

Articles

	Page
Days of Uncertainty	1
Israel: A Prince with God	1
Gathering-Together-Unto	4
Elders, Overseers, Shepherds	5
Ephesians 4:8-24	6
Misrepresenting Christ	8
A Call to Commitment	9

The Days of Uncertainty

There has never been a time in the history of the world when there has been so much uncertainty in connection with its affairs. There is uncertainty in connection with governments. Thrones that have been regular Gibraltar's have tottered. Rulers and statesmen are at sea in the guidance of the ship of state, wondering what is coming next. There is uncertainty in connection with business. There has never been a time when the Lord's people have passed through so much that savours of uncertainty. In many parts of the world brethren do not know what is going to happen next.

Many carnal Christians are running with uncertainty. How many derelicts there are in the world — preachers, elders, Sunday School teachers, personal workers who began their course well, but through temptation, secret sin, jealousy, discouragement, etc., have been set aside; placed on the shelf as it were, and are now running with uncertainty!

It is very important to lay aside, or shun whatever hinders our spiritual growth, however costly may be the sacrifice. If the Hebrew believers could take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, how much more ought we to part with what operates against cheerful running, and keep our eyes fixed upon the goal where everyone shall receive the reward for running successfully.

There is uncertainty in sounding the TRUMPET (1 Corinthians 14:8). If the trumpet gives an uncertain sound and has no definite meaning, who could prepare himself for the battle? If, when the soldier is to prepare himself for battle, and the trumpet should give a different sound to that which is ordinarily used on such occasions, the soldier is not informed of what he should do and therefore does not arm himself. Consequently, that vague, unintelligible sound of the trumpet is of no value.

Some of the Lord's people still remember with great pleasure when the trumpet was sounded out in clear ringing tones at conferences and in assemblies by men of

God, most of whom are now with the Lord. There was no uncertainty in those days as to what should be the path of the child of God in connection with assemblies, nor as to how the battle should be fought. Their ministry gave conduct to assemblies and character to the individual Christian. There was a clear ring to the testimony of the local assembly and to the path of separation from the sects and the world in general, and also to the coming of the Lord. We would seek to warn God's people against the many uncertain sounds that are going forth today through the trumpet, which will not stand the light of the Word of God. Prove all things: hold fast that which is good. The Lord is coming. C.R.K. ("Wholesome Words")

Israel: A Prince with God

"Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed"
(Genesis 32:28)

"And Jacob said unto Joseph, God Almighty (El Shaddai) appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me" (Genesis 48:3). Nearing the end of his eventful life, Jacob looked back to an experience with God, at a "place" (mentioned 6 times in Genesis 28) which seemed to change his life. Let him describe the years of his life himself. "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been" (Genesis 47:9). This is not a confession of gross evil but an acknowledgement that his 'life' had been marked by trouble and many disappointments. His pre-natal struggle in the womb with his twin brother set the tone for his disposition and habits. He took advantage of his hungry brother. He deceived his blind father. He met the guile of his uncle with superior trickery. His large family grew up to engage in hatred, jealousy, lies and violence. This is the story of Jacob in the first book of the Bible.

The last book of the Old Testament says, "The burden of the Word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi. I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast Thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob, And I hated Esau" (Malachi 1:1-3). God loved Esau as He loves all men that He created. The exceeding fervency of God's love for Jacob is explained in Romans chapter 9. "That the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth ... The elder shall serve the younger" (Romans 9:11-12).

God's sovereign call is not because of what He can see in us, but because of what He can make out of us. The love of God is not determined by any good He can find in us, for there is none. "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). God's choice is not to make us servants but to conform us, "To the image of His Son" (Romans 8:29).

Jacob had a dealing with God at Luz which changed him and he never forgot the "place" where God appeared to him. We too, must have such an experience as did the believers at Corinth, some of whom like Jacob, were thieves and covetous. "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified (set apart to God)" (1 Corinthians 6:11), at conversion.

BETHEL

"And he called the name of that place Bethel (the House of God): but the name of that city was called Luz at the

first" (Genesis 28:19).

In spite of many failures of the flesh, Jacob in contrast to Esau, always had an appreciation of the spiritual and priestly, even in the claiming of the birthright. However, God's love led him into the very necessary school of discipline. Though now a mature man, he found himself parted from the comforts of home: leaving his mother whom he never saw alive again; hated by his brother, he was destitute and in fear. Uncomfortable as he lay down to try to sleep on the rocky moorland waste, he was a lonely pilgrim, with a staff in his hand, a stone under his head, the sods below him, the sky above him and an uncertain future before him. Jacob was naked, helpless and open for an awesome revelation of the Lord God of Abraham and Isaac.

"And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it" (Genesis 28:12).

"Bethel" (Genesis 28:17) is the first reference to "the House of God", in the Bible. It is to be compared with the house that the apostle Paul wrote about; "The House of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15). It was the place of Divine choice, pilgrim rest, solid foundation ("other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ", 1 Corinthians 3:11), heavenly communication, angelic ministry, Lordship ("The Lord stood above it", v 13), reverence ("He was awed and said how sacred is this place" [Sproule], v 17), separation (Luz means "separation"), resurrection (pillar set up, v 18), remembrance ("vow", v 20), provision ("bread to eat", v 20), anointing "oil" (v 18), nearness to God (v 22). Giving ("the tenth", v 22), and the promise of return (God said "I will bring thee again", v 15).

The stone laid down as a pillow is a type of Christ in humiliation. His death is the foundational truth upon which we find rest. The same stone raised up as a pillar speaks of Christ raised up again in resurrection.

