

THE WORD OF TRUTH

OTIS Q. SELLERS, Editor April 1952

Vol. XIII, No. 1

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TRUE CONVICTION DEMANDS ENLIGHTENMENT

In the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ there came the time when He told His disciples that it would be to their advantage (expedient) that He depart (John 16:7). He could best administer heavens' government from the seat of that government, the heavens. He had come to earth to die, not to reign as a king. He had established the seat of His government in the heavens, and once His mission on earth was completed He would return to it and begin His glorious reign (Psalm 103:19). He told His disciples that if He did not go away the Comforter (parakletos) would not come to them, but if He departed, He would send Him unto them. This Comforter has already been identified as "the Spirit of truth" (John 14:16, 17). Following this our Lord added that when the Spirit of truth came to them, He would do SOMETHING in relationship to the world (mankind) in regard to sin, righteousness, and judgment. The thing that our Lord said the Spirit of truth would do for the world in respect to sin, righteousness, and judgment is represented by the Greek word *elegxei*, which is the future, active form of the verb *elegcho* (pronounced el-ENG-kho). Therefore, it is evident that all we need to do is to find the exact meaning of the Greek verb *elegcho*, and we will know what it is that the Spirit of truth is to do in regard to mankind concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment. This would seem to be simple, but it is not as simple as it seems.

This matter has become somewhat confused, due I believe, to the fact that most expositors have sought to make this word mean something, which they believe the Spirit is doing among men today. They take these words of our Lord as a statement of the operation of the Spirit of truth in this the dispensation of the grace of God. Concerning John 16:8, J. C Ryle wrote **in 1873**:

This sentence is perhaps one of the most difficult in the whole of St. John's Gospel. Men will probably never agree about it entirely till the Lord comes. There is something in it, which seems to baffle all interpreters.

The commonest explanation is that which regards the passage as describing the ordinary operations of the Holy Ghost in saving God's people. It is He who convinces people that they are sinners; convinces them that they must be saved by Christ's righteousness, and not their own; and convinces them that there is a judgment to come. This interpretation is the one adopted by Alford and many others. No doubt it contains truth, but it is not at all clear to me that it is the truth of the passage. It is open, in short, to grave objections, and, in common with some commentators, I cannot feel satisfied with it. For popular addresses this view may do pretty well. But, I venture to think, no man who sits down and calmly weighs the meaning of words, can fail to see that it is open to very serious objections.

Inward conviction is certainly not the meaning of the word rendered "reprove." It is rather refutation by proofs, convicting by unanswerable arguments as an advocate that is meant.

Believers and God's people are not said to be the subjects of the Spirit's reproofing work. It is the "world" that is to be reproofed; and this very world, in this last sermon, is continually put in contrast with Christ's people.

Add to all this, that the latter part of the ninth, tenth, and eleventh verses can hardly be said to suit and square in with the verse we are considering. If our Lord had simply said, "The Spirit shall convince your hearers of their own sins, of my imputed righteousness, and of a day of judgment," it would have been plain enough. But unfortunately there are several things added which really do not chime in with this mode of interpretation. I repeat, that no intelligent Christian, of course, will think of denying that conviction of sin is a special and saving work of the Holy Ghost on the heart of believers. But it does not therefore follow that it is the thing taught in this passage. It is truth, but not the truth of this text.

I believe the meaning to be something of this kind. "After the day of Pentecost the Holy Ghost, the great Advocate of Me and my people, shall come into this world with such mighty power that He shall silence, convince, and stop the mouths of your enemies, and oblige them, however unwillingly, to think of Me and my cause very differently from what they think now. In particular, He shall convince them of their own sin, of My righteousness, and of the victory which I have won over Satan. He shall, in short, be a crushing Advocate whom the world shall not be able to resist or gainsay." (*Quoted from Expository Thoughts on St. John*, by J. C. Ryle).

This quotation reveals the struggle that Ryle had with this passage. He could not believe that the word *elegcho* here described "the ordinary operations of the Holy Ghost in saving God's people." He made it a much greater work than this, but failed to see that the Spirit of truth is NOT doing today the mighty work that is described here. He says, "There is something in it which seems to baffle all interpreters." This is right, and it still baffles interpreters and will continue to do so until they see that the Lord here is not revealing the ministry of the Spirit in this dispensation, the dispensation of the grace of God. This great work of the Spirit belongs to the kingdom, and it is suspended and in abeyance until such time as God resumes His kingdom purposes.

In getting the meaning of a Greek word there are those who feel we should consult all "authorities" and then abide by "the consensus of scholarly opinion." Thus, instead of settling things by the Word of God, they are to be settled by the majority opinion of the scholars. But scholastic opinion is a shifting sand, and with all due respect .for it, it is not going to help us much in finding what the Lord meant when He said the Spirit of truth would *elegxei* the world.

When men first began to turn the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament into other languages, the first translations were from Greek into Latin. When they came upon the Greek word *elegcho* in John 16:8 they used the Latin word *arguet* as its equivalent. This Latin word meant to make clear, to

present information concerning a subject in such manner that the truth became the conviction of the hearer. Our word *argue* comes from this Latin word. When men "argue" a matter they should present information in order to convince a man of the validity of a proposition, but, alas, most arguing has to do with abusing, ridiculing, or belittling an opponent.

Thus it seems that the earliest translators of the Greek Scriptures understood the word *elegcho* to mean that the Spirit of truth would impart information to mankind concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment in such manner that men would stand informed and convinced in regard to these three things. What men might do with this information is not the subject of these verses. It needs to be remembered that men do not always act properly on the facts in their possession. Nicodemus, speaking of "the rulers of the Jews" said, "We know that thou art a teacher come from God" (John 3:2), but the very men who knew this were the ones who conspired to put Christ to death.

When men began to turn the Bible into English it was necessary for them to find some word, which would express accurately the idea contained in the Greek word *elegcho*. It is evident that the King James translators used the word *reprove*. This word in Elizabethan English had a variety of meanings such as reject, disprove, convince, and rebuke. And, so that there would be no mistake as to what they meant by reprove, the King James translators put "convince" in the margin. As the years passed the word *reprove* came to mean only "rebuke," with a connotation of deliberateness. Therefore, by the time the Revised Version was translated it did not fit; so "reprove" was dropped for "convict." Among other translators Rotherham used *reprove*; Darby used *bring demonstration*; Wilson (used *convict*; Moffatt used *convict*; Weymouth used *convict*, but placed a footnote "bring demonstration to;" Goodspeed uses *bring conviction to*; and the revision of the American Standard Version used *convince*.

Among the commentators, lexicographers, and theological writings I have consulted there is a wide variety of opinion, which when analyzed is pretty well in agreement. "To overwhelm with argument or facts;" "to impart information concerning;" "to bring conviction by an unanswerable argument;" "to bring conviction;" "to convince." These are the phrases generally used in seeking to express and clarify the meaning of the Greek word *elegcho*.

Our greatest difficulty rests in finding an English word that means as much as the Greek word *elegcho*. All our words seem to fall short. One writer says:

In John 16:8 no single word in modern English will translate the word *elegcho*, and "reprove" (A V), "convince" (A V margin), and "convict" (RV) are all unsatisfactory.

