

THE WORD OF TRUTH

OTIS Q. SELLERS, Editor, MAY-JUNE, 1945

VOL. VIII, NO. 3

Table of Contents

- * A New Epoch
- * The Non- Covenant People
- * Truth From the Scriptures
- * The Scriptural Assembly
- * Lessons From Jeremiah
- * The Mystery of the Son
- * The Editor to His Friends

A NEW EPOCH

Those who know and understand the declaration of Paul in 2 Timothy 3:1 are fully aware that the days in which we live will be characterized by recurring periods of peril. These are called periods of peril because they are fraught with danger for the people of God. Those who are taught in the Word can recognize the approach of these and do not need to wait until they are in them. Preparations for periods of peril can be made well in advance. The warning signs are, certain conditions that exist in the world, certain conditions among the people of the world and certain deplorable spiritual conditions that manifest themselves among the professing people of God. During the past six months I have been deeply exercised by the Spirit of God as I have contemplated existing conditions. It is my settled conviction that all who "name the name of Christ" are passing into one of the most perilous periods that any company or generation of God's people have ever been called upon to go through.

When men, women and children become unusually selfish, when they become lovers of money, when they become unthankful and unholy, when immorality, intemperance, gambling and filthy conversation begin to be the chief characteristics of their lives, when these things become so commonplace that they are regarded as normal in the lives of people - then all who fear God and profess faith in Christ can be assured that they are approaching a period of peril. We may not indulge in a one of these things personally, we may hate and loathe them with all the strength of our being, nevertheless, since no man lives to himself, the presence of a flood of these things are perilous to all that we are and stand for as men of God. Furthermore, when we see a great increase in the *form* of godliness, when we see people ever learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth, then the true man of God can know of a certainty that the enemy is preparing a flood to send against him.

The war in Europe has come to a successful conclusion and our country is already in that period called reconversion. Having been spared some of the physical horrors of war, the task ahead is one of reconversion rather than reconstruction. From now on every day that passes will reveal more and more the frightful cost of this war. I do not mean the cost in lives and money, but in the frightful moral and spiritual consequences that irrevocably follow every war. The greater the war, the greater the consequences.

No one ever wins a war. Both sides in a war are losers even though one side is declared to be the victor and the other the vanquished. To engage in war brings frightful consequences even to the winning side, and we cannot expect to be exempt from these. Some of the effects of war are obvious and easily recognizable. Others are more subtle and obscure. No one can say just what effect a war of this kind has upon people. Time alone can reveal this, but we can state with conviction that most of the effects of war are bad and that everyone should take steps to counteract these in their own lives.

With all my heart I believe that the next quarter-century will be the most dangerous that men of God have ever been called upon to live through. There is proof enough in this in the fact that we must live in the aftermath of the most frightful war the world has ever known. Turmoil will be the chief characteristic of the postwar world. There will be international, national, social, political, governmental, moral and religious turmoil. Once this turmoil gets into the lives and thoughts of God's people, they will be incapacitated as workers and witnesses of God.

There is every evidence that God's people are no more ready to meet the crisis ahead than this nation was at the time of the attack upon Pearl Harbor. If most believers would obey the scriptural admonition to examine themselves, they would be shocked to discover how detached they have become from the things that are important with God. In the past four years their lives have been dominated and controlled by the cares of this world. Reconversion of their spiritual lives to meet the approaching storm is out of the question. Reconstruction is the need. But, like many cities of Europe, the rubble is so deep that reconstruction is impossible. A spiritual life must be built upon a new and more solid foundation. That foundation is a knowledge of the Word of God.

The threatening years ahead can be met only by a spiritual offensive. Our best defense is an offense. Those who know the truth and have been made free by it are in a most favorable position to begin a spiritual offensive against the rulers of the darkness of this world. We are free to be all that God's Spirit would have us to be. We owe allegiance to none but God. We have no commitments except to God. As individuals before God we should set our faces like flint and with a determination born of God should declare that we are going to give time, thought, and prayer to the task of becoming the most spiritual people that God has ever produced.

Is this goal too high? Would any set it lower? God forbid! It is not impossible. It is within our reach. It is the desire of God for us. It should be our desire for ourselves.

What I have written is not merely a passing thought. It is set forth as being an abiding principle of *The Word of Truth Ministry*. Out of necessity much of my ministry in the past has been expository. A foundation of truth had to be established. From now on a good part of this ministry will be exhortatory. I will seek for myself and for all my readers a definite place among those who can qualify under Paul's classification of, "You that are spiritual."

THE NON - COVENANT PEOPLE

Those who seek for a better understanding of the Word of God would be greatly helped if they could get a certain great general truth firmly fixed in their minds. Once this is done, a thousand and one difficult details of truth will take their proper place and cease to be difficult. This great general truth can be succinctly stated as follows.

From the creation of Adam to the call of Abraham, God was dealing with the race of men that came from Adam, that is, the human race. This period, from Adam to Abraham, covers two thousand years of human history and it is set before us in the first twelve chapters of Genesis. The methods that God used in that period in His dealings with man, the basis of His dealings, the way in which men obtained His blessings may not be fully clear. However, of this we can be sure: God was not dealing with the human race on the basis of covenants or agreements.

Many have tried to prove that God entered into a covenant or agreement with Adam and his descendants, then dealt with them on the basis of that agreement. But this is not true, for there is nothing in the first twelve chapters of Genesis to suggest that God entered into agreements or covenants with anyone except Noah. This agreement with Noah provided no basis upon which Noah could deal with God or obtain His favor. It was a one-sided covenant in which God promised never to flood the earth again. From that time Noah and his descendants could live secure in the knowledge that the whole earth would not be flooded a second time. Inasmuch as there was a definite promise in the declaration of God made to Noah, His declaration can rightly be called a covenant. Nevertheless, this covenant required nothing from man. God would never flood the earth again no matter what man did.

It is true that when God placed Adam in the garden, He declared certain great principles under which man had to live, but these principles cannot be called a covenant or agreement. After Adam sinned God announced a new set of principles under which man and his descendants must live, but these do not have the character of an agreement or covenant. At no time from Adam to Abraham did God deal with mankind on the basis of any covenant or agreement He had made with them.

At Genesis 12 we discover that God elected or chose Abraham in connection with His ultimate purpose to bless the world and the nations of the world. At the time of his choice an agreement was offered to Abraham under the terms of which he was to get out of his country, leave his relatives, even his nearest kinsmen, and go to a land that God would show him. As a result of this God would make of him a great nation, bless him, make his name great, bless all who blessed him, curse all who cursed, him, and bless all the families of the earth in him (Genesis 12:1-3). When Abraham arrived in the country to which God led him, God added to this agreement a promise to give the land to Abraham and his descendants (Genesis 12:7). Later, God established the rite of circumcision as the token or sign of the Abrahamic covenant, and the uncircumcised man among the descendants of Abraham was cut off from Abraham's seed (Genesis 17:6-14).

From Genesis 12 through the balance of the Old Testament, on through the period covered by the Gospels and on through the period covered by the book of Acts, we have before us in the word of God his dealings with the seed of Abraham, the covenant people. These are called the covenant people because God had made a covenant with Abraham and His seed, and this fact proclaims that all other people in that period between Genesis 12 and Acts 28 are non-covenant and non-elect people. If we trace out the dealings of God with the seed of Abraham in the period mentioned, we will find that all these dealings are based upon the covenant or agreement that God had made with Abraham and his seed after him. Instances abound where this covenant is referred to by either God or by some faithful Israelite. See Exodus 2:24-25; 32:13. When Jesus Christ appeared upon the earth, it was as "a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God to confirm the promises made unto the fathers (Romans 15:8)." However, it must be clearly seen and firmly kept in mind that it is only the seed of Abraham that is dealt with on the basis of covenants *or* agreements.

There are several illustrations that may help in making this plain. We can imagine Adam as being a small amount of water poured upon the earth, and as this begins to flow, imagine it adding to itself until it becomes a great flowing river. This river is in view until Genesis 12 when a tiny rill or brook is seen flowing from it and this in time forms a river of its own. This little brook, flowing away from the great river, that soon forms a river of its own is Abraham and his multiplied descendants. And at the moment this brook begins to flow the Scripture record ceases to follow the mighty river and begins to trace the little brook. From Genesis 12 to Acts 28 the people of Israel are predominantly in view. The river of Israel is required to flow in a fixed channel of covenants or agreements. The mighty Gentile river is permitted to select its own course. See Acts 14:16-17.

