name. Having seen and felt the power of God, Cyrus was moved to decree:

Ezra 1:2-11 – "Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and He hath charged me to build Him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all His people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel, (He is the God,) which is in Jerusalem. And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem. Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all them whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem. And all

they that were about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, beside all that was willingly offered. Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his gods; even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and numbered them unto Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah. And this is the number of them: thirty chargers of gold, a thousand chargers of silver, nine and twenty knives, thirty basons of gold, silver basons of a second sort four hundred and ten, and other vessels a thousand. All the vessels of gold and of silver were five thousand and four hundred. All these did Sheshbazzar bring up with them of the captivity that were brought up from Babylon unto Jerusalem."

It is not difficult to see that if the rulers of the Medo-Persian empire had continued to rule in the same spirit as Cyrus, the kingdom would have stood until this day. That kingdom, though, gave way to Grecia; Grecia, to Rome; and Rome, to the nations of today. Plain enough it is to see that the kingdoms of today still stand because God has purposed it so.

Their growing more and more independent of God will sooner or later bring the end of them too, for looking down the stream of time, down to the kingdoms of today which are depicted by the feet and toes of the great image, the Spirit of Truth wrote: "And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and

part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay. And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a Kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the Kingdom shall not be left to other people, but It shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and It shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure." Dan. 2:41-45. Rather than merging into the Kingdom of God, they will have to be destroyed.

Example No. 5: Now let us see what benefit the kingdoms and nations reaped from coming in contact with the church. Babylon, Medo-Persia, Grecia, and Rome, who came in contact with the church, make up the civilized world of today.

Look at the nations and peoples (the heathen in the somewhat isolated places of the earth) who were not so fortunate as to meet the church as early as the other nations.

Still further, look at those who are still more isolated in the remotest parts of the earth who have had no contact with the church, not until just recently. Most of them are but little better than animals not only in intelligence but even in progress.

The people who were fortunate enough to be the closest to the religion of Christ, are, you will find,

the most intelligent, the most prosperous. England, for example, who translated the Bible and published and scattered It throughout the world to all peoples and languages, became the greatest of the nations in its time. Then the United States (but a sister nation to the English Empire), who less than two centuries ago founded its government upon the principles of the Bible and inscribed on its dollar, IN GOD WE TRUST, and who also established the American Bible Societies, in but a comparatively few years became the greatest of nations, as did the Hebrews in their day.

On the other hand those who turned against the religion of the Bible, were left desolate – their blessings became a curse to them. The hated Jews, for whom there is no spot on earth, are the best example. Germany, who led out in the Reformation but who turned back from it, has reaped a sorrowful harvest, too.

And what is true with the nations is, of course, just as true with individuals, homes, families, and communities.

If you will take a little time to observe, you will see this law of blessings and cursings in demonstration everywhere without exception.

The world was founded upon religion, and you can rest assured that when religion disappears from the earth, the world will disappear with it. Those who fall in love with the Truth will find that blessings will, reciprocally, fall in love with them. Let us read:

2 Thess. 2:8-12 – "And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit

of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming: even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the Truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the Truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

We see that if we do not fall in love with the Truth, deception is inevitable. No, none are deceived by coming in contact with error (for we are in contact with it anyway from the time we are born to the time we die), but everyone who does not love the Truth is sure to be deceived, regardless what he may do to avoid It.

And those who are satisfied with the Truth of yesterday, who are not looking for fresh Truth for today from the throne of God, not looking for "meat in due season," – such ones will find themselves in as terrible a predicament as did the Jews – spued out.

Deut. 30:15, 19 – "See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil:... I call Heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."

Example No. 6: If we fail to profit by what God tells us we shall fail as badly as, if not worse, as any who have failed before us. I think some of you who have had personal contact with God, know these things through experiences of your own. Doubtless you have found that you cannot long prevent explosion

while keeping fire and gunpowder in the same room; that you cannot serve the Devil and yet have peace and security. Let me illustrate this by an actual incident:

A certain man dreamed that a horse killed him by kicking him. To safeguard his life he ever after kept his distance from all horses. Nevertheless one windy day as he was walking down a street, he passed a blacksmith's establishment in front of which was hanging a sign with a horseshoe painted on it. The sign suddenly fell on his head and he died from the impact.

We can no more avoid the consequences of sin and of isolation from God, than could the dreamer avoid death by dodging it. We never know what the day will bring forth, and we cannot afford to isolate ourselves from God even for a moment. Neither can we say definitely that we will or will not do this, that, or the other.

Example No. 7: Some years ago while in Europe, I heard that one of my cousins had left for America. I then said to myself, "Poor cousin, I will never leave home and go to live anywhere as far away as America for any reason." But about that time, I, along with others, was falsely accused of conspiracy. It was in the season when the nights were long, and as we put on the lights in our store one morning before daylight, a mob gathered with guns and stones, and stormed the windows. So it was that just a few months after I took pity on my poor cousin's estrangement from his homeland I found myself in America in the same house with him. It was a great disappointment at first, no not lesser than Joseph's of old, but what a favor at last! God bless the mob!