Translators and expositors have used *reprove*, *convict*, *convince*, *enlighten*, *expose*, and *bring demonstration*. Not one of these words is an adequate or satisfactory translation of *elegcho*, so the best anyone can do is to take one of them, use it as a translation and then explain at length what is meant by the English word used. Furthermore, this matter cannot be settled by proclamation. For anyone to announce in a headline that "Elegxei ton Kosmon," means "Convict the World not *Enlighten* the World," as the Editor of *Questions and Answers* does, is just another case of Don Quixote dueling with the windmills. Let us have a definition of the word *convict*, and, furthermore let it be explained how the Spirit of truth can convict a man and "not enlighten him. True conviction demands enlightenment. The dictionary defines **convict** as follows:

1. To prove or find guilty of an offense or crime charged or of wrong; to pronounce or find guilty, as of a crime by legal decision, or of sin by one's conscience.
2. To demonstrate by proof or evidence; to prove. (Obsolete).
3. To prove or show to be false or in the wrong; to refute; confute; convince. (Obsolete).
4. To defeat, to doom to destruction. (Obsolete).

From this we see that *convict* has four possible meanings, three of which have become obsolete, so that *convict* has only one meaning in English today. In view of this it will be well if those who insist that *elegcho* means "*convict*" will give us their definition of this word. Do they by this word mean what is set forth in the first definition above? If so, then I deny that *convict* is an adequate or satisfactory translation of *elegcho*, and I further insist that "*convict*" misrepresents the truth declared in this passage. Is it the ministry of the Holy Spirit to sit as judge, weigh the evidence, find men guilty? Is not this the prerogative of the Son? See John 5:22, 30. Did not the Apostle Paul set forth a ministry of the law by which "every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God"? Why then attribute this work to the Spirit of truth?

If by the word *convict* these men mean the second or third definition set forth above, then I will agree that *convict* is a fair (but only a fair) translation of *elegcho*. However, since both the second and third definitions above are now obsolete, I see no reason why *convict* should be used.

Our English language is virile and there is nothing static about it. Words lose old meanings and take on new. Reprove and convict no longer mean what they did several centuries ago. The "consensus of scholarship" that can be brought forth in favor of *convict* as a translation are men who lived years ago when *convict* had a different meaning from what it has today.

When I first set forth in writing my belief that the kingdom of the heavens is premillennial, and that it precedes the second coming of Christ, I brought forth John 16:7-11 as a clear statement of one of the great factors that will produce that new world order under which men will live when the dispensation of grace has come to an end. In this connection I said:

The word *reprove* in this passage no longer expresses the truth contained in the Greek word which it translates (*elegcho*). Reprove is now a harsh word containing the idea of rebuke, while this Greek word is a tender word; nevertheless, one of great force. It means to enlighten by making known the facts. It contains also the ideas of "to shame, to put to shame; to do so by proving one in the wrong." (The Word of Truth, Vol. XI, No. 5).

This simple statement brought a reaction that I hardly expected. It created more interest than anything I had written for months. Some seemed to lose sight of the truth being presented, some even lost sight of the paragraph, and saw nothing but the word *enlighten*. A number of correspondents wrote in and asked for additional light, especially in regard to the use of *enlighten* as a translation of *elegcho*. One detractor pounced upon the word *tender* and ridiculed my thoughts. This word had come from James 5:11 (tender mercy) as it was my understanding that the work of the Spirit set forth in John 16:8 is a tender work. If any do not like my understanding of the word *elegcho*, I leave it to them to believe that it is a harsh word, or that it is neither harsh nor tender but neutral. However, I am convinced that *elegcho* in John 16:8 is expressive of the softer dealings of God with man; therefore, a tender word.

As to the word *enlighten*, I remembered that this had first come to me about twenty-five years ago from the writings of Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer (*He That is Spiritual*, page 26). When I first read this in his writings it struck me with peculiar force. I felt it was highly expressive, and I had used the words *enlighten* and *illuminate* for years in setting forth the truth of John 16:8.

This interest indicated that a further article was needed, and this was published under title of *The Spirit of Truth* in Volume XI, Number 6. In this study I quoted Dr. Arno C. Gaebelein showing that he taught that *elegcho* meant "conviction by demonstration. It means conviction by an unanswerable argument." Archbishop Trench was quoted showing that he felt that *elegcho* meant "to rebuke another, with such effectual wielding of the victorious arms of the truth, as to bring him, if not always to a confession, yet at least to a conviction, of his sin." Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer was quoted

from his latest writings as holding "the word connotes the impartation of understanding regarding the subject in question. With this in view the word enlighten is perhaps the most satisfactory."

Following this I declared: These quotations from others have been given to show that I have not acted arbitrarily in using the word enlighten in connection with John 16:7, 8. In fact, I would prefer a stronger, more expressive word, one that sets forth the ideas of imparting understanding or giving intelligence regarding the subject in question. But I know of no such word in common use. The word enlighten comes the nearest of any English word I know to express the truth of the Greek word *elegcho*. (The Word of Truth, Volume XI, Number 6).

This presentation of my views I believe was honest, open and straightforward. But the Editor of *Questions and Answers* became quite stirred up about this, causing him to declare that Gaebelein and Chafer were not "erudite authorities," therefore their testimony was worthless, and that the "sole erudite authority Mr. Sellers cites is Dr. Richard Chenivix Trench, Archbishop of Dublin, Ireland, author of *Synonyms of the New Testament*." In regard to this quotation the charge is made:

But what does Mr. Sellers do to the statements of the noted Doctor? Nothing really unique, for he merely changes a word to mean something other than the author intended to convey. Then he takes liberties to leave out of the quoted paragraph an important clause and also neglects to add the succeeding paragraph that does not fit in with Mr. Sellers peculiar viewpoint. *Questions and Answers* June 1951, page 5.

It is with regret that I discover that the word *unneeded* came out as *unheeded* in my quotation of Archbishop Trench. This was a typographical error, which every editor dreads and seeks to avoid. But this error did not misrepresent the writer. The quotation was made as brief as possible to conserve space, but in view of the above charges I will give the quotation in full. Archbishop Trench deals with the distinction between *epitima* and *elengcho*, concerning which he says:

One may rebuke another without bringing the rebuked to a conviction of any fault on his part; and this, either because there *was* no fault, and the rebuke was therefore unneeded or unjust; or else because, though there was such fault, the rebuke was ineffectual to bring the offender to own it; and in this possibility of 'rebuking' for sin, without 'convincing' of sin, lies the distinction between these two words. In *epitiman* lies simply the notion of rebuking; which word can therefore be used of one unjustly checking or blaming another; in this sense Peter 'began to rebuke' Jesus (*erxato epitiman*, Matt. 16:22; cf. 19:13; Luke 18:39): or ineffectually, and without any profit to the person rebuked, who is not thereby brought to see his sin; as when the penitent thief 'rebuked' (*epetima*) his fellow malefactor (Luke 23:40); cf. Mark 9:25). But *elegchein* is a much more pregnant word; it is so to rebuke another, with such effectual wielding of the victorious arms of the truth, as to bring him, if not to a confession, yet at least to a conviction, of his sin, just as in juristic Greek, *elegchein* is not merely to reply to, but to refute, an opponent.

