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GOD'S PRESENT ADMINISTRATION

There is an important truth in Paul's first letter to Timothy, which is lost to the average reader of the King James Version due to a faulty translation. This appears in verse four of the first chapter wherein Timothy was to charge some that they should not give heed to fables and endless genealogies. To "give heed" means to center the attention upon, and the fables and endless genealogies refer to those matters, which were always being discussed but could never be settled. The discussion of such matters only led to more questions, they never led to any truth.

Discussions such as these are still greatly loved by many people, because they never end in anyone being brought face-to-face with truth on which they must act. Men today still want to discuss where Cain got his wife, as if their spiritual stature would increase if they knew. They relish a discussion on what would have happened if Adam had never sinned. They do not want to face the fact that he did sin, then go on from that point. They do not want to deal with realities, so they discuss such things as can never be brought to a conclusion.

The exact nature of the "fables and endless genealogies" which were the center of discussion in Paul's day is not now known. It is not necessary for us to know what these things were, but it is essential that we avoid centering our attention upon those matters, which lead to interminable discussions and result only in more questions.

Having spoken negatively, having told them what they should not do, Paul then speaks positively and tells them what they should do. And it is his positive advice that has been lost through the faulty translation in the *King James Version*. There we read that they are to center their attention on "**godly edifying which is in faith**," but every translation that has come forth since the *King James Version* has made radical alterations in this. Note the following versions:

"a dispensation of God which is in faith." *Revised Version*.

"God's dispensation which is in faith." *Darby's Version*.

"the stewardship of God which is with faith." *Rotherham*.

"an administration of God, one in connection with faith." *Lenski*.

"the divine order which belongs to faith." *Moffatt*.

"the divine system which operates through faith." *Goodspeed*.

The Greek word here, which is in the *King James Version* translated "edifying" is *oikonomia*. This same word is found in Ephesians 3:2 (**dispensation**); Ephesians 3:9 (**fellowship**); Colossians 1:25 (dispensation); Luke 16:2, 3, 4 (**stewardship**). In dealing with the word *oikonomia* translators and commentators make use of the words dispensation, stewardship, or administration. This has proved confusing to some, but it need not be as these words are synonymous and can be used interchangeably. Let us consider this by means of an illustration from the political realm, which will make use of these words.

About three years ago Harry S. Truman as the nominee of the Democratic party sought a *dispensation* to *administer* the affairs of the United States for four years. Since a *stewardship* of this nature can be granted only by the majority of the voters, the matter had to be decided by an election. The majority decided that Mr. Truman should be *steward* or *administrator* for four years, so by their votes they granted him a *dispensation* to *manage* the country for a four-year period. Therefore, at the present time we are under the Truman *administration*. However, at the end of each four-year period, a president must give an account of his *stewardship*, so it will again be brought before the voters to see if they desire to grant Mr. Truman another *dispensation* to run the country for four years, providing of course he seeks to have his *stewardship* renewed. If he does, and the majority decides upon a change, then the United States will have a new *administrator* and a different *administration*.

The paragraph above will help the reader understand the words administration, dispensation, and stewardship when they are used to translate *oikonomia*. Now if we will remember that all three of these words mean management or method of dealing, much confusion will be dispelled. Administration, dispensation, and stewardship are all defined as meaning "management" in *Webster's New International Dictionary*. Some may think that this is pointing out the obvious, but it is necessary in view of the fact that most men fail to think right when they hear the word dispensation or administration. To sum up, *oikonomia* means administration, and an administration is a method of dealing, handling or treating.

The importance of all this is seen in the fact that it makes possible an absolute answer to the question that every Christian must sooner or later ask and answer, "What is God's method of dealing with mankind today?"

The correct answer to this question is of the utmost importance to all who would live well pleasing to *God* at the present time.

Let us remember that our *God* is the Administrator of all creation, collectively as well as individually. He does not need to ask permission, He does not need to seek an administration. He is the Administrator of all mankind and His method of dealing with all men or any section of men at a given time is His administration at that time. For example, from the call of Abraham to the close of the Acts period *God* had one method of dealing with the seed of Abraham and another method of dealing with the balance of mankind. It is utterly futile to try to make God's dispensations to be a matter of time periods.

Thus in Timothy 1:3 Paul beseeches us to center our attention upon God's administration which is in faith. This is essential if we would know God's will for us, God's present purpose, and our walk in harmony with His present method of dealing.

In Ephesians 3:2 we learn that God's present administration is one of grace. This one passage tells us more about the character of the times in which we live than any other passage in the New Testament. It is here we learn that God's present method of dealing with mankind is entirely gracious. Paul announces here that this administration of the grace of God had been given to him in order that he might pass it on to the nations (Gentiles). The context shows that Paul here refers to the truth concerning the dispensation of grace, which was given to him for the nations.

There had been times before this when grace had been predominant in God's dealings. This was true in the Acts period, a fact that has led many men to think that the Acts period was a part of the dispensation of grace. But grace was not then God's absolute method of dealing. Today it is His only method of dealing with mankind. His administration is now one of grace that He might provide a demonstration of the graciousness of His character. This demonstration takes place in the history of mankind, but it will stand as a memorial to His grace through all eternity. Yet God's present grace and His purpose in it are recognized by very few. Some even give the lie to His present dealings in grace. All kinds of childish arguments are set forth to prove that *God* does not always act in grace. Their interpretation of certain experiences is brought forth in proof of their arguments. The following quotation is an excellent example of this type of thinking. It is taken from "The Fundamentalist" which is the Journal of the British Bible Union (January, 1948.) It appears to be a quotation from another magazine called "Dawn," which apparently got its material from "The Defender." Under title of "Judgment" it declares:

Judgment in our day of grace is exceptional, but it occurs, and acts of judgment are likely to darken and multiply even before the day of the Lord. A minister of the Gospel *for* many years in Russia, and who was tortured, but escaped in 1932, recorded (in *The Defender*) an incident personally known to him. From the city of Kharkov, the Capital of Ukrania, two atheists came to a neighboring village to carry on their atheistic propaganda. At the market place on a platform they delivered their blasphemous speeches before a large audience. The first speaker closed his speech with the words: "If there is really a God in heaven I kill Him now," and with that he shot into the air with his revolver and continued, saying: "and if there is really a God let him kill me now. If there is a God I do not wish to live any more." The second speaker closed his speech with the words: "If there is a God let him revenge himself on me by making me a cripple from now on. I do not wish to walk from this day on if there be a God." They left the crowd and started for the station to catch a train to Kharkov. On the way to the station the first speaker dropped dead. The second speaker, detained by the sudden death of his companion, arrived at the station late. The train was already in motion. He tried to jump on the moving train but slipped and dropped under the wheels. Both of his legs were cut off and he did not walk from that day on. God had seen fit to smite both blasphemers according to their words.

This whole story to a critical mind sounds a bit "fishy," especially the part where "he shot into the air with his revolver." One is inclined to wonder whether atheistic speakers in Kharkov usually carry revolvers and shoot them as part of the dramatics of their messages. However, even if the whole story were true, even if it happened exactly as recorded above, we reject the interpretation that, "God had seen fit to smite both blasphemers." What happened to these two men looks more like the work of Satan than the work of God. These men served under Satan and he would gladly have sacrificed them in order to set God forth in a false light. By so doing he could make the people think that God was quick to become angry (See Psalm 145:8); that He killed an ignorant atheist who shot his revolver at Him. This could be the work of Satan, but it could not be the work of God. To cite

instances such as these to prove that God is now punishing the wicked is to work contrary to God's present purpose to demonstrate the graciousness of His character.