Only God knows the future, and we should place our hopes and ambitions in His mighty hand. Then, and then only, will we come to the "top." And if we are tempted to say we will or will not do this or that, then let us remember Jonah: He said he would not bear a message to Nineveh, and straightway took a boat for Tarshish. But the boatmen threw him overboard and the great fish picked him up and brought him right back to the place whence he was trying to run away.

Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, thought to perpetuate his kingdom by ordering all his subjects to bow down to his golden image. The three Hebrews, though, defied his purpose and changed the course of history. The men who threw the Hebrews into the fiery furnace were themselves burned to death, but not a hair of the Hebrews' heads was singed all the time they remained inside the fiery furnace. Let us with the Psalmist lift up our voices and say:

Psalms 8:1-6 – "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth! Who hast set Thy glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast Thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that Thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger. When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the Son of man, that Thou visitest Him? For Thou hast made Him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned Him with glory and honour. Thou madest Him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under His feet."

The prophet Malachi was instructed to write for the people that were to live in the time of the end.

Let us read from chapter four:

Mal. 4:1-3 – "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts."

Is it not better to be a human being in God's order, a beautiful ever-living creature, than to be ashes under the soles of the saints? Why not now respond to His call and make life what it ought to be?

Verses 4-6 – "Remember ye the law of Moses My servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and He shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

Are you waiting, watching, praying and hoping that when this antitypical Elijah the prophet appears and calls on you, your heart be turned toward your children and their hearts toward you, or are you crawling under your shell, as it were, for fear that you be deceived if you should meet him?

Life, you see, is what you make it. Most people do not know how to make it better, but "if you know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

To summarize this study: We have learned that we have been put in this world for a purpose, that if we want salvation and blessings we must cooperate with God. This we can do by following the examples of God's Truth-hungering people. To enable us to do this He has seen to it that both the glories and calamities of both classes have been noted in His Book.

If we compare our works with Noah's works we will see whether we measure up with him in obeying present Truth. Neither the antediluvians nor the postdiluvians did profit from Noah's preaching. The former did not believe it possible to flood the earth and perished; the latter did not believe it possible for the earth not to be flooded again. They built the tower of Babel because they feared another flood although they were plainly told that there will be such a flood no more. God, though, not only destroyed their work, but also confounded their language, and in exchange gave them all different languages so that few could understand one another. If we work to fulfill God's plans for us we shall never be confused or confounded.

Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon at last saw these things as God sees them, but the hard way – not before God turned him loose for seven years to eat grass like the oxen. Later when he came to himself, he acknowledged God as the God Who rules both heaven and earth. Let us do better than did the King.

Then Belshazzar, the king who failed to profit by the experience of Nebuchadnezzar, over night lost himself, his kingdom and his all.

Ruler followed ruler and finally the kingdom passed to the Medo-Persians, then to the Grecians, next to the Romans and finally to the nations of today. The

nations, you see, belong to God, and He lets them be ruled by whomsoever He will.

The nations who came nearest to God and His teachings became great and respectable nations, and those who kept themselves away from Him are not much better than animals.

It is best to learn what God wants you to do, then do just that. Life truly is just what we make it – no less and no more. Now is your chance, now you are at the two cross roads. Which will it be for you? The wide, or the narrow, which?

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The Gifts of God

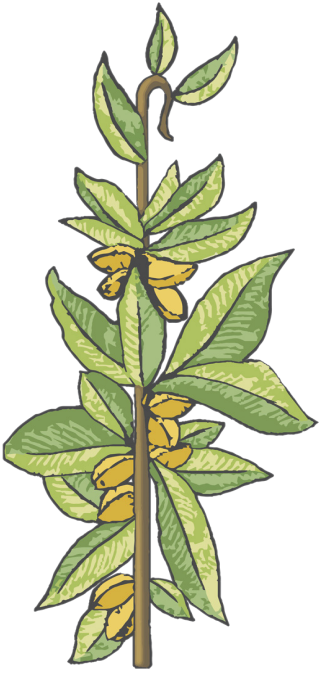
His gifts are greater than my
dreams,
The gifts of God to me;
As countless as the sunset's golden
beams,
As boundless as the sea.

I ask a part, He gives the whole–
Himself, and all beside;
His loving-kindness overflows my
soul,
Inrushing as the tide.

Within my heart He shall have place
To rule and reign supreme;
My voice will ever praise Him for
the grace
Of which I ne'er could dream.

His gifts are greater than my dreams,
The gifts of Him who set me free;
And more and more abundant daily
seems
The grace of God to me.
–J.B. Pounds

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