When we keep this distinction well in mind, what a light does it throw on a multitude of passages in the N. T.; and how much deeper a meaning does it give them. Thus our Lord could demand, "Which of you convinceth (*elegchei*) Me of sin? (John 8:46). Many 'rebuked' Him; many laid sin to his charge (Matt. 9:3; John 9:16); but none brought sin home to his conscience. Other passages will also gain from realizing the fullness of the meaning of *elegchein*, as John 3:20; 8:9; I Cor. 14:24, 25; but above all the great passage, John 16:8: "When He (the Comforter) is come, He will *reprove* the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:" for so we have rendered the words, following in our 'reprove' the Latin 'arguet;' although few, I think, that have in any degree sought to sound the depth of our Lord's words, but will admit that 'convince', which unfortunately our Translators have relegated to the margin, would have been the preferable rendering, giving a depth and fullness of meaning to this work of the Holy Ghost, which 'reprove' in some part fails to express. "He who shall come in my room, shall so bring home to the world its own 'sin,' my perfect 'righteousness' God's

coming 'judgment,' shall so 'convince' it of these, that it shall be obliged itself to acknowledge them; and in this acknowledgment may find, shall be in the right way to find, its own blessedness and salvation." (*Synonyms of the New Testament*, by Richard Chenevix Trench, D.D.)

The above paragraphs are worthy of careful consideration. The reader can compare this with my previous partial quotation, and instead of finding out that I failed to quote a part that did not fit in with my viewpoint, he will find that the omitted part greatly strengthens my argument. For if Trench is right in his understanding of *elegcho*, then it is most evident that the Spirit is not doing this work today, and when He does do it, it will be so revolutionary that the world will never again before God be the same. A new world order will have been introduced.

After weighing the facts, the student can take his choice as to whether *elegcho* means reprove, convict, convince, enlighten, demonstrate, illuminate, or expose. I refuse to be bound by anyone of these inadequate words, even though I favor the word *enlighten*. I insist that when the Spirit of truth does for mankind that work which the Lord meant by *elegcho*, the world will never be the same again. Mankind will be under a new order, a new responsibility, a new dispensation. Then God can say of the whole of mankind that which He said to Israel in the wilderness and to those who heard the gospel in the Acts period:

For this commandment, which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it. See I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil. Deuteronomy 30:11-15.

There are ministers who seem to think that when they say a thing and hit the pulpit for emphasis that that makes it true. But it, does not even become true if the people are moved by such dramatics to say "Amen." Neither can the meaning of *elegcho* be settled by someone announcing in a headline that it means *convict* not *enlighten*. For headlines that may do very well, but as Ryle said, "I venture to think, no man who sits down and weighs the meaning of words, can fail to see that it is open to very serious objections."

The comprehensiveness of the word *elegcho* is sometimes startling. I would not try to encompass its meaning in anyone English word. The Septuagint translators used this word more than fifty times to set forth certain truths in the Old Testament. The first occurrence is found in Genesis 21:25 where we are told that Abraham reprovved Abimelech because of a well of water, which Abimelech's servants had violently taken away. Did Abraham "bawl him out?" Did He rebuke him? Did he find him guilty? If Abraham did any of these things he showed himself lacking understanding of common courtesy. No, Abraham did none of these things. He imparted to Abimelech all the facts concerning a matter of which he was entirely in the dark. Abimelech's response was that he did not know who had done this, neither had Abraham told him before, neither had it come to his ears before that day.

Having considered every available fact, having considered every occurrence of every form of this word in the Septuagint and the New Testament, having weighed the opinions of every scholar whose writings are available to me, I am convinced that this word does not mean "to convict." To "convict" means to prove guilty or to find guilty, and you cannot prove or find a man guilty of righteousness.

SELF – TESTIMONY - - CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

The things set forth in this study are for the greater part the personal experiences of the writer, so to avoid any ambiguity, I will not try to write impersonally. I hope to be able to set forth some principles in relationship to the truth by using as a background the grace of God in my own life.

That miracle of grace, which brought me to know and to trust in Jesus Christ as my Savior happened in the year 1919. This came about under such circumstances that I at once found myself in the midst of a doctrinal controversy which concerned a number of matters, one of which was whether men were saved by grace or by grace plus works. The premillennial and postmillennial controversy was rife at that time. The first minister I sat under after I came to know Jesus Christ was an ardent premillennialist, but before a year had passed the church had changed pastors and the new minister was just as ardently postmillennialist. I determined to become at once a student of the Bible in the hope of receiving some facts whereby I could come to a true conclusion concerning these and other matters. Today I glory in that grace which led me, an eighteen-year old boy, to try to master the contents of God's Word.

My own circumstances soon changed and I found myself in an atmosphere less charged with controversy so that I was able to spend the first years of my Christian experience in getting the simple historical contents of the Bible straight in my mind. Progress was rapid as most of my thoughts were devoted to knowing what God had said in the pages of His book. Recognizing the need for "right division" of the word of truth; I accepted and taught the dispensational divisions and system of prophetic interpretation made popular by the *Scofield Reference Bible*.

In the year 1929 a new set of circumstances forced me into the task of making my own independent studies of certain doctrines in order to be able to deal faithfully and honestly with teachings which were being vigorously advocated by influential members of the church of which I was then the pastor. This teaching in the main was that a "divine healing" program was absolutely essential in the work of any church if it stood complete and perfect in the will of God. The basis of this argument was that Paul's first letter to the Corinthians revealed God's program for the visible church at the present time. Here they found "gifts of healing," "working of miracles," and "speaking with tongue." I was in an exceedingly difficult spot due to the fact that Scofield headed this section (I Cor. 12:1-14:40): "Spiritual gifts in relation to. the body, the church, and Christian ministry."

At this time a little pamphlet came into my hands under the title of *Tongues, Signs and Visions, Not God's Order for Today*, by A. E. Bishop. I read this avidly inasmuch as the introduction was by C. I. Scofield, but it left me mystified. It seemed to be hinting at truth that it never got around to declaring, and it suggested positions, which the writer himself did not seem to take. One thought from it stuck in my mind: "After repeated study of the Epistles written after Paul's arrival at Rome, I am convinced that in them is found a curative teaching for all the present-day delusions and fanaticisms found among many of the most sincere saints in the Church." The writer did not follow this statement out to any conclusions, but this was my first introduction to that blessed body of truth, which I was later to hear branded on every hand as ultra-dispensationalism, hyper-dispensationalism, and Bullingerism. Not one of these epithets ever affected me beyond my eardrums. If this were the truth, I cared not what men called it. My heart longed for more information on this subject.

A month or so after this pamphlet came into my hands a friend gave me a book by Sir Robert Anderson, which had the fascinating title of *The Silence of God*. I did not know what it dealt with when I began to read it but my heart leaped with joy when I found that it contained the information I so desired. It was from this book that I first saw the truth that the thirty-three years covered by the book of Acts was a unique dispensation. I determined to follow this truth out to all its conclusions,

and this began a process of study which seven years later led me to embrace as being God's truth that Paul's declaration in Acts 28:28 marks a dispensational boundary line. I came to see that the Acts period in its entirety was related to God's kingdom purposes, that Paul's declaration suspended God's kingdom purposes and opened the way for the disclosure of a new body of truth which Paul calls "the secret." This started me on a quest for a full and accurate understanding of this body of truth; which I believe is revealed only in Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon, the epistles which Paul wrote after that point marked by Acts 28:28. This study of that body of truth which Paul calls "the secret" has gone on now for eighteen years, and it is far from complete.