Or, in harmony with Shakespeare's words, as an illustration of this we might consider: the world as a stage and see the great drama of Biblical history acted out before our eyes. In doing this we would see Adam as he appears on the stage and watch as he develops into many nations. These nations out of Adam fill the stage during the first 2000 years of human history, then suddenly a lone actor appears. This lone actor is Abraham, who before he appeared was just another one of Adam's descendants but is now separated from them. At his appearance the others disappear from view. Then for the second 2000 years of human history the descendants of Abraham dominate every scene of the play until thirty-three years after the Cross. However, during the 2000 years that Israel dominates the scene of divine revelation, a Gentile actor now and then appears, plays his part and disappears from view. These are from the non-covenant people who are in the background while God's dealings with His covenant people are being portrayed. Their appearances are often ignored, but they teach us some of the most important lessons of Scripture.

The Man Melchizedek

In Genesis 14:18, with almost dramatic suddenness, there appears upon the scene a man named Melchizedek. The word *man* is used carefully here as this is the divine revelation of Hebrews 7:4. He is described as being king of Salem and declared to be a priest of the most-high God. The statement concerning him in Hebrews 7:3 has to do with his priesthood and not with the man himself. When Melchizedek stood before Abraham he blessed him, thus assuming spiritual superiority to Abraham, and in recognition of this superiority, Abraham gave him tithes.

This sets before us Melchizedek who had no covenant and Abraham who had the covenant. Melchizedek had no promises while Abraham had been given some great and precious promises. Abraham had been chosen by God while Melchizedek had been passed by. God had appeared to Abraham, but there is no record that he had appeared to Melchizedek.

In spite of all this, which would seem to put the man Melchizedek at a frightful disadvantage, the non-covenant man was spiritually superior to the covenant man. He was a priest of the most-high God, while Abraham was not. Melchizedek had no promises, but he was able to bless the one who did have the promises.(Hebrews 7:6). And, since "without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better" we see in this further proof of his superiority. Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek, but Melchizedek paid no tithes to Abraham.

From this incident we learn that God's election or choice of Abraham, the covenants He made with him, the promises He gave to Him, these gave Abraham no advantage over Melchizedek, neither did they place Melchizedek at any disadvantage. Abraham was the elect, covenant man who had the promises. Melchizedek was the non-elect, non-covenant man who had no promises, and yet Melchizedek was spiritually superior to Abraham in every way. Therefore, let us learn from this that God's election of some by sovereign grace, the fact that he gave them covenants and promises does

not in any way give them any spiritual advantage over those who do not possess these things. .

Thus it is that upon the stage we behold God dealing with Abraham and his seed on the basis of covenants or agreements, while behind the scenes God deals with the rest of mankind wholly apart from such things. Yet when they appear on the scene together, the man who had none of these things is better than the man who possessed them. In view of this, why should anyone whom God has not placed under a covenant seek to put themselves under a covenant, whether it be the Abrahamic, the Sinai or that new covenant that God made with the house of Israel and Judah. Since God is glad to deal with us on the basis of grace operating through faith, we should rejoice in this and not strive to change it.

The Man Abimelech

A highly illuminating fact in connection with God's election or choice of Abraham to be the father of a new nation is seen in the fact that God did not make choice of the best man at that time. Melchizedek was a better man as we have already seen, and there was another man upon earth at the time of Abraham's choice who was a more admirable character in many ways. When Abraham lied about his wife saying that she was his sister, Abimelech took her with the intention of making her his wife. What happened as a result is told in **Genesis 20:3-9**.

But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife. But Abimelech had not come near her: and he said, Lord, wilt thou slay also a righteous nation? Said he not unto me, She is my sister? and she, even she herself said, he is my brother: in the integrity of my heart and innocency of my hands have I done this.

And God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against Me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her. Now therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine.

Therefore Abimelech called Abraham, and said unto him, What hast thou done unto us? and what have I offended thee, that thou hast brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? thou hast done deeds unto me that ought not to be done.

Those who read this record cannot help coming to the conclusion that the non-elect Abimelech was a better man than the elect Abraham, that the man who had no covenants and promises was a more admirable character than the man who had these. Here was a righteous king ruling over a righteous nation and God was watching over him so that he would not sin in his ignorance. And what a lesson there is here as we see the man who had no covenants or promises rebuking the man who had these, saying to him: **Thou hast brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin. Thou hast done deeds unto me that ought not to be done.**

Pharaoh

The next non-covenant actor that we will consider is the Pharaoh of the Exodus. Here was a man who could have been everything that Melchizedek was. He could have been a righteous and God-fearing ruler like Abimelech. There was nothing to hinder him from being this. No obstacles were in his path. But his feet were set upon another path, and as he travels his self-chosen way we see him as

the persecutor of God's covenant people. This sin brought him under the word God had spoken to Abraham: "**I will curse them that curseth thee.**" This explains why God hardened his heart. However, it must be recognized that God did not harden his heart until after he became the persecutor of His covenant people.

Moses and Jethro

In Exodus 2 two more characters appear upon the scene, one a covenant man and the other a non-covenant man. The man who had the covenants was Moses, a descendant of Abraham. When he fled into the desert he came upon a non-covenant man who was the priest of Midian. His priestly name Reuel, meaning friend of God, and the fact that he made offerings and sacrifices to God (Exodus 18:12) shows that he was a priest of God and not a "heathen priest" as some have declared. Since Moses at that time was no priest, Jethro apart from circumcision, covenants and promises was more than Moses. Therefore, having none of these things was no disadvantage to Jethro. He was spiritually superior to anyone of the covenant people at the time he appears upon the scene.

The Wise Men

Passing out of the Old Testament and into the New we discover that there were certain "wise men" living in the East at the time of the birth of Christ and these were led by God to Jerusalem in search of the one who was born under the star. These were uncircumcised, non-covenant men who could claim no promises, nevertheless, they were in such close touch with God that they gave immediate response to his leadings. Some in Israel showed an equal faith, such as Simeon (Luke 2:25), but did not exceed the faith of the wise men.

The Syrophenician Woman and the Centurion

During the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus the only Gentiles who received anything from him was a Syrophenician woman who got her daughter healed (Matt. 15:21-28) and a centurion who secured healing for his servant. At first, both of these seekers for His blessings were handicapped by lack of covenants. The Lord had been sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, the covenant people. These Gentiles were not among that number so were at a disadvantage in seeking His favors.- But faith leaped over all these things and secured the blessings, demonstrating that lack of covenants and promises are no hindrance to the man of faith.

Abraham's Faith

The false teachers who had gone to Galatia had made much of the circumcision of Abraham and had taught the Galatian believers that if they desired to be like Abraham they would need to be circumcised. Paul refutes this argument by showing that the most majestic thing in the life of Abraham was not his choice by God, nor the covenants that God made with him, nor the promises God gave to him. **The magnificent thing about Abraham was his faith.** Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Galatians 3:6.

Continuing the apostle declares that they which are of faith are the sons of Abraham, that is, they are like him. Thus if they really desired to imitate Abraham, they should imitate that quality in him that gave his life a God-like character above all others, his faith. No one else could ever be what Abraham was. Only one could be chosen to be the father of a predetermined nation. However, in one matter which his election, covenants and promises did not touch, we can be equal to him. We too can

believe God.

The Grace Through Faith Basis

As we consider such men as Melchizedek, Abimelech, Jethro and the wise men, the question naturally arises concerning the methods of God's dealing with them and the basis upon which they obtained his favors. These men had no preachers, they possessed no Bible, there is no record that God appeared to them personally to bring them to Himself. How then did He deal with them? Concerning this, speculation would be irreverent and none should offer their opinions as if God has not spoken. He has spoken and the whole burden of divine revelation declares that when no other basis of dealing is revealed, the basis is divine grace operating in response to man's faith.