In addition to the great fact that God's present method of dealing with the world is gracious, we are told that this administration is in faith. Grace and faith are the two words that characterize the present dispensation.

Since at the present time God has shut Himself up to deal only in grace, this shuts man up to deal with Him only in faith. Faith is taking God at His word and thinking accordingly. Therefore at present we are shut up to God's Word, and there is nothing else upon which we can lean. We need to give due heed to this or else we will be found seeking for some manifest token upon which we can rest, some objective sign in which we can place our confidence. We must recognize that this out of all dispensations is a time of pure faith, that this is the time of the absolute silence of God. God has spoken. He seeks men to believe what He has said. We cannot expect any signs, demonstrations, or miracles to confirm the sacred Scriptures. May we readily accept this fact as being the will of God for us at the present time.

THE KINGDOM OF THE HEAVENS

(Continued from Vol. XII, No. 5)

It is not a new position or teaching that the work of God throughout the thirty-three years covered by the **book** of Acts was related to His kingdom purposes. This has been taught and believed by many, although very few have been willing to follow this truth out to all its conclusions and accept all its consequences. Some think that the kingdom was fading out while "the church" was coming in, but since the kingdom was not yet a full reality it could not have been passing out. Furthermore, if we ask "What church?" there is only one possible answer, the church of the kingdom.

There are those who hold that the ministry of Paul in the Acts period was related to a new and entirely different purpose while Peter's ministry continued to the end to be related to the kingdom. However, an unprejudiced study will show that God's purpose was constant and consistent all the way through. The ministry of the Apostle Paul in the Acts period was most certainly unique, and this requires us to seek an adequate understanding of his place and ministry in relation to God's purpose at that time. But Paul's ministry before Acts 28:28 cannot be adequately explained by disassociating it from God's kingdom purposes. Apart from Paul's special ministry certain sinners could never have come into and laid hold of the blessings of forgiveness, redemption, and justification which made it possible for them to participate in the hope of Israel. Peter's message and ministry could do nothing for those who had not been prepared by the ministry of John the Baptist (See Luke 1:17). He could help a circumcised Israelite but he had no message for an uncircumcised Jew, let alone a sinner of the Gentiles. He was given a special commission to the house of Cornelius, but Cornelius had already heard the message of John (see Acts 10:37). Paul alone had the message, which could be proclaimed to unprepared Israelites, uncircumcised Jews, and sinners of the Gentiles.

The gospel preached by Paul as recorded in Romans could raise the lowest sinner to a place where he could participate in the hope of Israel. That same gospel today can raise the lowest sinner to a place where he can be blessed with all spiritual blessings in superheavenly places among superheavenly beings. Our blessings are no part of the hope of Israel. The realization of these

blessings in the future will make it possible for us to be a blessing to highly favored Israel, as in the ages to come we show forth the exceeding riches of His grace.

The kingdom purposes of God in the Acts period were related to that very kingdom which John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus Christ both announced as being "at hand," the very kingdom which the Lord so clearly illustrated in His parables, the very kingdom which was to appear in stages comparable to the blade, the ear, and the full corn in the ear of growing grain. In our previous study we traced the development of heavens' government through the first three chapters of Acts. We will resume our studies at that point. No detailed treatment of these portions will be given, as the purpose will be to point out suggestive lines of truth, and then the student can develop the theme himself.

The First Conflict

As the events recorded in Acts 4 begin to unfold, we see *two* governments on the scene. Heavens' government is there in a stage comparable to the blade of growing grain. Human government is there, strong and deeply entrenched. The representatives of human government are seen in "the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees." The representatives of the kingdom of the heavens are seen in the faithful apostles. *Those* who represent human government are now seen to move against those who represent heavens' government.

But it will be seen that the One who now sits on the right hand of power is hesitant to use His great power against those who oppose Him. Wrath is always the last resource of the wise who have power. These opponents of heavens' government are the dupes of Satan, but they are still loved by the Lord. These are men for whom He died, and great patience and mercy will be shown them in order that they might have every opportunity to break with Satan and submit to the kingdom of the heavens. Since heavens' government was not yet in full manifestation, since it had not yet assumed full control, these men did not feel the fury of divine wrath. The Lord had declared in Ezekiel that He would purge from among Israel the rebels, and those who transgressed against Him. These men are rebels, but for a time at least they will be shown mercy. The Son of man had not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. Luke 9:56.

The First Penalty

What has been said above would seem to be contradicted by the severe punishment that fell *upon* Ananias and Sapphira as recorded in Acts 5, but cases here are quite different. Ananias and Sapphira were among the ecclesia of God. As such they enjoyed light that had not been given to those whom we considered in the fourth chapter. They were destined to rule when God's government was fully manifested *upon* the earth. Their sin was all the more serious because of the position they held. The Psalmist had written of a time to come when, "He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within My house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight" (Psalm 107:7). That time had arrived, and Ananias and Sapphira were directly responsible under it. They died at the word of Peter. The strict nature of God's government was thus made plain. Those who were rushing in to secure the blessings that it promised became frightened. Men hesitated to link themselves with the apostles. See Acts 5:13

Kingdom Blessings Manifested

The healing of "everyone," without exception or distinction as recorded in Acts 5:12-16 is a revelation of what can be expected when the heavens rule the earth. If it happened this way in the

"blade" stage, think what it would be in "the full grain in the ear." But it should be noted that under God's government men could not be healed then forget the One who healed them. Every man healed was brought under full responsibility to heavens' government. "Sin no more lest a worse thing come upon thee," would be the proper charge to everyone who enjoyed the healings that were part of God's government.

Heavens' Power Revealed

The second conflict between human government and heavens' government is seen in Acts 5:17-28. In the first conflict the apostles remained in jail overnight, and then were brought forth the next morning. In this instance they are released by an angel of the Lord. This angel is one from the heavens, the very heavens that was beginning to govern the earth. All who had first-hand knowledge of this are brought under a new responsibility. This is in harmony with the words of our Lord in **John 15:24**.

If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father.

What these men experienced was enough to tell them to go slow and seek further light, but instead they beat the apostles and by so doing sealed their doom. They slammed the door of the kingdom of God in their own faces.

A Kingdom Principle Established

Under heavens' government it will be a part of the moral law that no man shall live by bread alone. He must live by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God. Our Lord had made it plain while He was upon the earth that those who sat at His feet to hear His word had "chosen the better part." Luke "10:42. The apostles were well aware of these facts, and would not be immune from punishment if they ignored them. Their service to men had become so great that it was pushing aside their service for the Lord (Acts 6:2). They realized this and moved to make the proper adjustments. Their positions were of such nature that they determined to give themselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word.

The Great Change

When Israel first came out of the land of Egypt, God did not lead them the shortest way through the land of the Philistines for fear they would turn back when they saw war (Exodus 13:17). However, conflict was in their path and sooner or later they would have to fight. This is illustrative of the book of Acts. In the first six chapters it is a record of practically unbroken blessings. No weapon formed against them prospered. Every tongue that arose against them in judgment, they condemned (Isa. 54:17). God worked openly and mightily in their behalf. There was every evidence that heavens' government would soon rule the world. However, with the arrest of Stephen a great change took place. From that time forth the record is one of victory and defeat, success and failure, blessings given and blessings withheld. It is even as Paul states it in **2 Corinthians 4:8-12**, which becomes more vivid in a free translation. **"We are hard pressed, but never in absolute distress; perplexed, but never utterly baffled; pursued, but never left unsecured; struck to the ground, but never destroyed."** All of Paul's metaphors here are military metaphors and entirely suitable for the experiences that were his daily lot.