From the very first I have sought and obtained the writings of those who before me have recognized the Acts 28:28 dispensational boundary line. On the whole I have not found these to be adequate or satisfactory expressions of the truth of the secret, but this is to be expected since no truth that has long been neglected and buried could ever be brought forth in its pristine purity. These men have aimed in the right direction, and their works show that they have the range, but they have not yet hit the target. Neither have I, but I will continue to fire after carefully correcting my aim upon the basis of facts which are turned up from perpetual and progressive research in the Word.

It is my conviction that the greatest and most important truth in the Word of God for the time in which we live is that truth called "the secret" in Ephesians 3:3 and Colossians 1:26 (In both of these passages "mystery" should be translated secret). To gain full and accurate understanding of the seven last epistles of Paul, which contain this body of truth has been my passion and goal for eighteen years. This task is not as simple as some would make it to be. I stand in amazement at those men who can start with little or nothing and in six months time have a full understanding of the truth of the secret. This they do with the aid of a few books purchased for a few dollars. From their smug position of oracular certainty they look down in pity upon all such as I who are still laboring to solve the innumerable problems and clear up the hundreds of difficulties that are evident to all who make a penetrating study of Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. Some of these men claim to be teachers, but they capitalize upon their hearers inadequate knowledge and lack of ability to analyze that which is offered to them as absolute truth.

I had no more than gotten well started upon my purpose to make an independent and exhaustive study of the seven last epistles of Paul when I came to the conclusion that any conclusions I arrived at would be open to question unless I first made a careful study of the first six epistles which Paul wrote (1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians and Romans) and the book of Acts which gives the history of the time in which these were written. I was quite familiar with these, but had never studied them in the light that they were written before the Acts 28:28 dispensational change. To further my own studies and to intensify my efforts I expounded these books to the three separate groups I was teaching. This took time, and caused criticism from some in my classes who wanted to hear nothing but Ephesians and Colossians. I sought to explain, but as my explanations were not received by some, I ignored the criticism inasmuch as in my studies I serve the Lord and not those who attend my classes. I still believe that no man can climb to the heights of Ephesian truth unless he uses the ladder of Paul's earlier epistles. Furthermore, I believe that these epistles can only be understood by means of the truth revealed in Acts and the four Gospels, and that these books will never speak God's truth to us without a solid understanding of the Old Testament.

Very early in my studies of "the secret" I came to the conclusion that I would never get very far until I had made a careful study of man's nature and destiny. This led me into labors that occupied much of my time for several years, and when I returned to the study of Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians some of my problems and difficulties no longer existed.

It was the phrase "in heavenly places" in Ephesians 1:3, 1:20, 2:6, and 3:10, and the phrase "in heaven" and "under heaven" in Colossians 1:5 and 23 that led me to make a study of everything in the Word of God related to the word *heaven*. This subject has been one of almost constant study in the past eighteen years, and on four separate occasions I have gone to the Word to make a new study of all that is revealed there concerning the heavens. My last careful study of this truth has been in the past two years and has been the most profitable of all. The total result of these studies are soon to be set forth in these pages.

About four years ago in connection with certain studies I was making in Ephesians and Colossians I determined that I could advance no further until I had made a new and complete study of the Greek word *ecclesia* and its corresponding Hebrew word *qahal*. This study was most fruitful, but when it was about complete I felt the need for further studies in the kingdom. I had felt this need when I studied "the heavens" and came to "the kingdom of the heavens" and again when I studied *ecclesia* and realized that there was an "ecclesia of the kingdom." This study resulted in one of the greatest advances in truth that I have been able to make. My findings on the kingdom are now being set forth in numerous articles. I have pursued this study to its end. Everything I have found concerning the kingdom has made the dispensation of grace more glorious and has made the truth of the secret to shine forth with a radiance that I had never seen before. Since this dispensation of grace is a parenthesis in God's kingdom purposes, it can never be properly understood until- it is seen in relationship to the sentence God was writing, the sentence in which he inserted this dispensation of grace. It will be my purpose in the near future to set forth my findings under the title of *The Glories of Grace*, and I believe this advance and clarification of truth concerning grace will bring joy to the hearts of all those who love the secret.

Before bringing this article to a close, I must deal with the matters that suggested its title. When I saw that Acts 28:28 marked a dispensational boundary line I determined to follow this truth out to all its conclusions. I have never compromised, temporized, or waited for favorable circumstances. The full acceptance of the truth concerning Acts 28:28 marks a crisis in my life and ministry, which I can now refer to as "before and after." There are things, which I believed before this, which I no longer hold. There are truths, which I hold now which I knew nothing about before. Through the years I have become convinced that certain truths are pillars in that body of truth we call "the secret." To fail to have one of the pillars in place, or to seek to pull one out will endanger the whole structure. Certain of these fundamental truths are now under attack, and in some instances are being attacked by the very men who should be doing the most to uphold them. Four of these fundamental truths I will deal with 'briefly.

The Extent of the Dispensation of Grace

The term "dispensation of grace" was often upon my lips before I came to know the truth of the secret. At present it is hard for me to say just what I did believe about it, but some ancient notes indicate that I held that when we put our faith in Jesus Christ we came under God's dispensation of grace; therefore, the dispensation of grace was God's method of dealing with His own in the world. This idea was carried over for a time and was imposed upon the truth of the secret, but the time came when I saw that grace is God's present method of dealing with mankind as a whole. I hold this truth to be of major importance, a pillar of truth, which if pulled down will weaken the whole structure of truth revealed in Ephesians and Colossians. This truth is supported by a multitude of Scriptural facts which when they are brought together give the most positive testimony that God's present method of dealing with mankind is entirely gracious.

I Timothy 4:10 is sufficient to prove this. To deny it is to deny the truth declared in Ephesians 3:1-3, Titus 2:11 and Titus 3:4. These are only a few facts. There are many more. Another major article

on this subject will appear in a later issue. It shall be my purpose to contend earnestly for this great truth, bringing forth every pertinent fact from the Word of God in defense of it.

God's Present Purpose

Before coming to know the truth of the Acts 28:28 dispensational boundary line, it was my understanding that God's purpose in this dispensation of grace was "to take from among the Gentiles a people for His name" and that these Gentiles along with a few saved from Israel were to form "the body of Christ." It was my belief that God had postponed His kingdom purposes in order to call out "the church." But once I came to a measure of understanding of the truth revealed in Ephesians and Colossians it became my deep conviction that God's present purpose is to provide a demonstration of the graciousness of His character, a demonstration that will stand as the historical witness throughout all eternity. He is doing this by means of an administration of grace. I believe that a true understanding of God's present purpose is essential to any proper understanding of present truth. This truth is now under attack, but I consider it so vital that even to neglect its proclamation would be upon my part failure to contend for the truth.

The Heavens of Heavens

Before I came to know the foundational facts of that body of truth which Paul calls "the secret," I believed that there were only two realms of divine activity, the heavens and the earth. Today I know that these two realms do not suffice to encompass all the truth that God has revealed in His word. I believe that there are three realms of divine activity: the earth, the heavens, and the heavens of heavens. It is my conviction that God's present calling of believers, the trophies of this dispensation of grace are to be blessed among super-heavenly beings and in super-heavenly places, as declared in Ephesians 1:3. I believe that those of the kingdom calling who "sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" are blessed with heavenly blessings among heavenly beings in heavenly places. To me "super-heavenly" is the real meaning of *epouranios*, and I refuse to abandon this simply because someone declares that if *epouranios* means "super-heavenly" then *epigeios* must mean "**super-earthly**." That is exactly what it does mean, and I will prove this to the satisfaction of every truth lover in a forthcoming pamphlet under the title of *Satanic Counterfeits*. I hold that to abandon the idea of three realms of divine activity and blessing is to abandon our distinctive ministry, calling, and destiny.