This is often misunderstood because of confused conceptions concerning faith. Divine faith is man's response to divine light, truth or word. These three are the same, but since Scripture uses these terms we need to do the same. Men had light and truth before they had the written word of God. God's word is both truth and light, and faith is man's response *to* these things.

The clearest revelation in regard to how this operated in Old Testament times among non-covenant people is found in the first chapter of John's gospel. In order to understand this we must fully realize that John 1:14 speaks of the birth of Christ, His advent into this world, and that all that *comes* before this must be before the Word was made flesh and dwelt upon the earth.

It is declared that in the beginning was the Word or Expression and that this Expression was in relationship to God and was God. Men before the *Cross* were not without a revelation of God, unless the Expression failed to express or reveal God. This is unthinkable. The Expression was the Creator and in Him was life. If men desired life, there was a place to go and get it from the beginning. This life was the light of men, so it is folly to think that men were without light before the Cross. It is *true* they were in darkness, but a *true* light was shining in that darkness. The darkness failed to comprehend it, lay hold of it or make any use of it. The ministry of John is mentioned as a witness to the light, after which it is declared that the Expression was "the *true* Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world".

In view of this emphatic declaration it cannot be truthfully said that any man lacked the *true* light to which *God* would have him respond. When men respond to light, when they act upon it, it is faith in the highest meaning of that term and God always acts in response to faith.

The statement, "He was in the world" is usually taken to be a statement that became *true* when the Word was made flesh. This is a mistake. The pronoun "He" refers to the Expression, the Creator, the *true* Light. Throughout the Old Testament this One is seen in the world. We cannot close our eyes to the fact that He was in the world, the very world that He created but the world failed to recognize Him.

"He came unto His own," means His own things, the things He had created. This does not refer *to* Israel any more than it refers to any other part of His creation. That His own creation received Him not is the great declaration of Romans 1:21-32. The world of things and men was always unfriendly to the Expression of God. Even His own people Israel rejected Him in Old Testament times.

But as many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become the children of God. Among these we have considered such as Melchizedek, Abimelech, Jethro and the wise men. In response to their light they received the Expression to God. In response to our light we receive the Expression who was made flesh. Their light revealed to them the Expression. Our light reveals to us the same Expression. Their response to their light was equivalent to receiving Him. Our response to our light is equivalent to receiving Him. It is difficult today to know the exact nature of their light. It is not

difficult for us to know the nature of our light. Our light is the record God has given of His Son. To fail to believe this is to make God a liar. To believe the record is to enter into life and relationship with the Father.

How happy we should be that our lot is cast among the non-covenant people. Especially so in this day when no covenant that relates to men is operative. We need no covenants and we need no promises. All we need is the Word of God and by faith in this revelation we can open the storehouse of God and receive every blessing He has for us.

God is the source of every blessing. Christ is the channel through whom these blessings flow. The best way to obtain these blessings is by His grace operating in response to our faith. This is "the faith" way.

The End

TRUTH FROM THE SCRIPTURES

(Continued from Vol. 8, No. 2)

FOUR FUTURE RESURRECTIONS (Continued)

The Out-resurrection of Philippians 3:11

In the third chapter of the Philippian epistle Paul sets forth a series of spiritual steps he had taken or was in the process of taking. The purpose of these steps he declares to be:

If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Philippians 3:11.

We have already considered three resurrections, but the one Paul was seeking to attain cannot be any of these. And if the passage is permitted to stand as translated in the *King James Version* it is so radically opposed to the whole testimony of Scripture that it creates insurmountable difficulties. Paul believed in and proclaimed a resurrection "both of the just and of the unjust." Since resurrection does not depend in any manner upon forgiveness, justification or attainments, it is evident that Paul would have been raised from the dead whether he attained to anything or not.

When the Apostle wrote to the Thessalonians and Corinthians some years before this, he was as sure of a good resurrection as he was of his redemption. He expressed the hope of being raptured and changed without passing through the process of death and resurrection, but if it were his lot to fall asleep resurrection was sure and certain. Why then would Paul speak of making such great sacrifices in order to "attain to the resurrection of the dead."

Some have concluded that the best solution of this problem is to interpret this resurrection as a spiritual experience, that is, a life lived in conformity with the death and resurrection of Christ. This I am unable to accept for definite scriptural reasons. The verse that precedes the one we are considering sets forth four great spiritual experiences. These are to know Him, to know the power of His resurrection, to know the... fellowship of His sufferings, to be made conformable unto His death. It is not logical to think that the Apostle would state that he was seeking to pass through four great spiritual experiences in order to attain to another great spiritual experience. If any resurrection in Scripture is to be understood as a literal and actual experience, then this one should be.

When we come upon a passage such as this, there is nothing that is more satisfying than a firm and settled conviction in the great fact of verbal inspiration. In considering this passage we can be thankful that we heartily and unhesitatingly accept the microscopic accuracy of God's living Word.

Translators may have bungled their work, thus stripping the passage of its distinctive truth, but we can go to the original in our search for the truth that God has revealed.

There are two important words in this passage that demand consideration. These are *kantantao*, which is translated "attain", and *exanastasin*, which is translated resurrection. The meaning of *kantantao* is clearly established by another passage in which it appears - Acts 27:12. There it means to advance on a journey with the thought of arrival included.

In Philippians 3:11 we have the only occurrence of the word *exanastasin*. The word for resurrection is usually *anastasin*, but here it is *anastasin* with the prefix *ex*. This prefix is an accelerative contribution to the word *anastasin*, and there is only one direction in which it can accelerate. It accelerates in regard to time making this an earlier -resurrection.

We have already considered that resurrection that occurs at the end of the kingdom eon (Rev. 20:5), but it is evident that Paul did not mean this one when he spoke of attaining to the earlier resurrection. We also considered the resurrection that takes place before the kingdom eon, on the last day of this present evil eon (John 6:40) but this cannot be the one Paul desired to attain. Then there is the resurrection, which the Scripture has dated as occurring at the last trump (1 Cor. 15:52), but Paul cannot be speaking of that one for he had already attained that resurrection. His words in 1 Thessalonians 4 and 1 Corinthians 15 show that he had no doubt about his part in it. It was his hope as a partaker of the heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1). But according to his statement in Philippians 3:11, he desires to advance from that resurrection that takes place at the last trump and to attain to an earlier resurrection. Philippians 3:11 may be idiomatically translated as follows:

If by any means, I might advance to the earlier resurrection, the one which is out from among the dead.

In regard to the time of this resurrection, no time can be given. Since it is in no way linked up with any other event it cannot be related to these in order to establish the time when it will occur.

Of this we may be sure: It must precede that resurrection that takes place "at the last trump" being an *exanastasis* or earlier resurrection.

As to the subjects of this resurrection it is evident that they are the members of a special out-calling designated as being the church, which is His body. Their destiny is revealed to be "far above all that is of the heavens."

From the things we have considered concerning resurrection we are now able to make the following summary:

1. The resurrection of Jesus Christ - the first fruits of them, which are asleep. This is an accomplished fact, therefore, is not a future resurrection.

2. The resurrection of the church, which is His body. This will take place after "the salvation of God" returns to Israel but before the resurrection that occurs at the last trump. This resurrection establishes and makes a reality of that witness and memorial to God's grace, which is an essential factor in the coming eons.

3. The resurrection of the heavenly calling. Hebrews 3:1. This takes place "at the last trump." 1 Cor. 15:53. The subjects are Abraham's seed "like the stars," and it includes the Gentiles of the Acts period who are "blessed with Abraham" and who are partakers of Israel's spiritual things.

4. The resurrection of the earthly calling. Ezekiel 37:11-14. This takes place on the last day of the present evil eon. John 11:23-24. There are no Gentiles in this except a few who became proselytes in Old Testament times. The subjects are Abraham's seed "like the sands of the sea."

5. The final resurrection. Revelation 20:5. This is the "general resurrection" as it includes all the

dead who were not raised in any previous resurrection. Those raised in it will either enter into the new heavens and new earth or be destroyed. The judgment of the great white throne will decide this.