Up to the time of the stoning of Stephen it seemed that all men needed to do was to submit in order to share in the blessings that God was distributing. But after that time submission to Christ was sure to involve men in frightful conflicts. All this was necessary for the development, training, and purging of the kingdom ecclesia.

Before Stephen's arrest men could believe because of what they saw. Afterward men could still see and believe, but to prove their faithfulness they would need to believe even when they could not see. In other words, there would be experiences that would prove that the heavens were reigning, but there would also be experiences that would indicate to the eye of flesh that human governments were more powerful and had gained the upper hand. This situation continues throughout the rest of Acts, and it was permitted by God because it was in harmony with His kingdom purposes (See 1 Thess. 3:3-5). The student will profit if he follows this out, through the balance of Acts.

The Kingdom Suspended

At the time of the birth of Christ, when the Word was made flesh to dwell for a time among men, the heavenly host proclaimed that the result would be "peace on earth, good will toward men.: This "peace on earth" was the same peace that Isaiah had predicted (Isa. 2:4), and which David sang about when he said, **'He maketh wars to cease unto the ends of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.'** Psalm 46:9. This peace was to be one of the outstanding features of the kingdom of the heavens, yet 1900 years later we see no peace anywhere. There is only one explanation of this, and that is that all of God's purposes in relationship to the kingdom are in abeyance. His government of the earth has for a time been postponed.

When John announced heavens' government as being at hand, he declared that One was coming who would "thoroughly purge His floor, gather His wheat into the garner; but would burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." But 1900 years have passed and evil men still dominate the earth. They have neither been purged nor consumed. And there is only one answer to this. The kingdom under which this was to be done has been suspended.

At one time in His ministry the Lord healed all the sick who were brought to Him, and we are told that this was in accord with the word spoken by Isaiah, "Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses" (Matt. 8:16, 17). But today we see more sicknesses and infirmities than ever before. Old diseases are conquered but new ones come up to take their place. Under heavens' government there is to be universal health. This is a positive feature of heavens' kingdom. And since it is not a reality today, there is only one adequate explanation-heavens' kingdom has been suspended.

In the period covered by the four Gospels, even before the death of Jesus Christ, there was every evidence that these great blessings might soon be realized. The sick were healed and the dead were raised. When the seventy returned from their mission they joyfully reported, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through your name." Luke 10:17. But the full manifestation of God's kingdom purposes had to await the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ and His ascension to the right hand of power. When this was accomplished, the events of the Acts period gave every reason for men to believe that the bright expectations of the kingdom of the heavens would soon be realized. The very ecclesia, which was to fill such an important place when the kingdom was manifested was being called and developed. True, there was a frightful struggle between the forces of evil and the forces of good, and those aligned with the good suffered because of this. But Paul was able to confidently say, "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Romans 16:20. He also announced that the night is far spent, the day is at hand (Romans 13:12), but instead of "the day"

coming the world has passed through a 1900 year period of darkness that grows deeper every hour. There is only one solution to the problem that these facts create. God's kingdom purposes, which were in progress in the Acts period, have been suspended.

If the words recorded in the Gospels and Acts were truly spoken, if every incident recorded there actually occurred, then it is an absolute truth that God's kingdom purposes were suspended at the close of the Acts period and have been in abeyance ever since. All one needs to do is to compare what God was doing in the thirty-three years of the Acts period with that which He is doing today, and no other conviction is possible than that God is not working on the same purpose today as He was then.

The truth that God's kingdom purposes were suspended was an unwelcome truth in Paul's day, just as it is still unwelcome today. To receive such a truth called for a complete renouncement of self and a desire that Christ should be magnified. Those who were vitally affected by its suspension did not want their hope to be deferred, yet its deferment gave them an opportunity to show their amenability to the word and the will of God. Job had supplied them with the right words for such an occasion: "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil ?" (Job 2:10).

There is no doubt but that some went ahead in self-will and tried to drag in the kingdom through their own efforts. This caused them to turn away from Paul. Their descendants have never ceased to be, for ever since Paul's day men have labored to bring in the kingdom of God upon earth. Their work has been "kingdom work," they have sought "kingdom blessings," they have tried to administer "kingdom principles." Their efforts are doomed for failure, no matter how sincerely they are undertaken.

God's Secret Purpose

Before that point marked by Paul's declaration in Acts 28:28 the theme of all Scripture was preeminently related to God's purposes to fully establish His government in the earth. As this was being revealed, no one knew that He had another purpose, which He was keeping to Himself. This is the secret that was revealed to Paul and then by Paul. God had a purpose that in one period of time He would make an absolute demonstration of His grace by means of an administration of grace. This would provide an eternal memorial to His grace so that all men who ever live in the ages to come can know the graciousness of His character. It was impossible that this demonstration of grace should be before the death of Christ, for His death is the basis of this great display. It was impossible that it should start immediately after His death for the initial kingdom ecclesia had to be called from the men of that generation. But once this was accomplished, God's kingdom purposes could be postponed while He brings to pass that purpose, which was a secret hid within Himself. This is the time in which we now live. This is the dispensation of the grace of God. This is the time when God is accomplishing His purpose to demonstrate that He is the God of grace.

The Suspension Lifted

The dispensation of grace will not continue forever. Someday God's purpose will be complete. When it is, He will resume His kingdom purposes and fulfill every promise made of blessing for Israel and the world under heaven's government.

The End

VITAL PRINCIPLES

There are certain passages in the New Testament which speak in such manner that the only possible explanation of them seems to be that the apostles were expecting the second coming of Jesus Christ to take place at any moment. If this is true we are forced to believe that they passed this expectation on to those whom they taught, thus leading them into the same hope. This position is fraught with many difficulties, but it has appeared to be the only honest explanation of many passages in the New Testament. This whole matter now needs to be carefully reconsidered in the light of the truth that has been gained as the result of long investigation.

There can be no question but that during the three years of the earthly ministry of Christ, it was the hope of His disciples that the kingdom of the heavens would soon begin. This hope was realized when Christ arose from the dead, and when many others arose after His resurrection (Matthew 27:51-53). Of course, if any expected that the kingdom should begin in any manner greater than in a stage comparable to the blade stage of growing grain (Mark 4:26-29), then their expectation went beyond what Christ had promised, and it was not based upon His words to them. From the moment of His resurrection until the close of the Acts period a vast amount of heavenly activity was manifested in connection with the fact that the first stage of heavens' government had begun.

. The expectation of the believers throughout the thirty-three years covered by the book of Acts was that the kingdom of the heavens should come in its next great stage. In this stage the Lord would arise in light upon Israel (Isa. 60:1-2), God would pour out of His Spirit upon all flesh, mankind would be enlightened concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment; this to be followed by the full manifestation of the kingdom in which every statement and prediction of the glorious benefits which Palestine, Israel, the earth, and mankind would experience under heavens' rule would be realized. The time of this next step was left very indefinite, as a reading of Acts 1:6, 7 will prove.