The Out-resurrection of Philippians 3: 11

The debate concerning this is whether this resurrection is a "spiritual experience" which Paul sought to attain, or whether it refers to literal resurrection, the taking of men from among those who are literally dead. I believe that Paul spoke here of an actual and literal resurrection from the dead to which Paul desired to advance, and that to participate in this resurrection is the hope of all in God's present calling. In other words, that company of believers who are to be allotted to Christ for the special purpose of extolling the glories of God's grace will be raised in this -resurrection.

I consider these four great truths to be fundamental and vital to any true understanding of that body of truth which Paul calls the secret. There are those who are eliminating these truths with nothing

more than the statement that they do not believe them. They demand that their "I say so" be accepted as settling the matter, and when men want to question them further they wrap themselves in their robes of aloofness and declare that they do not care to indulge in arguments.

I do not wish to be contentious, but I do believe in contending earnestly for the things that I believe to be the truth of God. I refuse to compromise or be quiet for the sake of unity or fellowship. I will not hold back for fear that some will be upset. Truth needs no champions, no more than God needs helpers, but man can seek no higher service today than to champion the cause of truth.

STUDIES IN ACTS

Chapter 8:26-40

8:26. And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went.

The numerous strange events of which we read in this portion are in reality only strange to us because we read them in the light of the time in which we live, a time when the heavens are silent and all of God's works are secret and untraceable. The entire book of Acts is a revelation of things related to the kingdom of the heavens, even though it is only the initial stage of heaven's government. This was the stage that our Lord likened to the blade of growing grain (Mark 4:26-29). Certain manifestations that will characterize and be common under heavens' government are here seen in their initial stages. One of these is the absolute, unmistakable, unquestionable direction, which the Lord in heaven will give to the service of all servants of the kingdom (Isaiah 30:21). This is seen in the opening verse of this portion.

It will be well to note here that in the Scripture the word *heavens* is a dual word, which means beings as well as places. In the declaration "the heavens do rule" (Daniel 4:26) the emphasis is upon those beings through whom God will rule, rather than on the place where the rule is centered. The word "heavens" in English means the "heaved ones" or "heaved things." This becomes more clear if we remember that that which is heaved is lifted up or exalted.

It was one of the heavens, an angel, that came and spoke to Philip, telling him to arise and go toward the south taking the road that leads from Jerusalem to Gaza. This territory we are told is desert.

When the persecution had broken out in Jerusalem following the stoning of Stephen, Philip had gone north to Samaria (8:5). There he had preached Christ to the Samaritans with such wonderful results that the whole city rejoiced. Miracles abounded, healings were commonplace, and unclean spirits yielded to the power of the ascended Christ. Suddenly in the very midst of his exultation over the wonderful response to his ministry, an angel of the Lord spoke unto Philip giving him the most explicit directions. To "arise" means that he is to make ready for the long journey (see 5:17). "Go toward the south" is in the Greek "go toward noon," that is southward. This was an altogether different direction from the one he had been traveling. He is to take the road that runs from Jerusalem to Gaza. The remark "which is desert" refers to the country which the road traversed, not to Gaza. This is what we might call a back road. There was a road that led through populous sections and was traveled by many people, but this one led through uninhabited parts.

While this road will be away from men, there will be a man on it who has chosen it for that very reason, chosen because he desires to study without interruption a scroll of Scripture which he has recently acquired in Jerusalem. Could it be that reports had come to him that this book contained a specific message addressed to men such as he was, a eunuch. If so, once he had secured this book we can readily understand his desire for uninterrupted solitude. The trip back to his own country gave him his first opportunity, providing he took the back road.

Philip knows nothing about this. He has been instructed to travel over this road, and it is not his to question, "Why?" His duty is to obey, so we see him arising and off on his long journey on foot. He is leaving a place where multitudes have been responding to his ministry, and traveling a road where he might not meet even one man.

8:27, 28. And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, was returning, and sitting in his chariot reading Esaias the prophet.

This passage begins with an exclamation denoting surprise. "Behold, a man!" It is as if Luke the writer of Acts is reporting the innermost thoughts of Philip. Indeed it should occasion surprise that Philip would meet a man of such high station traveling over a lonesome desert road. This man had been to Jerusalem, and on his way home he chose this lonely road in order to avoid the salutations, greetings, and constant interruptions, which a man of his position would experience in every hamlet, village, and city along the road. He is not antisocial, for he chose this road in order to read, study, and absorb the scroll, which it appears he had recently purchased in Jerusalem. One can well imagine that he had told his driver, "Take it slow, let the horses walk."

This man was an Ethiopian, a eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. He had come to Jerusalem to worship; a fact that many think to be exceedingly strange, even though the Lord had said that His house was to be called a house of prayer for all nations. In fact, these very words were written in connection with a promise made to eunuchs who identified themselves with Israel. Isaiah 56:4-8. He had come to the temple seeking to make contact with the true God, but his visit had been in vain. He had failed to contact those in the temple who were in union with the true fountain of blessing and life

(Acts 2:46). This man was, seeking, and his sincerity is seen in the fact that he had made this more than two hundred mile journey. Under heavens' government it is a fixed law that all who seek will find, all who ask will receive, and all who knock will find that the door opens to them. Matthew 7:7. Since all this takes place under heavens' government, this seeker cannot return empty. And even though this eunuch is returning to his own country, he is still seeking the light, which he failed to receive in Jerusalem. But now he seeks that light in the word of God, for he is reading the prophet Isaiah.

8:29. Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.

The picture here is simple to construct. Philip is on foot, traveling a lonely road, not knowing why he is on the road or where he is going. A man walking briskly will overtake slow moving horses, so at last Philip sees moving objects ahead. As he draws nearer he finds to his surprise that this is no band of desert nomads, but a man of great authority. The Spirit of God now speaks to Philip and directs him to move more swiftly and attach himself to this chariot.

This was not uncommon in that day. Travelers often did this for companionship and protection, and others did it hoping to secure work if the caravan or company needed aid.

8:30,31. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide' me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.

The strict customs of this time required that when a traveler had joined himself to a company such as this he must wait until he is recognized. It would not be proper for him to speak first unless' an occasion arose where he could say, "May I be of help?" such as when horses became frightened, or a wheel came off a chariot.

As Philip walked alongside the chariot he heard the man reading from the prophet Isaiah. His struggle with the Greek tongue was manifest to Philip so it was proper for him to offer help. "Do you understand what you are reading?" was the question Philip asked in the same Greek language in which this scroll of Isaiah was written. The nature of this question is' such that it seems to include the words, "If you do not, I do, and I will be happy to be of assistance." This is seen in the fact that the eunuch answered, "How could I understand unless one shall guide me?"

Following this he entreated Philip to come up and be seated with him.

8:32,33. The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.

With Philip seated alongside of him, the eunuch read that majestic description of Jesus Christ wherein He is pictured as a sheep led to the slaughter, as a lamb dumb before its shearers. Philip now knows why God called him away from his great successes in Samaria. He is to explain the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah to this man, and by means of its truth point him to Jesus Christ.