THE SCRIPTURAL ASSEMBLY

It is my sincere conviction that whenever and wherever possible *the* people of God should assemble themselves together at stated times for the purpose of mutual worship, fellowship, instruction and encouragement in the things of God. Those who love God will spontaneously love those who are born of God, and to seek the fellowship of those we love in Christ. This should be the normal desire of every believer. God's people should never forsake the assembling of themselves together, and no surmountable difficulty should ever be permitted to interfere with the assembling of God's saints. Where even two are gathered together in the name of Christ, He will be in their midst to bless their assembly. The idea that this can only be done in a church, or that it can best be done in a church is foreign to the truth of God. In view of His promise to be in the midst of every assembly that gathers in His name, we should avail ourselves of every opportunity to assemble in the name of Christ.

I not only believe this and proclaim it. I practice it in my life as well. My circumstances are such that I have excellent opportunities to gather with some of God's people in several cities. I am identified with and a part of three different assemblies, and as the opportunity presents itself, I meet with other assemblies, doing so with the assurance that I am one with them in the things of God and Christ. I am never a stranger or an outsider when I am among those who are in touch with God through Christ.

However, out of and away from the simple scriptural truth of men assembling together in the name of Christ has grown a multitude of ecclesiastical organizations, most of them called churches that are far removed from the idea of a true scriptural assembly. In fact, so far removed that when the white light of God's word is turned upon them they are seen to be unscriptural assemblies and some are even assemblies of Satan. Those who give these assemblies or churches a place in their lives have incorporated into their lives a thing with which God can have no fellowship.

One does not need to look very far to find churches that are satiated, rich and powerful. Those that are not this way are making every effort to become so. These do not assemble out of any desire for common worship nor to be of help to one another in their personal devotional relations with God in and through Christ. In them we find false claims such as claiming divine authority, claiming to be divine organizations or insisting that attendance at their services gives one merit before God. We often find in them unscriptural programs, unscriptural rituals and unscriptural messages. They seek to discourage all personal study in the Word of God and claim that perfection of truth is embodied in their creed or articles of faith. They are not open to any change, development or progress so far as truth is concerned, and they are unable to receive any ministry of the Word in correction or reproof. All who seek to make progress in the truth of God must soon part company with these churches. .

Thousands of people realize the truth of these things and readily confess that they are so. Nevertheless, they support these churches by their attendance and gifts and excuse it by saying that "one should go to some church." Such an idea is dishonoring to the truth of God and is unworthy of our high calling in Christ.

No man should attend or support an unscriptural assembly. I do not believe that "a bad church is better than none at all" as one correspondent declares. An apostate church is far worse than none at all. It misrepresents and dishonors God. It bears the name of the Lord, but it bears it in vain.

While there are great advantages resulting from a believer assembling himself with those of like precious faith, yet if attendance at a scriptural assembly is impossible God will deprive the believer of no blessing because of this. It is not that God wants His people to "go to church". He wants them to assemble on a scriptural basis in the name of Christ, And if an assembly is not a scriptural one, God would not want His people there at all. It is therefore imperative on the part of all who would be spiritual in this matter to give careful thought to the matter of the scriptural assembly.

God, in His Word, calls upon His people to reason, consider, think, meditate and study. This is His will for us, and these represent the hardest tasks He lays upon us. But most of His people refuse to do these things. Therefore, we see on every hand a worship and service that is unreasonable, unconsidered and thoughtless. In regard to the subjects dealt with in the Word of God their opinions have already been formed by circumstances and traditions. They speak their minds about a subject without even considering that God has revealed His mind about it. To them, what they believe IS the truth, so why should they study in the hope of obtaining the truth. They consider all attempts to bring them the truth as being presumptuous, something like "carrying coal to Newcastle". Believing that they possess truth in abundance and perfection, they will not seek for it. This is the attitude of many professing Christians, and it acts as a barrier to doing that God appointed work expressed in the words *reason, consider, think, mediate, and study*.

In this article I would direct the minds of my readers toward a consideration of the subject of "**the church**", a scriptural subject if there *ever* were one. In considering any subject we must always be completely honest, and because of traditions and prejudices we must exercise great care if we are to be honest in dealing with this one. All who consider this subject should examine their beliefs by some questions such as these:

1. Are my beliefs and practices concerning the church based upon the revelation God has given?
2. Do my beliefs and practices come from the Word, or have I read them into it?
3. Are my beliefs and practices concerning the church the fruit of considering all the truth, or are they based upon consideration of only part of it?
4. Have I gone to the Word to secure the truth, or did I go to it to find support for opinions and practices already determined upon?
5. If upon turning to the Word to consider all that is revealed there I should be granted the truth as a result, would I receive it, walk in it and be willing to accept all the consequences that come from following such a course. Or, would I put it aside because it clashed with my established views and practices?

The Word "**CHURCH**"

If one who is unfamiliar with the English language should refer to the dictionary in order to find the meaning of the word "church," he would probably find the following definitions given in the order of their importance.

1. A building set apart for public Christian worship.
2. A place of worship of any religion, as a Jewish temple or Mohammedan mosque.
3. The collective body of professing Christians.
4. A body of Christian believers holding the same creed, observing the same rites and acknowledging the same authority.
5. A formally organized body of professed Christian believers worshipping together.

Since the use of a word governs its meaning, the correctness of these definitions of the English word *church* can hardly be doubted. The word *church* is constantly and prominently used of buildings that are set apart for public worship. In fact this is its most common use. It is also used to designate any building set apart for religious purposes whether used by Christians, Jews or Mohammedans. In fact, in some sections of the United States of America, places where funerals are held are called "Funeral Churches." It is also used of the collective body of professing Christians, by which all professing Christians are called "the church." It is used of a denomination and also of a single organization. These are the ideas that come to the mind of the average American when the word *church* falls upon his ear. By common use in the United States, the word church primarily means (1) a building, (2) a denomination, (3) or a single organization within or without a denomination.

Many who read these lines will insist that the word *church* does not mean any of these things to them, insisting that they see in this word much more than anything set forth in the dictionary. This may be true, nevertheless, if such a meaning is attached to the word *church*, then that meaning was not gained from common use. Therefore, if the meaning you attach to the word *church* came from the Word of God, very good; only we should be willing to make sure that we have the accurate truth that God has revealed upon this subject. Many talk about "the mystical church" or "the mystical body of Christ," but these things are entirely mystical and not scriptural. They are as foreign to Scripture as the "funeral church" already mentioned.

When I read in the word of God such statements as "I will build My church," "Christ is the head of the church," "Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it," and "the church which is His body," it is utterly impossible for me to believe that the word *church* here can mean a building, or a denomination, or a single organization, or the sum total of professing Christians. And if any reader should say, "Neither does anyone else; you are attacking a man of straw," I would answer by saying that they are ignorant of the beliefs held by many men. These scriptural statements are constantly applied to organizations and denominations.

The Word "EKKLESIA"

Since, as stated before, by common use in the United States the word *church* primarily means a building, or a denomination or an organization, then there is no word in the Greek that corresponds to our word *church*. Therefore, the word *church* is not a satisfactory translation of the Greek word *ekklesia* since it stands for ideas that the Greek word does not represent. The word *church*, has gathered to itself much that is foreign to the word *ekklesia*. The Greek word is a common noun, while the English word, to a great extent, has become a proper name.

Out of 115 occurrences of the word *ekklesia* in the New Testament it has been translated by the word *church* 112 times and *assembly* three times. From this it would appear that the translator who did the work on Acts 19 (there were many translators working on the *King James Version*) refused to conform to the common practice of his fellow translators to render *ekklesia* by the word *church* in every occurrence regardless of the place it occurs or of its context.

An examination of everyone of the 115 occurrences of the Greek word *ekklesia* will reveal the following facts:

In its simplest and primary meaning *ekklesia* means an assembly of people. If the word always stood alone without a context, that is the most it would ever mean. However, every occurrence has its own context and from this we can determine the nature, character, purpose and power of the assembly.

In its highest and most complex meaning it signifies an out-calling. Some out-callings could

assemble, but some by their very nature cannot assemble and never have assembled so far as this earth is concerned.