Throughout the years as the truth has unfolded that there is to be a long period of blessing for the world before the second coming of Christ, I have felt it necessary to consider every possible objection to it that my mind could conceive. A major difficulty for a time was that if the apostles believed that the great tribulation was imminent, then how could there be a long period of blessing preceding the tribulation and the second coming of Christ. This difficulty caused me to make a careful examination of the foundations upon which the idea was based that the apostolic expectation was the imminent coming of Christ.

This study was most profitable and it revealed a number of truths. It showed that some passages had been interpreted to fit in with this idea. The statement of our Lord in Matthew 16:28 was one of these. There "the Son of man coming in His kingdom" was made to be the Son of man coming in person, which it most certainly is not. This study also brought the conviction that certain divine principles of revelation had been ignored in interpreting the passages that seem to teach that the apostles believed that the second coming was imminent, that the space of time between His ascension and His second coming would be very short. These major principles of revelation we will need to consider in some detail.

The way in which God reveals or declares truth is the way in which it must be interpreted. When one has gained familiarity with the Bible he realizes that (as Dr. I. M. Haldeman stated it) "the Bible is not such a book as a man **WOULD** write if he could; nor such a book as a man **COULD** write if he **WOULD**." Considered from the standpoint of man's literary principles, the Bible is not a systematic book. It was produced according to divine literary principles, and in order to properly understand it we need to discover these divine principles and let them have

full bearing upon our interpretation of any or every passage in holy writ. In human literature we would not expect to find men writing in the present tense, yet in reality to be speaking of and predicting events that are to take place in the future. Yet this is exactly what we find in both the Old and New Testaments as can be abundantly proved. These divine principles of revelation can best be set forth and made plain by considering certain passages where they stand out beyond dispute.

The Principle Declared in I Peter 1:10-12

The first passage we will consider is I Peter 1:10-12. Speaking of the salvation that had come to them he declares:

Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into. I Peter 1:10-12.

In this passage we learn that when the Hebrew prophets wrote of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow, they did not fully understand the prophecies they had been inspired to write. This was especially true in regard to the time when they would be fulfilled. They wrote as if the fulfillment were imminent and would be seen in the lifetime of those to whom they delivered their messages. But to them it was revealed that they did not write for the people of that time, but for a people who should live long after. In the case of Isaiah's writings, his predictions of the sufferings of Christ were fulfilled over seven hundred years later. Yet when he wrote them it seemed as if they would have to be witnessed by the people who first read his prophecies. Note this in Isaiah 53 :2, where he says "when we shall see him," and the pronouns through the rest of the chapter. Note this also in Deuteronomy 18:15. The people who heard these words could easily have believed that the Prophet predicted would soon appear, but He did not appear until 1450 years had passed.

This must have been made plain to them, for God would not lead them astray.

Thus we see a great principle of divine revelation. Things, which to us may seem to have been spoken to the people living at the time when the inspired writer gave his message may have in reality been written to a people not yet born. Therefore, this would have been the way the Spirit made the message plain to those who first heard it, revealing to them that it was for the instruction of men at some future time.

With this principle of divine revelation in mind let us examine a passage in James. Speaking to "the twelve tribes in the dispersion" (James 1:1), he declares:

Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming (*parousia*) of the Lord draweth nigh. James 5:8.

The context of this passage shows that it is a word of encouragement spoken to those who had been defrauded of their wages by rich (powerful) men. They are told to be patient, to establish their hearts, seeing that the coming (*parousia*) of the Lord has drawn near. A casual reading of this passage will at once bring the feeling that the coming of the Lord was imminent and could be expected in the normal lifetime of those to whom James wrote. But if we ask, "How would they who first read this epistle understand these words?" the answer is that they would understand them

exactly as the Spirit of God made His words plain to them. And in view of the principle established by I Peter 1:12 it is evident that the Holy Spirit made it plain to them that these words were not dispensed to them, but for a people who should live and suffer just before the second coming of Christ. Therefore there is no proof in James 5:8 that "the twelve tribes in the dispersion" expected the second coming to take place at any moment. Let us never forget that Scripture was written to fill the needs of men who live in every time, and those who will live in a future day have not been neglected.

This same principle applies to I Corinthians 15:51-53. If the Corinthians took the words "we shall not all sleep" as applying to them, time soon proved that they were wrong, or that they had been deceived by Paul. But if we keep in mind that in Scripture a writer often wrote as if the fulfillment were imminent and would be seen in the lifetime of those who first received the message, but the Spirit made it plain that this message was for a people who would come long after, all difficulties will vanish.

The Principle Declared in Isaiah 61:1, 2

Another great principle of divine revelation is seen when we compare Isaiah 61:1,2 with Luke 4:16,21. In the first passage we read:

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn. Isaiah 61:1-2.

When our Lord quoted this passage in the synagogue at Nazareth, He applied it to Himself declaring, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." But it must be noted that He stopped the quotation with the words "the acceptable year of the Lord," and did not go on to say "and the day of vengeance of our God." The reason for this abrupt ending is found in the fact that the acceptable year of the Lord was then present, but the day of vengeance of our God was and is yet still future. From this we learn that in a Spirit inspired message things that are near and things that are far in the future may be spoken of in the same sentence, with no indication of any time lapse in between. This is an important principle.

An example of this principle is seen in Matthew 10:5-23. The passage is too long to be quoted here, but a reading of it will show that our Lord was instructing the twelve disciples as He sent them forth to declare the kingdom of the heavens is at hand. His words seem to tell them what to expect as they go forth to perform this ministry. However, beyond all argument, at verse 17 the message leaves the present and jumps over into the tribulation period (10:17-22) and finally ends up with the second coming of Christ (verse 23). This shows that words spoken to the men who stood before the Lord might in their application go far beyond them and be instructions for a people living in a future time. Thus it is seen to be a principle of divine revelation that events near and events remote, or things imminent and things far off may both be declared in the same sentence.

With this principle before us we will consider another passage, which to some seems to indicate that the coming (*parousia*) of the Lord was the next great event that the apostles expected to take place. In I Thessalonians 4:13-17 Paul declares:

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are' asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto

you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent (precede) them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. I Thess. 4:13-17.

In this passage there are two resurrections of two groups of martyrs. The first group is those who died because of their relationship to Christ in the Acts period. They had been put to death by men, not by God, not because of sin, not because of Adam's sin. They are described as those "being put to sleep in Jesus," which is what the Greek means. Paul sets forth their hope in one great declaration. God will bring them forth with Jesus. They died in living connection with Jesus and they will be raised because of their connection with Him. This resurrection is the same as that spoken by our Lord in **John 6:39**.

And this is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, hut should raise it up again at (in) the last day.

The "last day" here is identical in meaning with "the last days." The last days are that glorious period of time, which precedes the day of the Lord in which the world is to enjoy great blessings from God. It is described in Isaiah 2:2-5, Micah 4; Acts 2. It is identical with the kingdom of the heavens, and it is a time in which the righteous dead will be raised.

Paul's declaration concerning the resurrection of those who had died as martyrs is complete. Nothing needs to be added to it. Their hope is based upon the death and resurrection of Christ. "So also will God bring forth with Him, those who have been put to sleep through Jesus." This is a more accurate translation. This resurrection could be expected to take place in the next stage of the kingdom of the heavens. These martyrs laid down their lives in the first stage. They would live again in the second stage.