8:34. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?

The eunuch has the right question. "Who is this wonderful person of whom the prophet speaks?" He proposes a working hypothesis. "Does the prophet speak these words of himself, or of some other man?" He was a good student with a teachable disposition.

8:35. Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

We are not told in full what Philip said. We do know that he opened his mouth, the Spirit of God gave him the message, and that it was based upon the Scripture that had just been read. Each word he spoke was illuminated by the Holy Spirit. A complete presentation was given of the record God had given of His Son.

8:36-38. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

On this passage a hundred and one ideas concerning baptism are supposed to be founded. Does the reader have any denominational or personal ideas concerning baptism? He can probably find support for them here. But why bother with support? Men are going to believe as they please and do as they please concerning baptism until such time as the Spirit of God exercises them deeply concerning the importance of truth on baptism, and they see that the truth on this is just as important as truth on the Deity of Christ. The things men put forth today in regard to baptism are a travesty upon the truth. As

evidence let us consider a statement by Dr. V. Raymond Edman, President of Wheaton College. In "Christian Life" January 1952 he says in answer to a question concerning baptism:

"Baptism is an *ordinance*, not a *doctrine*, of the Christian church. Ordinances are liable to wide interpretation, which is not true of doctrine!"

Men concoct ideas such as this in order to keep from coming to grips with the word of God in regard to baptism. If the time ever comes that men seek the truth of God concerning baptism, all questions will be answered and all difficulties will disappear.

The textual evidence for verse 37 is very slight and not sufficient even under the most liberal rules to give it a place in the text.

8:39-40. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.

In catching away Philip the Spirit of the Lord eliminated the factors of time and space so far as Philip was concerned. This is normal under heavens' government. Men on earth can suddenly be transferred to heaven and then return to the earth without any time having elapsed. Time and space are laws imposed upon us by God, but he is not bound by them.

ISRAEL'S RESTORATION PROPHECIES

That the seed of Abraham, the people of Israel, will yet return to their land and experience great national blessing and be a source of blessing to the nations of the world is one of the Bible's most positive predictions. This stubborn testimony of the Word of God has never yielded to the attempts of those who explain the prophecies as speaking of "the church." These predictions must be accepted in their literal form or else ignored altogether. There are more than fifty passages, which assert that Jehovah will Himself place Israel in their own land. The truth that Israel will be restored is generally believed by those who believe that God says what He means and that He means what He says.

However, even though this is generally believed, it is evident that the overwhelming majority do not know just why they believe it, except that they have the vague idea that it is taught some where in the Word of God. They are not familiar with the passages which predict this, they have no accurate knowledge of the prophecies that deal with Israel's restoration; therefore, they are easily led astray by those who tell them that what is happening in the land of Palestine today is a fulfillment of the prophecies of Israel's national restoration and blessing. They can believe this because they have no knowledge of the prophecies, but they could not believe it if they were entirely familiar with those passages which deal with Israel's conversion, restoration, and blessing.

On every hand we hear about "the Bible predicting a return of Israel in unbelief," but this is an idea that has no basis whatsoever in the Word of God. Those who make the statement never give the Scripture for it. A recent writer has said, "The Holy Scriptures clearly aim once that the Jews shall be gathered to their land, in an entirely unconverted condition." This is typical of the manner in which this idea is set forth. No Scripture is given. If it is clearly announced, it should not be difficult to quote the passages, which announce this. I challenge anyone who makes this or a similar statement to show me a single passage where it says that the Jews return to Palestine, "in a condition

of total hardness of heart," as the same writer further declares. I venture the opinion that this "clear announcement" exists only in the minds of those who hold this idea, and that no Scripture can be offered in its support. If I am wrong in this opinion, it should be easy to set me right.

In seeking to teach the truth concerning the kingdom of the heavens, that it is a period of blessing which precedes the second coming of Christ and the millennium, I have been dismayed at the amazing ignorance of the average professing Christian in regard to the prophecies that speak of Israel's conversion and restoration. If they knew these prophecies they would better be able to recognize the truth when it is pointed out that if these predictions are not fulfilled before the second coming of Christ, they can never be fulfilled after He has come and purged the earth of all who know not God and who obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ. See 2 Thessalonians 1:9.

It shall be my purpose in this study to present and to examine the major prophecies that deal with Israel's restoration to the land of Palestine. I beg of the reader to give these his most careful consideration. There is no easy road to a knowledge of the Word of God, and we will need to devote a proper amount of concentration upon these portions of the Word if we are to enter into a true understanding of them. It is expected that the reader will examine them with an open Bible, noting the context as lack of space will make it impossible to quote some passages in full. The first and one of the greatest predictions that declares Israel's restoration is found in the writings of Moses.

Deuteronomy 30:1-8.

And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, wither the Lord thy God hath driven thee, And shalt return unto the Lord thy God, and shalt obey His voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul; that then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee. If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the Lord thy God gather thee, and from thence will He fetch thee: And the Lord thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and He will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers. And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live. And the Lord thy God will put all these curses upon thine enemies, and on them that hate thee, which persecuted thee. And thou shalt return and obey the voice of the Lord, and do all his commandments, which I command thee this day.

Since this is the first great prediction of the restoration of Israel, and since all subsequent predictions are in full harmony with this original one, the student should give diligence to become entirely familiar with it. Let him take the time to discover the truth that is revealed here step by step. The strangest thing about this, prophecy is that it predicts the restoration of Israel from a worldwide dispersion long before the dispersion took place.

The context of this chapter reveals that God is about to bring Israel into the land of Canaan. Their forty years of wandering in the wilderness is complete, and the generation, which sinned against God at Sinai has passed from the scene. God is now going to take the nation into the land He had promised to their fathers. He is going to do this because of His word, for the sake of His name, and not because of their own righteousness. In the message that Moses delivered to them they are told that they will continue in the land and be blessed in it if they obey, and that they will be thrust from, it and be cursed if they forget God. Moses knowing only too well the character of their fathers, and knowing also the character of those who now stand before him, has no doubt about the outcome. They will be blessed by being taken into the land, and later they will be cursed by being dispersed from it. Thus in the first verse Moses sees the blessing, the curse, and the worldwide dispersion.

However, Moses sees even beyond this. Moses saw them going into the land, saw them blessed there, saw them forgetting God, saw them cursed, and saw them driven by God among all nations. All this has been fulfilled to the letter, and stands today as a historical fact. The question now comes, "What next?" What does the seer reveal concerning God's next move for Israel? A wandering back to the land in unbelief? No! A restoration by God of a people whom He has brought to know Him.

The first step is that they shall "call to mind" the word which Moses has spoken to them. Rotherham translates this "bring them back unto thy heart." Darby translates it "take them to heart." At the close of the book of Acts the Apostle Paul declared that "the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed." They brought this condition upon themselves, and God pronounced a judgment that fixed them in that condition. Following this He removed from them the only thing that could make their hearts receptive and understanding, their eyes seeing, and their ears hearing. He took the salvation of God from them and sent it to the Gentiles. This removed from them the very channel through which these blessings must flow. Israel will never "call to mind" or "take to heart" the word of God until the salvation of God returns to them. Israel will remain in her present pitiful condition "until the Spirit be poured upon" them from on high (Isaiah 32:15). The only channel through whom that Spirit can flow has been removed from them.