In Acts 19:23-41 we have the inspired record of the actions of the riotous mob of silversmiths in Ephesus. These men were all worshippers of the goddess Diana, and they made silver replicas of their goddess, which was very profitable for them. Feeling that their trade was endangered by the message of Paul, they laid hold of two of Paul's companions and rushed with one accord into the theatre. This unity of purpose and thought constituted them an *ekklesia* in the scriptural use of that term and they are called this in the inspired record. We read in **Acts 19:32** that "**the assembly (*ekklesia*) was confused**. Therefore, if *ekklesia* means "church" then this howling mob was a church.

When the townclerk had quieted the mob, he rebuked them for their rash conduct declaring that these men were neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of the goddess, also, that if the silversmiths had any real grievance against anyone it would be determined in a lawful assembly (*ekklesia*). The assembly in the theatre was not a .legal assembly (*ekklesia*), nevertheless it was an assembly (*ekklesia*), for we are told that when the townclerk "had thus spoken he dismissed the assembly (*ekklesia*)."

Since Luke, the writer of Acts, wrote as inspired by the Holy Spirit, it is plain that he was directed by the Spirit to call that riotous mob in Ephesus an *ekklesia*, the very word which is translated "church" 112 times. These three occurrences of *ekklesia* in Acts 19 are sufficient to demonstrate the absolute necessity of examining the context of every occurrence of the word *ekklesia* in order to discover the character, nature and purpose of the *ekklesia* under consideration. This passage also proves that any and every company of people (good or bad) assembled together are an *ekklesia* or church.

"But, would you call an unruly mob a church ?", someone is sure to object.

No, I would not refer to an unruly mob as a church. The word *church* in English does not mean a mob, although I have seen some "church" meetings wherein the people acted as an unruly mob. However, the Spirit of God called the unruly mob in Ephesus an *ekklesia*, and I will not close my eyes to this fact. If *ekklesia* means "church" then an unruly mob is a "church" by usage of that word by the Spirit. But, let no one think that I am advocating calling a mob a church. All I desire to demonstrate is that every time the word *ekklesia* occurs it must be carefully considered in the light of its context and qualifying terms.

My Church

In the first occurrence of this word in the New Testament, our Lord declared:

Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Matthew 16:18.

What our Lord meant by these words is to be found in the circumstances under which these words were spoken.

While engaged in intimate conversation with His disciples, the Lord put to them two pertinent questions. The answers to the first question, "Whom do men say that I am?" revealed the utter failure of the people of Israel to recognize Him. Some said He was John the Baptist, some said Elijah, while others said Jeremiah or one of the prophets. This made it clear that they knew Him not. But, how was it with the twelve whom he had chosen. Did they hold the popular notion, which made Him to be only one among other men of God. Therefore, with great intensity of feeling He put to them the question, "But whom say YE that I am?" This question was addressed to all the disciples and was answered by Peter. Speaking for twelve, he declared, "thou art the Christ (Messiah), the Son of the

living God." This confession was welcomed by the first personal blessing the Lord conferred:

Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven. Matthew 16:17.

Inasmuch as the Lord had already declared that, "no one knows the Son save the Father," He now declares that Peter had been taught this by the Father. What the people thought of Him were the mere thoughts of flesh and blood, the thoughts of mortal human beings, but what Peter and the twelve believed about Him was from the Father in heaven.

Following this declaration He spoke the words that declared His purpose to build His church (*ekklesia*). What He meant by this declaration is easily understood once we cease to read our own fanciful ideas into them. The nation of Israel, the chosen people, had repudiated His offer of Himself as their king, therefore, it is now His purpose to form those who do receive him into a distinct assembly or out-calling.

An assembly (*ekklesia*) was not a new thing. There had been assemblies (*ekklesia*) in the Old Testament. But that He was to make a division in Israel and form a new assembly out of those who received Him was an unexpected announcement. Some, reasoning apart from all the facts, take it for granted that there was no church (*ekklesia*) before the Lord made this announcement. That this is a mistake can be readily seen by reading **Acts 7:38**, where it is said in reference to Moses:

This is he that was in the church (ekklesia) in the wilderness with the angel which spoke to him in Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, who received the living oracles to give unto us.

Since the *ekklesia* in the wilderness existed in Old Testament times, and since the *ekklesia* our Lord declared He would build was future it is evident that these two churches (*ekklesia*) are not the same. From this we learn that there are at least two churches in the Word of God. And if two, there could be three or thirty, the only limit being those imposed by divine revelation.

In view of these scriptural facts it can be seen that all such questions as "When did the church begin?" and "Will the church go through the great tribulation?" are foolish and unlearned questions which should be avoided (2 Tim. 2:23.) In all kindness, I declare these questions to be this, inasmuch as they can never be answered or they can be answered both ways. These questions show that those who ask them have the idea that the church is one thing and only one thing.

A question such as "Do you think the sun will shine today?" is entirely proper, there being only one sun. But, a question as "Do you think the star will shine tonight?" is utterly childish - unless the one asking the question has previously designated the star to which he is referring. Even so, the questions "When did the church begin?" and "Will the church go through the great tribulation?" are childish unless one makes it plain of which church he is asking. And if he says "The New Testament Church" as so many do, I can only answer by saying that there are numerous churches in the New Testament. This has to be believed when one reads such statements as "the churches of God, which in Judea are in Christ Jesus," or "the churches of the Gentiles" or "the churches in Galatia." See 1 Thess. 2:14, Romans 16:4, Galatians 1:2. There was a church (*ekklesia*) on earth in Old Testament times. There will be a church (*ekklesia*) on earth in the great tribulation. Therefore, those who try to begin the church at Pentecost and get it removed from the earth before the great tribulation begins must close their eyes to some very obvious truths of Scripture.

It is true that there was a church (*ekklesia*) that had its public beginning at Pentecost, and there is another church (*ekklesia*) that did not begin until after the salvation of God was sent to the Gentiles at Acts 28:28. In view of this the careful student is made to realize more and more the need of obeying the divine command set forth in Philippians 1:10 (A.S.V. margin) "to distinguish the things that differ." In spite of this exhortation, many persist in spending their efforts to prove that all

churches in the New Testament are the same.

When the Lord declared that He would build His church (*ekklesia*) it was apparent that His intimate disciples would be the nucleus around which it would be formed. If He had said nothing more, then His church would have been only a simple assembly of Jews that believed. But He said more, and by His words He conferred upon that assembly of men divine authority, a fact that gives it a uniqueness not possessed by any other church. **And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Matthew 16:19.**

These words changed the character of that *ekklesia* from a simple assembly of believing Israelites to the most powerful assembly that has ever existed or will ever exist upon the earth. This assembly became Christ's representative upon earth, and the Principal accepted full responsibility for all acts of His agent.

Later, acting upon the great principle of "calling the things that are not as if they were," Christ repeated these words in connection with the discipline in that assembly that He had declared he would build, and to the power they already possessed he added still more:

Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. Matthew 18:19.

This church had its private beginning after the resurrection of Christ when He appeared to the disciples:

Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained. John 20:21-23.

From all this we learn that this church was divine as to its architect, divine as to its building, divine as to its power, divine as to its authority, divine as to its membership and divine as to its ministry, service and assemblies. No man ever had one thing to do with any of these features in this church. Everyone of these features were in that church, but all of them together cannot be found in any other church - not even the church which is His body. For example, the church which is His body, God's present out-calling, does not possess divine authority over its members. It cannot bind upon earth and have its act ratified in heaven, neither can it remit nor retain sins. The church the Lord spoke of building in Matthew 16:18 did possess divine control over its members and over certain assemblies that did not possess power equal to it. This was the Church of God, which is seen in operation from the day of Pentecost until the close of the Acts period. The assemblies of the Gentiles were subject to the Church of God in the Acts period.

From what we have considered thus far the following truths stand out. The Greek work *ekklesia* means a company of people in its simplest sense and an out-calling in its highest sense. The nature of the assembly and the nature of the out-calling must be obtained from the context and the qualifying terms. There are a number of assemblies and out-callings in the Word of God.

As an illustration, consider the English word *president*. This word can mean little or much. If *your* young son comes to you and announces that he and his five friends have formed a club and he has been elected president, the word means very little. In fact, so little that the very idea may bring on an inward smile. But if we say of a man that he is president of *Standard Oil* or *General Motors*, the word takes on a new significance and declares his high place in a vast industrial empire. Furthermore, if we say of a man that he is president of the United States, we have used this word in the highest possible sense that, it can be used in this country. However, in all cases there is no

difference in the word; it is in the qualifications and contexts that we find the difference.