Another Resurrection

Having declared what God will do for those who were being put to death, Paul then jumps far into the future and reveals another resurrection that is to take place at the end of the kingdom of the heavens at the time of the coming (parousia) of Christ. That a new thought is introduced here is manifest by the declaration, "This we say unto you by the word of the Lord." The truth he sets forth following these words is not simply an explanation or enlargement of what He has said before. Here the apostle jumps across the centuries and reveals by inspiration another resurrection of martyrs at the time of the coming (parousia) of Christ. These are the ones who lay down their lives in the revolt against the kingdom just before the day of the Lord. Because of that revolt, and because of the appearance of the man of sin, many faithful saints will need to seal their faithfulness with their own blood. Those who do not die, but who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord will have no advantage over those who have been put to sleep. For the Lord Himself, coming in person to put down the revolt against His government shall descend from heaven. The dead in Christ shall then rise first and the living shall be caught up.

That two resurrections, many centuries apart, should be revealed in one paragraph is in harmony with a clearly established principle of divine revelation.

THE WORD "KINGDOM"

About the year 1870 in the British Isles a learned discussion was carried on among certain men of God concerning the meaning of the Greek word *basileia*, the word, which is commonly translated "kingdom" in the New Testament. Not very much was put into print in regard to this exchange of ideas, as much of it seems to have been carried on by personal correspondence and spoken messages. However, some of the published writings of Dr. Joseph Bryant Rotherham shed some light on the various ideas advanced during the discussion.

Among the British at that time the word *kingdom* had the fixed meaning of a territory ruled over by a king. Thus it was quite logical for some to argue that a kingdom demanded the presence of such elements as a territory, a capital city, a people, a law, and a king. But there were others who felt that while these things may be true of the English word *kingdom*, they were not necessarily true of the **Greek word *basileia***. In this connection Dr. E. W. Bullinger voiced the conviction of many by saying that the *basileia* "has regard to *sovereignty* rather than to territory."

These facts led many to feel that "kingdom" was not a true expression of the word *basileia*, so a search was made for some English word that would more truly represent the Greek. Quite a few interesting possibilities were brought forth such as *sovereignty, dominion, reign, authority, government, control, and jurisdiction*. None of these words had in them the idea of territory, and while men honestly contended for the superiority of these words over *kingdom* as a translation of *basileia*, none of them ever came into general use as a rendering of this Greek word. In this connection Rotherham contended:

Let us retain "kingdom"; and as to any measure of latitude with which the original word is employed, let us simply give to "kingdom" a like latitude. The English reader will thus be in a similar position to the reader of the Greek, and like him, can be alive to modifying forces which may lie in the "context and circumstance" of any particular occurrence of the New Testament term.

This is an excellent suggestion, but it has not proved to be practical. Eighty years have passed since this suggestion was made, but men still fasten the meaning of the English word *kingdom* upon the Greek word *basileia*, and it is impossible to use the word *kingdom* and to have it to immediately signify dominion, rule, or government. When the American or British mind hears the word *kingdom*, the only thing they think of is a territory over which a monarch called a king holds nominal rule. This being so we can use the word *kingdom* in connection with Canada or England, but not in connection with the United States. But the ancient Greek word could be used properly in connection with all three countries, for it would be right to speak of "the *basileia* of the United States," but it is not right to say "the kingdom of the United States." The Greek word *basileia* means "government," and there is nothing in it which limits it to the monarchial form of government. The very fact that we can say "the *basileia* of the United States," but cannot say "the kingdom of the United States" is proof that "kingdom" is not an adequate translation of *basileia*. This does not represent the Greek, it misrepresents it. In Greek a *basileia* can be an autocracy, democracy, theocracy, or monarchy. A kingdom can be only a monarchy.

The limited meaning to which men hold the word *kingdom* makes it almost impossible for them to come to any true understanding of the phrase "the kingdom (*basileia*) of the heavens," and the allied phrase "the kingdom of God."

The scope of the Greek word *basileia* is seen in the fact that it has seven members in its family (*basileia, basileion, basileios, basileus, basileu6, basilikos, basilissa*). It does not seem that there is anyone English word that can be used consistently to express the ideas found in the seven forms of

this word used in the New Testament, but this need not keep us from entering into the truth concerning the exact idea that the Spirit intended to convey when men were inspired to write the word *basileia*. We can trace out all occurrences of this word in the New Testament, also its equivalent in the Old Testament, and thus enter into the divine intent and meaning of this word. Having done this, it is the writer's conviction that our word *government* comes the nearest to expressing the word *basileia*. Government is an abstract word, like the word *basileia*, and it is also a member of a large family. And while it is not perfect as a counterpart, it causes many passages to shine forth with a new glory when it is substituted for the word *kingdom*.

The Old Testament Term

When we compare Hebrews 1:8 with Psalm 45:6 we know for sure that the Hebrew word *malkuth* is the exact equivalent of *basileia*, since they are in these two passages used interchangeably by the Holy Spirit. In view of this it will be highly illuminating if we consider certain pertinent passages in which this Hebrew word appears.

The first occurrence of *malkuth* is in Numbers 24:7 where the truth declared by Balaam is that the government which someday shall prevail in Israel shall be exalted, and thus become the model which all other governments shall seek to emulate.

In the next occurrence (1 Samuel 20:31) Saul declared to his son Jonathan that as long as David was alive he, Jonathan, would "not be established, nor thy kingdom." Saul did not mean that Jonathan's land, flag, or capital would not be established as long as David lived. These ideas are not inherent in the word *malkuth*. He meant that Jonathan's government or rule over Israel would never be a reality as long as David lived. The idea of "rule" is basic in this Hebrew word, and the word cannot be used without suggesting the idea of government or rule.

In I Kings 2:12 we read that Solomon sat upon the throne of his father David and that "his kingdom was established greatly." This reference is to Solomon's government, his rule or control over the people Israel.

I Chronicles 11:10 tells of those who "strengthened themselves" with David in his kingdom. This means that they held strongly with him in his divine appointment to govern Israel.

I Chronicles 12:23 speaks of those who linked up with David in Hebron for the purpose of giving him the government or rule which Saul exercised over Israel.

In I Chronicles 14:2 we read that David fully recognized the fact that God had confirmed him as king (governor or ruler) and that his kingdom (government) was exalted for the sake of Israel. In this passage Rotherham translates *malkuth* by "kingship" in his desire to more accurately express the truth. He, however, puts "kingdom" in a footnote.

In I Chronicles 17:11 God says of Solomon that, "he will establish his kingdom." The land, the flag, the people, and the capital city were not Solomon's. But the government, the privilege of ruling Israel, was to be his. Nevertheless, it was God's government, which He placed in the hands of Solomon, as the next occurrence of *malkuth* (I Chron. 17:14) clearly shows. God does not abdicate when He permits a man to govern His people.

Up to this point we have considered all occurrences of *malkuth* in order. We will now consider only those that are pertinent to our theme.

In I Chronicles 26:31 *malkuth* is translated "**reign**." This is highly illuminating, for a reign indicates supreme authority. The one who reigns, or that which reigns, governs. See also 2

Chronicles 3:2, 15:19; and 16:1 where this word is also translated "reign."

In I Chronicles 29:25 it is translated "**royal**." Here the original language declares that God bestowed upon Solomon an excellency of government as had not been on any king before him.

In 2 Chronicles 2:1 we read of Solomon's determination to build "a house for his kingdom." This was to be a place where all activities related to his government would be centered.