But Israel will someday call to mind or take to heart the Word of God. And she will do this while she is still dispersed among all the nations where the Lord God has driven them. This is step number one. It is a thing, which has never yet been seen in Israel.

Upon the basis of this word which they take back into their hearts they will return unto Jehovah their God, and they will obey His voice in harmony with all that Moses commanded them that day, and they will do it with all their heart and all their soul. In response to this the Lord will "reverse their captivity."

It should be noted here that even though if in the course of their wanderings a portion of Israel, great or small should wander back to the land this does not mean that the Lord has "reversed their captivity." An Israelite who wanders back to Palestine is still just as much dispersed among the nations as is a Jew in Russia, Spain or the United States. God drove them out and God alone can restore them. Distance from the land will prove no barrier and nearness to the land will mean no advantage.

Those who teach that the return or second coming of Christ is indicated in verse three are in error. That Jesus Christ will come again is a positive truth, but it is not the truth declared here. Several times in the Old Testament it is revealed that Israel turned from God and that He punished them by turning from them. When they returned to Him, He returned to them. See Malachi 3:7, Psalms 6:4, and Psalm 80:14, where the return of God to Israel is spoken of. It is evident in these passages that it does not mean the second coming of Christ. Israel's turning from God as recorded in the Gospels and Acts brought about a condition wherein the Lord turned from them and imposed upon them a condition which makes their return to Him impossible until that condition is lifted. Israel as a nation will not see, hear, or understand until God lifts the great barrier. The salvation of God must return to His people Israel. The declaration of Acts 28:28 must be reversed.

Thus in **Deuteronomy 30:1-10**, the following steps can be traced in divine order.

- 1 Israel will call to mind the word of God among all the nations where the Lord has driven them.
2. They return unto the Lord their God and obey His voice according to all that Moses commanded them in his final message.

3. The Lord their God turns their captivity, has compassion upon them, returns to them and then gathers them from all nations where He has scattered them.

4. He brings them into the land, which their fathers possessed, and they possess it. He will do them good and will multiply them above their fathers.

5. The Lord their God will circumcise their heart, to cause them to love the Lord with all their heart and with all their soul.

6. Then the Lord will put "these curses" upon their enemies, on them which hated them and which persecuted them.

These are the divine steps which God has revealed in Deuteronomy 30. Here we have the program when God resumes His dealings with the nation of Israel. I do not believe that the first step has yet been taken. I make no claim to any superior insight or spirituality. But I do believe that if this work should begin today or tomorrow that ere long I would be able to recognize it as being the very work that God said He would do on behalf of the people of Israel.

Following this great prophecy there are many others that deal with the condition of Israel after they are restored to the land. Some of these deal with a part of the process of God in restoring these people to Himself. Along these lines the following passages in the prophecy of Isaiah should be carefully examined.

Isaiah 1:25-28	Isaiah 35:1-10
Isaiah 2:1-5	Isaiah 42: 1- 7
Isaiah 4:2-6	Isaiah 43:1-10
Isaiah 9:1-7	Isaiah 44:1-6
Isaiah 11:1-16	Isaiah 51:3-23
Isaiah 14:1-2	Isaiah 60:1-22
Isaiah 32:13-20	Isaiah 61:1-11
Isaiah 33:5-6	Isaiah 62:1-12

I would suggest a careful reading and marking of these passages, after which the whole of Isaiah should be read. We turn now to the next great prophecy of Israel's restoration.

Jeremiah 16:14.17

Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be said, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; But, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers. Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the Lord, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks. For mine eyes are upon all their ways: they are not hid from my face, neither is their iniquity hid from mine eyes.

The restoration of Israel by God to her land is anticipated in prophecy as being one of the greatest miracles in the entire history of the earth. God will work powerfully, skillfully, and openly to accomplish this purpose. In this passage the bringing of the children of Israel from all the lands

where He has driven them is said to surpass in glory their deliverance from the land of Egypt, even the crossing of the Red Sea. Therefore, let none think that the restoration of Israel is to be simply a case of persecuted people wandering back to their land because they have no place else to go. Nothing that is happening to Israel at the present time can be considered as a fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy. It is suggested here that the reader consider also the following prophecies in Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 23:3-8
Jeremiah 31:27-40

Jeremiah 30:1-24
Jeremiah 32:36-44

Jeremiah 31:7-14
Jeremiah 33:6-26

We will next consider certain great prophecies of Israel's restoration found in the book of Ezekiel.

Ezekiel:17-21

Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord God; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof and all the abominations thereof from thence. And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God. But as for them whose heart walketh after the heart of their detestable things and their abominations, I will recompense their way upon their own heads, saith the Lord God.

This brief portion epitomizes "the hope of Israel" and sets it forth in a succinct manner as does no other portion of the Word of God. It was for this "hope of Israel" that the Apostle Paul was a prisoner as recorded in Acts 28:20. This passage does not tell of a "return of Israel in unbelief," but of a divine restoration to the land of a people whom God has brought to Himself. He promises to denationalize them. They will no longer be German, Russian, English or American Jews. He promises to repatriate them. Not one of them will be found among the nations. He promises to give them the land of Israel. To deny the literal regathering of Israel is to deny the Word of God.

Upon their return to the land they remove from it all detestable things and all abominable things. They will be an obedient people, they will be God's people, and He will be their God. Those who are disobedient are purged. The next passage we will consider adds many details.

Ezekiel 20:33-38

As I live, saith the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you: And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with- you face to face. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord God. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the Lord.

This passage has been dealt with in detail in Volume 12, Number 2 of *The Word of Truth*. This is one of the most important passages predicting Israel's restoration. It is set forth here as being the work of God. This is not a restoration of an unconverted people, but a people whom Jehovah has brought into relationship with Himself. Some may rebel, but these will be purged. All in the land will serve Him (20:40). This entire chapter should be carefully read, with special attention being

given to the part quoted above.

Ezekiel 28:25,26.

Thus saith the Lord God; When I shall have gathered the house of Israel from the people among whom they are scattered, and shall be sanctified in them in the sight of the heathen, then shall they dwell in their land that I have given to my servant Jacob. And they shall dwell safely therein, and shall build houses, and plant vineyards; yea, they shall dwell with confidence, when I have executed judgments upon all those that despise them round about them; and they shall know that I am the Lord their God.

It is needless to say that up to this time the restoration predicted here has not taken place. Neither has it yet begun. The Jews who have returned to Palestine do not "dwell safely" there. They live on the edge of a figurative volcano, which may erupt at any time.

The next passage we will consider shows how this restoration takes place.

Ezekiel 34:11-16

For thus saith the Lord God; Behold I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his sheep in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down saith the Lord God. I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.

In the restoration of Israel it is the Lord God who will both search for and seek out His sheep. This will be done even as a shepherd seeks out his sheep in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered. See Psalm 95:7, Isaiah 40:11. Jehovah must again be "among His people" to do this work. The Salvation of God must be returned to Israel. The truth declared in Acts 28:28 must be reversed.