As previously stated, the Greek word *ekklesia* occurs 115 times and it is the same word in every occurrence. Nevertheless, the context gives it meanings ranging all the way from a heathen mob to the out-calling which is His body. Therefore, we are able to make the following distinctions.

1. In Acts 19 the word *ekklesia* is used of an unruly mob of silversmiths and of a legally constituted court. This demonstrates that the word means an assembly.

2. In such places as Romans 16:4 and Galatians 1:2 it is used of companies of Gentiles who assembled together because of their common faith in Jesus Christ. There is nothing to indicate that these assemblies were organized, that they had elected officers or that they owned any property. These assemblies were the natural outgrowth of the reception of the gospel by individuals.

3. When qualified by the word *My* in reference to Christ as in Matthew 16:18, vested with divine authority and provided with God given officers, the word *ekklesia* takes on its highest possible significance in regard to an earthly assembly. This is the Church of God of the Acts period; a church that will be reconstituted when God resumes His dealings with His ancient people Israel once again.

4. In the Ephesian and Colossian epistles the word *ekklesia* is used in reference to a company of people designated as the out calling, which is His body. This has never yet assembled, cannot now assemble, and will not be assembled until it takes its place as a witness to transcendent grace far above all heavens. This can be called an assembly only because it will be that when its destiny is reached.

Present Truth

When men have been brought to a knowledge of God through faith in Jesus Christ it is most reasonable and spiritual that they assemble themselves together. By so doing, they automatically produce assemblies or *ekklesias*. These assemblies can be the most wonderful instruments for God if they remain scriptural assemblies. For the good of the assembly they may find it wise to legally incorporate or to formally organize themselves. Once this is done they can decide who shall be a part of the corporation and organization and who shall not. In so doing they are not usurping any of the prerogatives of God since no present day assembly is a divine institution. However, it seems that once men come together they are unwilling to be simple scriptural assemblies of God's people, but, like Simon the sorcerer "who gave out that himself was some great one" (Acts 8:9) these assemblies begin to claim divinity, rights and powers which they do not possess. They make attendance upon their meetings a work of righteousness and non-attendance to be a sin. They ransack the Bible to find scriptural names for their officers, and intimate that there is no salvation outside of the church. They presume to dictate what one should believe and how he is to live if he would please God. Some of them claim to be churches of God and others claim to be churches of Christ. False claims and unscriptural assumptions are their chief characteristics. They claim divinity and assume supremacy over and above the Word of God. Thus it is that they become unscriptural assemblies, even assemblies of Satan.

The true cause for men assembling together should be their common faith in and love for the Lord Jesus. As an assembly they should seek personal devotional relations with God in and through Christ and fellowship with others who are likewise in touch with God, through Christ. The assembly should be dominated, motivated and controlled by the Word of God. This Word makes much of God, much of Christ and much of the word that God has spoken. An assembly in tune with the Word will do the same. Far too many churches make everything of the church and little of God, Christ and the Word. The individual believer must judge for himself whether existing ecclesiastical organizations measure up to the divine ideal of the scriptural assembly.

THE END

LESSONS FROM JEREMIAH

Preface

In the preparation of these studies, I have been helped greatly by the following volumes: *The Rotherham Version of the Old Testament*, *The Companion Bible* and a commentary titled *Jeremiah* by E. H. Broadbent. In my judgment, possibly fallible, I am inclined to feel that E. H. Broadbent was himself helped by *The Companion Bible*, or it may have been that Mr. Broadbent and the author of *The Companion Bible* both received help from the same sources.

INTRODUCTION

The ministry of Jeremiah in Jerusalem covered a forty-year period. It ended with the destruction of that city. It was a probationary period during which the threatened judgment could be averted by the repentance of the people. In this it corresponds to another great probationary period of forty years from the death of Christ to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus: Jeremiah's ministry-ended 477 years before the birth of Christ.

Jeremiah was one of the greatest prophets sent by God to the descendants of Israel. And since their mission and ministry was to a nation, these prophets were statesmen in Israel.

The greatest asset of any nation is its statesmen. If a nation has just one man who is versed in the principles of government, one who shows unusual wisdom in treating or directing great public matters, and if such a one is influential in shaping its thoughts and policies, he alone will make his nation great. Statesmen need to know and to have been taught by the lessons of the past, they must be able to judge and appraise the present and suggest proper action, and, as best they can, they must be able to peer into the future and direct their nation in regard to its long term policies. If a nation has such men among its leaders, its present prosperity and future place is assured. If it lacks such men, or if it fails to hear them, it cannot endure for long.

Such men as Jeremiah, Isaiah and Ezekiel were statesmen in Israel. They were statesmen who were raised up and endowed by God. They were not the product of national situations, human circumstances or training. God raised them up and their wisdom was divine. Their interpretation of the past was taught to them by God; their appraisal and judgment of the present was also of God, and their knowledge of the future was so accurate that their predictions were perfect. They appeared in Israel to give the people vision. But when the people rejected their message they had no vision and soon perished.

Jeremiah was a true prophet raised up by God at a time when Israel's declension and apostasy had almost reached its climax. He was a true patriot, possessing great love for his nation and his people. His prophecy brings before us many lessons that are especially needed today. To his person and message we now give our attention.

His Person 1:1

The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin.

Jeremiah was the son of Hilkiah of the priests in Anathoth. His father was not the high priest although he had the same name. The high priest was of the line of Eleazer, whereas the priests at Anathoth were of the house of Ithamar. His family lived on its ancient inheritance at Anathoth, three miles northeast of Jerusalem. He was a priest, and as such had all the rights and honors that pertained to the priesthood in Israel. This was no small honor. In fact, to be a priest in Israel was to hold a most favored position. However, if the priest were faithful, his position could be an exceedingly difficult one if his lot were cast in the days of Israel's unfaithfulness.

All of God's servants can learn a lesson from this. What a marvelous position a man would hold if he were a teacher of truth in a day when men desired truth above all else! What an honor it would be to be a proclaimer of the Word of God if men turned to the Word and desired the Word! But to be a teacher of the Word in a day when men will not endure sound teaching, to be a proclaimer of the Word in a day when men have turned aside to fables (stories) is to undertake the most difficult task that a man can choose. In view of this, the inclination of many is to lower the message to the level of the people. Nevertheless, in that day when men will not endure the Word, the true servant will not look about for some message that men can and will endure, He will be faithful to his commission and proclaim the Word.

Jeremiah's Call- Its Time and Duration, 1:2-3

To whom the word of the Lord came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah king .of Judah, unto the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month.

Josiah began his reign over Israel when he was only eight years of age. Jeremiah's ministry began in the thirteenth year of his reign (when Josiah was 21) and continued after Josiah's death. The order of the kings at this time was Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoachin and Zedekiah. 2 Chronicles 34, 35 and 36 should be read here. Even in the days of Josiah, the ministry of Jeremiah was very unpopular with the people. Nevertheless, the sympathy and protection of this good king could be counted on: But it also continued through the times of the idolatrous kings who followed Josiah. Under their rule both king and people would be hostile to his message. In spite of this Jeremiah remained a faithful steward and proclaimed the message of God at the opportune time and at the inopportune time (in season and out of season, 2 Tim. 4:2). Thus the record of his life gives us a true picture of what may take place if a man determines to be loyal in a day of disloyalty, to be deep in a day of superficiality, to be faithful when most men seek to be successful, to seek the things of Christ when all men seek things of their own. May God give to writer and reader alike a great portion of that Spirit that he gave to Jeremiah. This day calls for men of his character and spirit.

Jeremiah's Commission. 1:4-5

Then the word of the Lord came unto me saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou earnest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations .

At this point Jeremiah begins to relate his experience. He begins with that event which changed his whole life. The word of the Lord came unto him. From that moment on he could never again be the

same. This mighty cause (the word) could not but produce a profound effect. The coming of the Word of God into the life will work a change in any man. It will produce in the life those qualities, which satisfy and glorify the Father. Very few who name the Name of Christ can prove that they are what they are because of the Word of God. They would have been what they are if they had never seen a Bible. Circumstances and accidents of birth have made them what they are. They believe they reached perfection of truth upon the first day they confessed Christ. Therefore they could never be taught, reproved, corrected or disciplined by the Word of God. They cannot permit it to perform its ministry in their lives. (2 Tim. 3:15-16).