Space forbids a consideration of every passage where this word occurs, but if each one is carefully considered the conviction will fasten upon us that the Hebrew word *malkuth* means government, and that it is properly an abstract word in which such concrete ideas as land, people, and a capital city are not inherent.

The New Testament Term

The word *basileia* occurs 162 times in the New Testament and it is translated "kingdom" uniformly with one exception. In Revelation 17:18 it is translated "reigneth," but could be better translated "which hath sovereignty (or, dominion) over the kings of the earth.

In 32 occurrences of this word we find it in the phrase "the kingdom of the heavens." Here the emphasis is not on the kingdom of a king. It is "the kingdom of the heavens." In this phrase there is no suggestion of a people, a territory, or a flag. John the Baptist did not call upon Israel to repent because heaven's territory or people were at hand. He called upon them to repent because heavens' government was at hand.

By the figure of speech called *metonymy* the word *basileia* sometimes becomes a concrete term and refers to some concrete aspect of heavens' government such as the subjects who are governed; But no such concrete meaning can be imposed upon this word when John announced that the *basileia* of the heavens is at hand.

In Matthew 12:26 the Lord spoke of Satan's *basileia*, meaning Satan's government. Satan has no land, flag, or capital city. But he does govern many; therefore it is proper to refer to his government.

In Matthew 12:28 the Lord declared that if He cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom (*basileia*) of God is come unto you. God's complete sovereignty over devils was present when they were cast out. It was seen in action.

In Romans 14:17 Paul declares that the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. There are many who erroneously take this to be a definition of the kingdom of God. This is an illogical and unscientific deduction. Paul here is telling his hearers what bearing the government of God has upon the subject under consideration. God's government was then operating in respect to righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, and not to control the diet of men.

In I Corinthians 4:20 we learn from Paul that God's government, with which he was officially connected, did not consist of promises and threats. It was demonstrated by realities.

In Ephesians 5:5 Paul warns that certain unclean persons can have no allotment in the government of Christ or of God. There will be no place for such in any realm under God's government, neither earth, heavens, or heavens of heavens.

In Colossians 1:13 the power (jurisdiction) of darkness is set in contrast with the kingdom (government or control) of the Son of His love. We who believe today are under a government which operates only in and through love. Nothing is ever done by the one who governs us that is out of harmony with love and favor to the undeserving.

In 2 Timothy 4:1 we are told that the Lord Jesus Christ will judge (set in order) the living and the dead at his appearing (epiphaneia) and His kingdom. When God brings in again His government of this world, the time of the resurrection of the dead will be here. But, it will be "every man in his own order." Those who are to come forth first will be raised first.

In 2 Timothy 4:18 Paul declares that he expected to be rescued from., every evil work and to be saved (blessed) in relationship to the Lord's superheavenly government.

Real conviction concerning great truths can come only when we have made our own personal studies and come to our own independent conclusions. My own convictions that *basileia* means government are the result of my own studies in the Word. I believe the reader will come to the same conclusion if he makes his own study of the subject.

STUDIES IN ACTS
(Continued from Vol. XII, No.3)
Chapters 7 and 8

Chapter 7:54-60

7:54. When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.

Stephen's word concerning the law did not complete his message. At this point Luke, the writer of Acts, interrupts his account of Stephen's message to explain that the members of the council were grievously distressed in their hearts. This resulted from the work of the Spirit, and it will either save their souls or seal their doom. This is the Acts period, not the dispensation of grace. Their response to the message of Stephen is revealed in the further word that "they gnashed their teeth at him." These men are now confirmed as unbelievers before God. They now stand as condemned. They are beyond all hope. The wrath of God abides upon them. There is no proof that Paul was one of this council. He obtained mercy because he acted "ignorantly in unbelief."

Even though they were "cut to the heart," they did not interrupt Stephen's message. They kept their seats and their mutterings were low. Stephen could still be heard. However, in one way his message to them is interrupted, for his next words are an involuntary exclamation, arising out of a wonderful thing that happened.

7:55-56. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

At this point, Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit, saw that which was normally invisible. God's "right" or His "right hand" signifies His majesty and power. Stephen saw the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. It would be easy to hang many interpretations on the fact that the Lord Jesus is here said to be standing. His statement must have brought to the minds of the council the words of Isaiah:

The Lord standeth up to plead, and standeth to judge the peoples. Isa. 3:13.

The meaning of "plead" here is to be understood from Ezekiel 20:35, 36; and the word "judge" from Isaiah 26:9. Stephen saw the Lord standing, ready to plead with His people and to establish His own order in the earth. This is the work that has been postponed. After Acts 28 :28 the Lord is represented as being seated. When His present purpose is complete, He will then arise to plead and to judge.

Stephen's Spirit - filled report of what he saw caused the council to rage like wild beasts.

7:57-59. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

It was at this point that the council broke their silence, left their seats and ran toward Stephen. No mere message from man could cause such men as these to act with the coarseness that is described here. If Stephen had been speaking to them they could have ignored the report of a vision, which was seen only by the man on trial. But the Spirit spoke through Stephen, which caused a storm of violence, which rushes Stephen to his death. They determined to still the voice of God by destroying the man through whom God was speaking. The whole action from this point on was one of mob violence.

What Stephen meant that the Lord Jesus should take to Himself when he prayed "receive my spirit" can be understood only when we know from the Word of God what the human spirit is. Many writers have undertaken to define man's spirit, but in far too many cases it is plain that they were attempting to support an idea rather than to find and declare the truth. The most common idea is that man's spirit is a spirit being which lives in his body and departs from it at death. This makes man to be a spirit being, rather than a human being, an idea that shows its falsity the moment it is put into words. The subject is one that needs much study.

Stephen's death marks a crisis. Up to this point nothing has taken place that could properly be called severe persecution. The apostles were arrested (chapter 4), but this provided them with the opportunity to witness to the highest men in Israel. They were threatened with dire punishments if they continued to speak and teach, but they told the Lord about it, and He answered so openly that they went on to speak without fear. In chapter 5 we read that they were arrested again, but an angel came and opened the doors and led them out. They were rearrested and after being questioned they were beaten, but they rejoiced that they were worthy to suffer shame for his name. Their ministry ceased not one bit. Finally, in Jerusalem, Stephen is arrested and placed on trial. The trial ends in pandemonium, and he dies as the result of mob violence.

In view of all that had taken place since the beginning of the ministry of Christ, and in view of subsequent events it would be normal to expect that when these devout men gathered around Stephen to pick up his broken body for burial that he would arise from the dead, even as Paul was raised some years later. See Acts 14:19, 20. But this was not the case, and his death was a difficult test to the faith of every follower of Christ.

From this time forth there will be two sets of manifest facts from which men can draw their conclusions. One set of facts will cause God's kingdom to appear to be in defeat, another set will show it as moving on to victory. Thus while men at times will be able to walk by sight, there will be other times when what they see will seem to say that the promises of God have failed. At such times they will need to walk by faith. This is part of their training for the service they are destined to perform as the outcalled of God.

Chapter 8

8:1. And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church, which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria except the apostles.

Starting on the very day of Stephen's murder a persecution began which Luke describes as being "great." This was directed against the outcalled ones, the followers of Christ, which were in Jerusalem. As a result they were all scattered abroad all over Judea and Samaria. The word "all" here must be understood in the light of the phrase, which follows it, "except the apostles." The apostles knew that their place was in Jerusalem. They were ready to die there if necessary. They had no fear, neither before nor after Stephen's death.