If Deuteronomy 4:7-8, Deuteronomy 4:32-34, and Deuteronomy 7:6 are read it will be demonstrated that Jehovah was among Israel as a channel of blessing in a manner that was not true of other nations. This is emphatically declared by the word "among" in the following passages. Numbers 23:21; Exodus 29:45, 46; Numbers 11:29; Deuteronomy 7:21. In Jeremiah 14:8, 9 the prophet dramatically proclaims the great truth that must be written over the entire period of the time from Genesis 12 to Acts 28:28, Jehovah in the midst (or, among) His people Israel. The great truth that must be written over the present time is "Christ among the Gentiles," as declared in Colossians 1:27. Before Ezekiel 34:11-16 can be fulfilled, Jehovah must return to His people Israel and be among them as a shepherd is among His sheep.

(To Be Continued, Vol. XIII, No. 2)

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

QUESTION: You place Isaiah 2:2.4 in a period of time which you say precedes the millennium. There we read that "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more," But you have this followed by the great tribulation in which there is plenty of war. How can there be war when there are no swords, no spears, and nations have not learned war. This upsets your whole theory of this passage being fulfilled in a "premillennial kingdom" which precedes the coming of the Lord. I believe Isaiah 2:2-4 belongs to the millennium, and that it comes after the wars of the tribulation.

ANSWER: Questions such as this come to us about every week. The answer to this question is quite simple. It consists of one question, namely, "What about the battle that follows the millennium?" Suppose we do put the fulfillment of this prophecy in the millennium? Do we not read in Revelation 20:7-9 that "after the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations. . . to gather them together to battle"? Might I not well ask you how they can go forth to battle when there have been no swords or spears existing for a thousand years? You are impaled on the horns of your own dilemma. But it is no dilemma to me as all such factors as this were carefully considered before my teaching on the premillennial kingdom was ever brought forth. The bloodiest battles ever fought have been when men fought against men rather than when great weapons fought great weapons. A most formidable weapon can be formed by sharpening the end of a six-foot length of wood. Furthermore, most wars are fought by unlearned civilians rather than by professional soldiers. Our own Civil War was one of these. When untrained men fight, the casualty rate is enormous.

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QUESTION: Can it be possible that the terrible conditions of today will be corrected?

ANSWER: Believing in both the Scriptures and the power of God I declare that they will be corrected. They will begin to be corrected the moment the Lord begins to work on them. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him. Isaiah 59:19. I grant you that it looks discouraging and impossible when we view it through our eyes. Since human government has failed to alleviate the terrible conditions that exist, we are inclined to feel that heavens' government can do no better. Remember, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged till He has set justice and judgment in the earth." Isaiah 42:5.

THE EDITOR TO HIS FRIENDS

This issue marks the beginning of Volume 13 of *The Word of Truth*. We begin it with many indications of God's favor upon the efforts we are putting forth in behalf of His truth. The chief purpose of this ministry is to seek to discover the truth that God has placed in His word. The secondary purpose is to set forth the truth by every means possible. To the hundreds who stand behind us with willing hearts and hands to help in accomplishing these ends, we express our heartfelt thanks.

****We wish we could say something that would cause our friends at a distance to realize the nature of our public ministry in Los Angeles. In spite of all we say, they come here expecting to find the Editor preaching in a building that is comparable to Solomon's temple and a congregation as big as that in St. Patrick's Cathedral on Easter Sunday. Our public ministry in Los Angeles consists of two scheduled meetings each week. One of these is held on Sunday morning at 11:00 A.M. at 245 South Lucas Street. It is a meeting held strictly for Bible exposition and it is not a "church service." The Tuesday evening meeting is at 7:45 P.M., at 607 South Kenmore Ave. It is held at our "home and headquarters." A cordial invitation is extended to anyone interested to be present at these meetings. Phone DUnkirk 20555 for further information.

****The challenge, which I issued to the Editor of *Questions and Answers* has so far gone unheeded. In June 1951 he charged that my present teachings concerning the kingdom of the heavens "is a 'lift from other men's writings.'" In the same article he charged that "there are several books extant, written and published before Mr. Sellers was ever born, that give in detail identical views regarding this theory of a Premillennial Kingdom." I requested the names of these books and promised to share this information with my readers once it was given to me. It has not yet been given. I have received two totally anonymous communications, and I feel that the senders of these would like to lead me to think that there is such a book. One of these was postmarked Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and the other Camden, New Jersey. These envelopes contained nothing but a small printed advertisement about 4 by 4 inches in size. These ads announced a book: "THE APPROACHING NEW WORLD ORDER IN RELATION TO THE PRE-ADVENT KINGDOM OF THE HEAVENS. Refutation of the theory of a partial fulfillment of Daniel's prophetic seventy weeks. By Zeletes. Author of *The Structure of the Book of Acts in the light of the Kingdom of Israel*. London: Elliott Stock, 62, Paternoster Row. 1891. Price Three Shillings."

I would like very much for the anonymous sender (or senders) of these advertisements to come forward and identify himself. I would like to know where they secured these advertisements. They were printed on different kinds of enamel paper and the ink on the first one received was still wet. It smeared when I rubbed my finger over it. The second one, which came a week later was dry. Is someone trying to "pull my leg"? Oh, well! Never a dull moment in this ministry.

****Among the friends of this ministry is one whom we have grown to "esteem very highly in love for his work's sake in behalf of the truth." His name is 1. Robert Gibson. His address is 5338 Trojan Avenue, San Diego, California. He carries on a definite ministry in behalf of the truth by means of literature, personal correspondence, and Bible classes held in his home, and has on hand for sale a stock of *Companion Bibles*, *Englishman's Greek Concordances*, various translations, and other Biblical helps. His house for many years has been a gathering point for servicemen stationed in San Diego who are interested in the things of God. Phone him at Randolph 6153 any evening or all day Saturday or Sunday for information concerning his classes.

****The book on *The Christian in Military Service* is now being widely distributed by many helpers. You should have a few of these on hand so as not to miss the opportunity of placing one in the hands of a soldier or sailor. What if the man who works next to you should be called back into service? What if the boy next door should receive his call to report for duty? Would you have something more than a "good-bye" to give to them when they leave? Be prepared. The prices are 1 copy 10c; 3 copies 25c; 15 copies \$1.00.

****There is quite a bit of excitement connected with pioneering a truth which is as old as the Word but which is new to men. Experience tells us in advance the reactions to expect. We must bear with the anger that is created in the minds of so many good people by the demand that they reinvestigate some doctrine, which they have long held to be true. We feel a momentary hesitation when we know we are going to flash unaccustomed light on unprepared eyes. We do it with the prayer that their

reactions will not be too extreme. The man who spends the major part of his life chasing the almighty dollar and the rest of it watching television is *not* going to be ready for the shock when someone dashes the cold water of newly uncovered truth upon him. His reaction is apt to be violent, and he may throw the first thing he gets his hands upon, but there is always the hope that he will warm up after he is fully awake. The most difficult part of pioneering new truth is to bear the attacks of those who cannot answer the message so they attack the person, the message, or the associates of the messenger. But every new truth must run the gauntlet of controversy. Men create bitter strife in the hope that you will sue for peace by abandoning the message. The man who is bold enough to leave the beaten paths of theological complacency in search for truth will hardly be frightened out of possession of it by the criticism and condemnation of those who are unable to see its preciousness.

**** HONORARY AGENTS OF THE WORD OF TRUTH

GREAT BRITAIN. Mr. F. W. Gardiner, "Anathoth" Pepper Lane, Earley, Reading, Berks, England.

NEW ZEALAND. Mr. Ralph V. Gibbs, 48 Sunshine Avenue, Karori-Wellington W.3, New Zealand.

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