This was not so with Jeremiah. The entrance of the Word of God into his life worked a profound change. It will do so for every man that truly opens his mind to the Word. And, best of all, the changes it will work will be divine. For it is a fact that many other things will change a man, even for the better. New interests may make a drunkard forget his drink, but this is not a divine change, desirable as it may be. The only divine changes are those that are wrought by the entrance of God's Word. This gives light. This gives understanding to the simple.

The Lord revealed to Jeremiah his knowledge of him before he was ever formed in the body of his mother, the separation of him before his birth and His designation or appointment of him to be a prophet to the nations. This describes his ministry after the fall of Israel, as seen in the seven last chapters of the prophecy that bears his name.

One writer sees in this the teaching of predestination, and he spreads this specific case out as if the same were true of all men. It is plainly true that God's predetermination of Jeremiah is surely revealed here. However, here it applies only to Jeremiah, and this specific message must not be spread out as if it were true of every man.

Jeremiah Replies. 1:6

Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.

At the time of his call, Jeremiah was quite young and he confessed his inability to speak. This was the truth, for he was immature in years and was lacking in experience and natural ability. But it is evident that God was not seeking for an efficient and able man of mature years. He was seeking for one who would faithfully speak His message.

Above all, this is what God wants in those who serve Him today. He will bless and use the education and ability of any man when these are laid at His feet. He will turn no one away because of their lack of these things. But, whether educated or ignorant, whether capable or incapable, God wants men who will take His Word and carry it to others.

The Lord Answers Jeremiah. 1:7-8

But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord. .

Jeremiah was not to consider his own youth, inexperience or weakness, but to be willing to go where the Lord sent him and speak the words which the Lord commanded him. He is not to be afraid of their faces, that is, not to be afraid of men. Here, by a figure of speech; faces are mentioned instead of men, since it is in the face that displeasure and hostility are first manifested. The fear of

men brings a snare. Prov. 29:25. God has not given us the spirit of fear, so fear is not a fruit of the Holy Spirit. 2 Tim. 2:7. The fear of man brings a certain restraint. I John 4:18. But Jeremiah's lack of fear was not to be based upon that natural boldness which is possessed by many men. It was to rest upon a promise made to him by God - - "I am with thee to deliver thee."

His Appointment as a Prophet. 1:9-10

Then the Lord put forth His hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put My words in thy mouth. See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.

A hand touched Jeremiah's mouth and he was informed that the Lord had put words in his mouth. This is inspiration. Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 1:21. The mouth was Jeremiah's, but the words were Jehovah's.

Here the one who had been appointed a prophet is installed in his office. The words "I have set thee" declare this. From that day on events of great magnitude took place in harmony with the words of Jeremiah. He declared that nations would be rooted out and thrown down - and they were. He declared that Israel and Judah would be reunited and restored -- and they will yet be. Some of his prophecies are yet to be fulfilled. The Lord is not slack concerning his promises or his prophecies.

Jeremiah Examined and Instructed. 1:11-12

Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what seest thou? And I said, I see a rod of an almond tree; Then said the Lord unto me, Thou hast well seen, for I will hasten My word to perform it.

The question, "What do you see?" was addressed personally to Jeremiah to test his powers of accurate observation. Before him was the rod (staff) of an almond tree. This was the thing that God had set before him, and if he were unable to see this correctly he was not yet ready for his role as God's prophet. This has in it a lesson for all who would serve God acceptably today.

In the present time far too many are practicing the rankest form of deception upon themselves by having trained their eyes not to see at all, or else to see things as they think they should be and not as they really are. They can see any teaching they want to see in the Bible, but they have no eyes for the truth that is really there. What they call "Bible study" is simply going to the Scripture to extract from it support for a position to which they had committed themselves before they ever opened the Word of God.

On every hand today we see things that are given the names of service, worship, and salvation. But an honest look at these things would soon reveal that much that passes for God's service is nothing more than the restless energy of the flesh, that which is called "worship" is nothing more than a man devised ritual, and what passes for salvation is nothing more than "responding to an invitation", "going to the front" or "raising the hand".

How tragic it is that today, men committed to the idea of "eternal conscious torment" should deceive themselves into believing that they SEE this in the Word of God. They raise their hands in horror (and rightly so) at the fearful atrocities perpetrated by the Nazis in their concentration camps. They deplore these frightful examples of man's inhumanity to man, while at the same time they teach

that their God has a place of torture a thousand times more inhuman than Dachau, Lublin or Buchenwald. The Nazis permitted their captives to have water, but, according to these proclaimers of eternal conscious torment, God will not permit his captives to have so much as a drop of water to moisten their tongues. They firmly believe that they see all this in the Word of God, and they steadfastly refuse to take a more careful look or to consider that they have seen only part of the picture. Such men are not fit to be God's prophets for -they have failed to see accurately the things God has set before them.

Jeremiah showed that he was ready for his work by taking a good look at that which was before him, then giving an accurate description of what he saw. The Lord commended him for the accuracy of his observation. The vision he saw was a parable and it impressed upon Jeremiah the certainty of the word that the Lord was to give him. There is a play on words here which could not but strike the Hebrew ear with force. The Hebrew word for almond tree means a watcher, and the expression "I will hasten" means "I am watching". Thus every time Jeremiah saw an almond tree, which abounded in that country, he would be reminded of the certainty of the fulfillment of every word God gave him to speak.

The Lord's Second Question. 1:13

And the word of the Lord came unto me the second time, saying, What seest thou?

This second question was asked to discover if Jeremiah could see more than one thing at a time. To be able to do so is essential to all who seek to understand the Word of God. The "one track mind", which many pride themselves in possessing, has no place when one deals with God's revelation. In handling the Word there are times when two and even three lines of truth must be clearly held without confusing them. Those who have not learned to distinguish between things that differ and rightly to divide the word of truth have not yet qualified as competent workers in the Word of God.

Today there are those who try to shut up God to one course of action at the present time, others fail to distinguish between God's calling and His out-calling. They say many are called but few are chosen, but are unable to make any distinction between God's called and God's chosen. They place all with the chosen or else give them no place .at all. Those who do this fail to see two great truths at the same time. They lack the spirit of Jeremiah. Many throw up their hands in horror at the very idea of trying to hold two lines of truth at the same time. They seek to simplify matters by denying or ignoring the greater part of truth, holding on to only one small portion. We must grant that it does simplify matters if we close our eyes to everything save one line of truth, but this is not what God would have us to do.

Jeremiah's Reply. 1:13

And I said, I see a seething pot; and the face thereof is toward the north.

This second parable completes the sense of the former one by explaining that the specific word that was to be watched over was the word of judgment. The prophet saw a great kettle upon the fire, the water in it bubbling and boiling. It faced from the north, or toward Jeremiah who was seeing it from the south. The face of the kettle was probably indicated by the pouring lip. Jeremiah saw and accurately reported all of this.

The Explanation of the Vision. 1:14-15

Then the Lord said unto me, Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the

inhabitants of the land; For, lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the Lord; and they shall come, and they shall set everyone his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about, and against all the cities of Judah.

In order to understand this we must know that the little kingdom of Judah was situated between two great powers: Assyria on the north and Egypt on the south. In spite of their unfavorable position, as long as Judah trusted in God the kingdom was inviolate and secure. But Judah had long before this given up all trust in God as her preserver. Her foreign policy was to play one great power against another, first looking to Assyria for protection from Egypt, then when this policy became dangerous, she would look to Egypt for protection against Assyria. At the time Jeremiah spoke the people of Judah felt some remote danger from Egypt but none whatsoever from Assyria. It was revealed to Jeremiah that the calamity that was to fall upon the kingdom of Judah was to come from Assyria and not from Egypt. The people saw no danger from that direction, but Jeremiah was shown a pot filled with boiling water. The pouring lip is toward Judah and if the pot is tilted the boiling flood will pour over the land and the people. Thus Jeremiah is given a frightful picture of all the northern powers occupying Jerusalem and all other cities of Judah and executing the judgments of God against a people who had abandoned Him.