8:2. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.

It was the strict Jewish custom to bury on the same day as death took place. Devout men saw to it that Stephen was given a decent burial. These devout men may have been men of the same type as Joseph and Nicodemus who saw to the burial of the Lord Jesus.

8:3, 4. As for Saul, he made great havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word.

It is evident here that Luke draws a contrast between the devout men who buried Stephen and Saul who began his work of persecution. The word "church" here does not suggest an organization or a meeting. It speaks of individuals, the outcalled ones. Saul searched these out by going from house to house. He did not spare the women. This brought about a state where Judea and Samaria were no longer safe places to hide. Further flight became necessary so they went in all directions. Wherever they went they heralded the word, but made it a point to preach to none but unto the Jews only. See Acts 11:19.

8:5-8. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles, which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city.

There are two men who bear the name of Philip in the book of Acts. One is the apostle (1:13) and the other is the deacon (6:5). Since we have been told that the apostles remained in Jerusalem, we understand that this must be the deacon. Inasmuch as the believers in Jerusalem were scattered abroad, the work he had been called to do was no longer possible, so he was free to leave. He preached Christ to the people of Samaria, and his effort was followed by remarkable success. He gave the people something to believe, and they believed it. He set forth Christ as the object of faith. The multitudes with one accord gave heed to the truths he declared. And in full harmony with the character of the Acts period, his message was supported with positive miracles. Unclean spirits were cast out, and many who were paralyzed and lame experienced full recovery. This set forth what men could expect under heavens' government. It brought abundant joy to the people.

8:9-11. But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries.

This man Simon was the most powerful and influential man in Samaria. He was fully established in Samaria, and since his magic was supernatural, he amazed the Samaritans. He made great and mysterious claims, and small and great gave heed to him, declaring "This is the power of the god, the one called Great." These deluded people, like so many today, failed to realize that supernatural things may be satanic as well as divine. They acted on the premise that all supermundane things are divine. This false idea gave Simon a strong and deep hold upon the people. This had continued for a long time. Simon was no ordinary faker who had to get out of town in a hurry before he was found out. The ministry of Philip quickly broke Simon's hold upon the people, and even Simon had to yield to him. Under God's government every false idea that binds men is to be broken. This is a clear example.

8:12. But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

This adds more detail concerning Philip's message in Samaria. In the previous statement it is revealed that he "preached Christ unto them." Here we learn that he declared the things related to the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. Very few will agree, the blinding power of tradition being so strong, but I do not believe that "they were baptized" here means that they were dipped in water, or that they had water poured or sprinkled upon them. Why read a ritual into it every time the word *baptism* appears. If the Greek word here were translated instead of being transliterated, the nearest we could come to expressing the truth in English would be to say "they were identified." This means they were personally and publicly identified with Christ. This was of the utmost importance in the Acts period, for there was no blessing apart from it. See Matthew 10:32, 33, Mark 8:39, John 10:27, Romans 10:9. The Samaritans did not fail in this most important matter. Today many go through a ritual called "baptism" who never identify themselves with Jesus Christ. The ritual now substitutes for the reality.

8:13. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs, which were done.

This man who had amazed others by his own supernatural works is now amazed by the miracles performed by Philip. We are told by the Spirit of God that this man believed, and while his faith may have been based too much on the miraculous, nevertheless, it is real. Philip, God's official representative, identified him with the believers and he followed Philip wherever he went. His difficulty is caused by the fact that too much of his former life is being carried over into the new. We must not judge him too harshly because of the mistake he later made in seeking to buy God's gifts.

8:14-17. Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

These Samaritans who have already been identified with the name of the Lord Jesus are now to be identified with the Holy Spirit. To be "baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" does not mean to be dipped in water while the one who does it says that he does it in the name of the Lord Jesus. It means to have sought identification and to have become identified with the character of Jesus Christ in all that He is. Philip was able to make this official, but he could not identify them with the Holy Spirit. This in Judea and Samaria was the work of the apostles, so Peter and John are sent from Jerusalem for this great work. This work was so manifest that men could actually see its results. Simon was one who witnessed this work of God.

8:18.19. And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.

In all probability, Simon had probably paid out money to learn the feats of magic, which he had formerly practiced. He reasoned that this power could be purchased in the same manner. His thoughts were highly derogatory to the character of the Holy Spirit, and it was this that brought Peter's severe reprimand.

8:20.23. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter; for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.

The idea that the gifts of God can be bought with money was not original with Simon, neither did it die out with him. Men fondly imagine this even to this day. "You perish and your money perish" was Peter's answer to Simon, because he imagined God's gift could be purchased. And this is what would have taken place except for God's mercy. This "bruised reed" is not broken, this "smoking flax" is not quenched. An opportunity to "ease himself" (repent) of this great wickedness is given, and he is advised to beseech the Lord with a view to obtaining forgiveness for this wicked thought. Peter's strong words were not in vain for Simon did repent.

8:24. Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord' for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.

Since tradition has made Simon to be the father of many heresies, most commentators seem to make this request fit in with the tradition. The sincerity and honesty of his act is questioned, and the conclusion is arrived at that he did not repent. But Luke's words are too simple to allow any such interpretation. An opportunity to ease himself of this sin was offered Simon, and he reached for it like a drowning man will grab at anything thrown to him. He does right in asking the *one* who had spoken the word of condemnation to intercede for its reversal.

CONSIDER THE HEAVENS

The research worker whose field is the Word of God will, in the course of his studies, come upon intimations of truth, which call for further consideration. These suggestions of truth may take the form of questions, problems, or difficulties. At times they may be apparent discrepancies or contradictions. Again they may be phenomena, which intrigue him and beckon him *on* to further investigation.

As a rule such things as these cannot be immediately followed *out*, since they usually appear in connection with the study of other subjects. To *follow* them *out* at that moment would lead him astray from the subject at hand, so he usually makes a note of these matters in order that they may be taken up as time or need may dictate.

At times many of these questions, difficulties, or phenomena will relate to a single subject. In my own experience I jotted down or made a mental note of many questions, problems, difficulties, and

strange facts, all of which were related to *one* subject, the heavens. Here is a list of some of these.

1. Scholars tell us that the Hebrew word for "heaven" is always dual, never singular. Why is this? What is the real significance of the dual number in Hebrew?

2. In Genesis 1:8 God called the firmament "heaven." Why did He give the firmament this designation? How many things in Scripture are called "heaven"? What characteristics must a thing have before it can be designated by this title?

3. In Psalm 68:33 we read of "the heavens of the heavens." What is this? Is it the "heaven" of Genesis 1:1? Is it the firmament of Genesis 1:8? Is it another heaven altogether?

4. The word *heaven* is both singular and plural in the New Testament. What is the significance of this? Why is it first singular and then plural in the two occurrences in Matthew 24:29?

5. Why would *one* writer use the singular and another the plural in giving the same statement? This is done in the Greek of Matthew 4:17 and Luke 3:22

6. Of the fifty-four occurrences of the word *heaven* in the book of Revelation, why is the singular used fifty-three times and the plural *only* once (Revelation 12:12)?