The Reason for the Judgment. 1:16

And I will utter my judgments against them touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands.

God would pronounce His judgments against the people of Judah, concerning all their wickedness, in that they had forsaken Him, had burned incense to other gods, had bowed down to the works of their own hands. He leaves no doubt as to the reasons for the calamity that was to befall them. .

It is not difficult to imagine the feelings of Jeremiah concerning all of this. He was a true patriot with a deep love for Judah, her land and her people. When he learned from God the evil that was to come upon these objects of his love, he could not but feel the greatest mental and spiritual distress. It was only natural for him to desire that this word from God should not be true. If he does not exercise care he will find himself so interpreting the message of God so as to make it say something else. Or, since such a message is sure to be very unpopular he may fail to declare it altogether. Those who handle the Word of God must ever be on guard against these tendencies in their own lives.

To get a clearer picture of this, let us consider that in the early months of 1942, we in the United States turned anxious eyes toward the east and saw a real danger there, even though remote. An invasion of our West Coast by the Japanese was a possibility: and elaborate preparations were being made to meet it. Now, let us suppose that at that time one of our statesmen had declared that there was no danger from the East, but that the South American nations, with whom we were friendly, would spill over our land from Mexico and even occupy the capital at Washington. If one of our statesmen had declared this, men would have ridiculed both the possibility and the probability of such a thing taking place."

This illustrates the position of Jeremiah. He was called upon to deliver an unpopular message that set forth improbable and apparently impossible events. He could anticipate the rejection of his message before he proclaimed it. Yet it was his duty to do it because it was the word of God.

Jehovah Commands Jeremiah. 1:17

Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them.

The prophet is commanded to begin his testimony. He is not to delay, neither is he to be dismayed before them lest God cause him to be dismayed before them. There is another play upon words here that is difficult to reproduce in English. It could be expressed as, "Be not afraid of them lest I fill thee with fear of them."

Jehovah Encourages Jeremiah. 1:18-19

For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee.

Jeremiah was provided with a triple divine defense against the fivefold ranks of his adversaries. The word *against* is repeated here seven times. This made Jeremiah completely against everything that was not of God. Those who possess a spirit of hatred find great joy in being against everything and everyone. He who has the spirit of love does not like to be in the role of an opposer. Nevertheless, since man's thoughts and ways are not those of God, it is impossible for one who declares the word of God to be other than against man. He who speaks the word of God must of necessity be against man, even against himself, when men do not conform to God.

THE MYSTERY OF THE SON

All who seek to know the Lord Jesus Christ must humbly bow their wills to the fact that there are certain limitations beyond which our knowledge cannot go. Truths are declared and must be accepted, even when these truths are not explained. The revelation concerning Him goes just so far, and beyond that no one can go. Human reasoning is of no value in seeking the answer to the question, "Who was Jesus Christ?" We do have a revelation, and this we can believe, but part of that revelation tells us that there is an inscrutable mystery connected with the Son of God. This must also be believed, and he who denies it is denying a part of the record God gave of His Son. This truth was stated by the Lord Himself when He said:

No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and He to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him. Matthew 11:27.

Here is another point of absolute equality between the Father and the Son. In the awful mystery of their beings, the Son is known by no one save the Father and the Father is known by no one save the Son and those to whom the Son has revealed Him. The Son expressed the Father and thus He revealed Him. But the Son did not express Himself, therefore the nature of His being remains a mystery.

That no man knows the Son is a truth to be accepted and believed. If it is acted upon it will keep us from dishonoring God by claiming that we understand the nature and being of His Son. Those who pretend that they are able to comprehend and explain Him, those who attempt to rationalize Him,

those who attempt to make Him to be One whom the human mind can understand and accept, must also make the claim that they stand on terms of equality with the Father- so far as knowing the Son is concerned.

The record that God gave of His Son is presented to our faith as one that is to be accepted and believed. We must not attempt to explain Him. Speculation concerning Him is irreverent. The record tells us that He is God. If this is believed it will result in adoration, praise and worship of Him. If it is questioned, if arguments are found against it, if difficulties are erected to hinder its acceptance, these will be from the mind of man, but not from the Word of God. These will exist in the mind of the unbeliever. They do not exist for the man of faith. He knows that no man knows the Son save the Father.

The more we study the record God gave of His Son, the more fervently we will exclaim, "I stand amazed in the presence of Christ."

The End

THE EDITOR TO HIS FRIENDS

****In this issue the reader will find a new series of studies under the title of *Lessons From Jeremiah*. The spiritual lessons contained in this book are sorely needed today. The article on *The Scriptural Assembly* is a continuation of the theme set forth in the studies on *Jesus Only* and *The Churches*.

****We were able to get 150 copies of Bound Volume 7 and all of these have been sold. We have 850 sets remaining to be bound, but have no idea when we can get the cloth for the cover. It may be three months or three years so if any want to order this volume they will have to be satisfied to wait patiently until we can make delivery.

****During the past eight months It has been almost impossible for me to get literature into the hands of Mr. Gardiner who looks after the distribution of my writings in the British Isles. His supplies have been exhausted in many items. This has kept him from filling the orders he has received. The difficulties that hindered the shipments seem to be clearing up and he should soon have a full supply of literature on hand.

Due to governmental restrictions, Mr. Gardiner can accept gifts for this witness only from those who have been in the habit of making such gifts in previous years, also the amounts of these" gifts must not exceed those of previous years. Therefore, contributions from new friends in the British Isles cannot be accepted.

****The Word of Truth printed page ministry is constantly growing. We have been getting 5000 copies of each issue but must increase this to 5500 beginning with this number. It is now evident that the addressing equipment, which was purchased 18 months ago will soon be too small for our needs. The representative of the company from which the equipment was purchased has granted the full cost to apply upon the purchase of a larger machine. This has been ordered and delivery has been promised within six months.

****After two years and three months of radio ministry over Station WAIT, Chicago, it became necessary to terminate the program on June 2. This was due to the fact that the management of that

station decided to discontinue all broadcasts of a religious nature on weekdays. No discrimination was shown and all broadcasters discontinued their ministry at the same time. Inasmuch as the station will still sell time for religious broadcasts on Sunday, I have purchased the quarter-hour from 10:15 to 10:30 a.m. This hour is not satisfactory, but it was the only time available.

As many of the friends of THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY live outside of the area reached by the radio they will probably be interested in the following information concerning this ministry. There were six fifteen minute broadcasts every week for 118 weeks, a total of 708 broadcasts. These consisted of simple expositions of various books of the Bible. The program was designed to attract only such listeners as desired to be taught the Word of God. There was an immediate response to this ministry and as it progressed many people began to feel that for the first time in their lives they were actually getting somewhere in their desire to know the Bible. At the close of each broadcast, the attention of the listener was directed to the printed page ministry. A package of literature containing eight pieces was offered for the nominal sum of twenty-five cents. This literature was selected so that all who received it would know the Editor's position concerning major biblical themes. As a result 2725 listeners sent for literature, and out of this number (after reading the literature) 1104 requested that they be sent every issue of THE WORD OF TRUTH. Thus, as a concrete result of this radio ministry I will have the privilege of teaching the word of God by means of the printed page to this great host of new readers.

At present, I am seeking to know the will of the Lord in regard to future radio ministry. Several opportunities have opened, but after careful consideration were not acted on as there seemed to be no indication that the Spirit would have me place the ministry on these stations. When the ministry is resumed, I will notify all the friends of the witness by mail or through these pages.

****This issue is thirty-two pages in number, and is the largest we have ever sent out. There have been innumerable delays in getting it ready, but it appears that certain adverse conditions, which have hindered in the past are being cleared up.

****Friends in the Chicago and Rockford areas please note: The Chicago Class will meet on Monday July 9 and Monday July 23 in the Swedish Fraternal Hall, 1415 Sherman Street, Evanston. The Rockford Class will meet on Tuesday July 10 and Tuesday July 24 in the Faust Hotel. Please note carefully these dates as they vary from the usual two-week schedule.

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End, Vol. VIII, No. 3