7. Daniel declares that "the heavens do rule" (Daniel 4:26). What are these "heavens" that rule?

8. God is sometimes called "heaven." See Luke 15:18 and John 3:27. Why is this?

9. What are the "heavenly places" of Ephesians 1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10?

10. What did God create when in the beginning He created "the heavens?"

11. Just what does the word "heaven" mean?

A list of questions such as these related to a single subject evolves over a long period of time. These are a valuable asset as they tell the student what he does not know, and they serve as a guide in his research work. In true research one must study first to get the right questions, then he must study to get the right answers.

The final question listed above was added when I came to the conclusion that I had no adequate knowledge of God's revelation concerning the heavens. The scraps of truth I had picked up here and there were not sufficient. I needed to follow the example of David (Psalm 8:3) and consider God's heavens. This study has now extended over many years and has been most profitable. The truth uncovered has provided satisfactory answers to every question listed above. I wonder if my readers are interested in this subject.

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, OUR HOPE

In Ephesians 4:6 Paul uses the "one hope" of our calling as an illustration of the unity of the "one body" and "one spirit." Previous to this in his first letter to Timothy he emphatically declares that the Lord Jesus Christ is the hope of the believer in this the dispensation of the grace of God. In other words, nothing more than Christ and nothing less than Christ is our hope. This truth is of great value if one desires to examine himself to see if he is satisfied with the Lord Jesus, to see if he is now finding his all in Christ.

We need to give careful thought to Christ as our hope, especially so when men are pointing to a variety of things as being our expectation. They would lead us to engage our hearts with some great event, as if this were our hope. We would thus be led away from Christ as the substance of our hope to some event, which He will bring to pass.

Because our calling is one that has no relationship to the promises of God, we are shut up to Christ as our hope. Paul declares in Romans 9:4 that the promises belong to Israel, and the man of faith will take God at His word concerning this and think accordingly. In Paul's epistles written after Acts 28:28 everything that seems to be a promise for us will be found on closer examination to be a promise concerning Christ. See Colossians 4:4. If it does not happen to Christ it will never happen to us. Our hope is in Him. The nature of our blessings are such that they are based upon statements of facts which we are to take by faith. Thus instead of holding a promise in our hands, we have the reality now in Christ.

An illustration of this can be found in Matthew 20. In the parable recorded there, the householder hired laborers and agreed with them for a penny a day (20:2). But when the second group was hired, he said, "Whatsoever is right I will give you" (20:4). From this we can readily see that while the first group could put their faith in an exact promise, the second group had to put their faith only in the householder.

Lest some should push this illustration too far, it needs to be noted that in this dispensation our Lord is not hiring laborers, neither is He paying wages. He is dealing with men in grace, and He would have all men place their faith and have their hope in Him.

There is a simple statement in **2 Timothy 4:1**, which carries a tremendous amount of truth, but it has been neglected by most students of the Word.

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom.

The word appearing here is *epiphaneia*, and it does not mean the second coming. Neither is this the *epiphaneia* that is related to His second coming as set forth in 2 Thessalonians 2:8, where it is translated "brightness." The *epiphaneia* set forth in 2 Timothy 4:1 is one of the first divine manifestations that will take place when God resumes His kingdom purposes. The word means literally "a shining upon," and can best be translated into English by the word *manifestation*. In John 7:2 the brothers of our Lord urged Him to "shew thyself (manifest yourself) to the world," but He replied by saying that it was not yet the time for it. This has been long delayed, but someday it will be, and when it is He will "judge the quick and the dead."

To "judge" is to set in order or in 'place. The "quick" are the living. Thus we learn that the Lord will set in order the living and the dead at His manifestation and His kingdom. When He does this we know we will be set in the place and at the task He has for us. If we are living when this takes place it will simplify the matter. We will not need to be raised from the dead. If we are dead we will need to be raised, and this will be in harmony with His purposes for us. We are willing to leave it all to Him. We make no demands. Our hope is in Him.

THE EDITOR TO HIS FRIENDS

****These final paragraphs are being written on the last day of 1951. It has been a good year, even though we have had to face certain personal problems, which were the outflow of our difficult experiences in 1950. Nevertheless, we have found our great God and Savior equal to every circumstance, and as the year is reviewed we know he has been active in our behalf. God, in this dispensation always works secretly, providing us with blessings, which are untraceable, but which we know came from Him. The past year has been rich in spiritual experiences. Much truth has been added to our store as we have diligently searched the pages of God's Word. Not a week has passed but that someone has sought us out who was anxious to be helped with the truth. The ministry has followed the same constant and consistent pattern throughout this year that it has in the past. Perpetual and progressive Bible study is our work before the Lord, and it will continue to be this as long as life shall last. There is very little demand for truth in this day, and among those who want it, most of them want very little. Very few are able to maintain any real purpose to continue in the Word. We must never forget the words of the Lord Jesus to those who believed on Him, "If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed." John 8:31.

About eighteen years ago I came into contact with a man who gave me some of the best practical advice I have ever received. This was at the time that I was seeking to arrange my affairs so that my life could be devoted to study and teaching. The years that have passed since then have demonstrated the soundness of his friendly counsel. Among the things which he told me was that no one could ever be a student of the Word unless he had an immense amount of leisure time, time with no demand upon it, time in which you studied the Word because there was nothing else to do. In all these years I have never found any such time as this, but this has been overcome by neglecting everything else for the study of the Word. This does not mean that all I do is study, but it does mean that this labor of love has the first claim on my time no matter what else there may be to do. This often produces a state of chaos in other departments of *The Word of Truth Ministry*, but this cannot be helped, as this is the only way I can find leisure time, even though it is manufactured.

****We often receive suggestions from well meaning friends that we should run this ministry like a business, that letters should be answered the day they are received, and that all orders for literature should go out in the next mail. This sounds very good, and it is the way we would like to do it, but this would mean that correspondence would have to be considered as preeminent. You will hardly believe it when I say that it would take twice as much time to properly answer all the letters we receive as it does to write the magazine. And in order to conduct our work like a business we would have to have several paid workers who could be held responsible for certain tasks and discharged when and if these tasks were not done properly. When things get in a mess here, I look about for some one to "fire," but there is only Mrs. Sellers and Herbert Baudistel, and they cannot be discharged. Most of my readers will have heard about the sign on the wall of a western saloon, "Don't shoot the piano player, he is doing his best." Remember this when you are inclined to blame the Editor for not doing better.

****In these days of rapid inflation, it takes a long time for income to catch up with increasing costs. In order to cut expenses wherever possible we have decided to send out the magazine without envelopes. If any copies should arrive in damaged condition, we will be glad to send another to replace it.

****Our time from September 12 to November 12 was given to travel and ministry in the Midwest and East. Mrs. Sellers was able to make the entire trip. We enjoyed every minute of it, and it stands out as our most pleasant experience.

****Since we cannot correspond, a few personal items in this department are apropos in view of the many inquiries which we receive. Mrs. Sellers continues to gain in health, but at times her ambition exceeds her strength and she is inclined to overdo. Our daughter Jane and her husband (Mr. and Mrs. Fred R. Hancock) are both well and happy. They live in Victorville, California, about a hundred miles from us. They visit us twice each month for a day or two. Jane is still teaching, but this will be her final year. They are building a house and hope to be in it this summer. My associate in this ministry, Herbert H. Baudistel, is employed as a Mechanical Engineer with the Los Angeles Water and Power Company. He makes his home with us and gives invaluable assistance in this ministry. He is a capable teacher of the Word, and he will be glad to minister to any group large or small within reach of Los Angeles.

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