The significance of the ladder also speaks of Christ the One Who descended to take upon Himself our fashion as a Man and has now ascended far above all. He is our sympathetic High Priest, through Whom our prayers ascend and the answers descend. "Ascended" is mentioned before "descended" because communion with heaven, through Christ, is a result of His work accomplished upon earth at the Cross. This was a lovely lesson for the lonely traveller, Jacob. He was weary of his journey but he was not alone. The Lord was present with him though unseen, giving protection from wolves and robbers and even Esau, the worldly man of the field.

"Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of" (Genesis 28:15). This same promise was given to Joshua as he entered the

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inheritance; to Solomon relative to the kingdom and to the Hebrew believers to which were promised things that were better (Hebrews 13:5). The first raised "pillar" mentioned in the Bible (Genesis 28:18,22), is identified with the "city" (Genesis 28:19). Jacob, like his grandfather, "Looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10).

"Then Jacob went on his journey (lifted up his feet, marg.)" (Genesis 29:1). This expression indicates that Jacob's feet were winged with joy, he sped on his way scarcely conscious of the rough terrain of earth. His burden was lifted as if lifted by ascending angels. We lose our burdens at the Cross and happily hand over our case to the Ascended Man, our sympathetic High Priest in the presence of God.

PENIEL

At Bethel Jacob received Divine promises. At Peniel, twenty five years later, at the breaking of the day, by the brook Jabbok, he experienced Divine power. Peniel was not Jacob's first great spiritual experience but it was a dealing with God that made an abiding change in his life. For us, the first experience is salvation and conversion. This second is the lesson of sanctification and consecration. The believer's response to God's mercy in salvation should immediately be, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6). At conversion we are born again and indwelt by the Spirit of God. We do not have to wait for a second blessing but for many of us, like Jacob, it takes some years in the school of God's discipline for us to realise the disabilities of our fleshly nature and learn to lean only upon God in the trials of day to day Christian living.

This was a tremendous day in God's dealings with Jacob. "Early in the morning" (Genesis 31:55), he left Laban, went on his way and came to a place which he called "Mahanaïm", where he saw the angels of, "God's host" (Genesis 32:2). To encourage him, now that he was on the path of faith, about to encounter a great test, God would remind him of the vision of angels and promise of Bethel, "I will bring thee again into this land" (Genesis 28:15).

In the afternoon of the day, the next host that concerned him was news of his brother Esau, coming with four hundred men (Genesis 32:6). Red Sea standstills are necessary in the path of faith when we are shut in alone with God. "Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that was with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands; And said, If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape" (Genesis 32:7-8). Jacob was in a corner. His conscience smote him about the deceit and lies that he had told his aged father and his robbery of his brother. Now he was surrounded by his wives and children, herds and flocks, the camels and the wealth of fourteen years of labor. Behind him was the memory of his trickery of

Laban and before him there was what seemed to be inevitable ruin. When everything was at stake Jacob took himself to prayer. "And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham (the God of Promise), and God of my father Isaac (the God of Provision), the LORD which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee" (Genesis 32:9). The God of Jacob was the God of Patience. God did not give up on Jacob, but the school of God's love involves discipline, trial, tests, leading to a sense of utter helplessness and worthlessness, even despair.

We can be so drugged to unconsciousness by the cares of this life, the deceitfulness of riches, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life that we cannot pray. Deceit and craftiness in the heart must be confessed in order to get right with God. Jacob confesses; "I am not worthy" (Genesis 32:10). Twice over, Jacob avails himself of the Word of God; "Thou saidst" (Genesis 32:9,12). He is crying out for God's help yet he is adding prayer to his own arrangements. The lesson is that praying and planning will not mix. The flesh must be subdued and God must have all the glory.

"And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day" (Genesis 32:24). God breaks a man in order to use him. Jacob still put up resistance and God was patient with him when only a touch was necessary. "And when he (the man) saw that he prevailed not against him (Jacob), he touched the hollow of his thigh (the strongest part of his body); and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he (the man) said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he (Jacob) said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me" (Genesis 32:25-26). God will cripple human strength that contends with Him that in weakness man may cling to Him for blessing. Paul writes, "My strength is made perfect in weakness, Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ my rest upon me ... for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). "Out of weakness were made strong" is a comment concerning those who triumphed through faith, (Hebrews 11:34).

"And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob" (Genesis 32:27). Jacob, the liar of chapter 27, said, "I am Esau" (v 19). This deception, twenty five years previous, had left Jacob weak before God and at enmity with his brother. God's name is not revealed until moral conditions are right. It is a real blessing to search ourselves with confession of our sins and stand before God in all our weakness. Jacob got to know God, "face to face" (Genesis 32:30), at Peniel. "And as he passed over Peniel (JND) the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh" (Genesis 32:31). It was a new day. Jacob was a new man, with a new name; "Israel" – a prince with God (Genesis 32:28). "He touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank" (Genesis 32:32). The lesson is, the flesh may shrink, and it should be kept in the place of death, but it

is never removed during our pilgrimage on earth.

BEER-SHEBA.

"And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beer-sheba ... And God spake unto Israel ... And He said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will (third time) also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes" (Genesis 46:1-4). In the closing chapter of Genesis, the final years of Israel overlap with the story of Joseph (the subject of a separate study).

The family of Jacob which went down into Egypt were; "threescore and six" souls (Genesis 46:26). In Egypt the family became a "congregation", and after four hundred and thirty years; "the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt"; "about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children" (Exodus 12:37,41).

It has been said that the final years of Jacob were his best years and that his death bed was his finest hour. "God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan" (Genesis 48:3). He never forgot that revelation.

In Genesis 48, he mentions the name of God, seven times. He speaks of the God of the Patriarchs, "before Whom my fathers ... did walk"; the God of Provision; "Which fed me all my life long unto this day" (v 15); the God of Promise and Preservation, "which redeemed me from all evil" (v 16). After many years in the school of God's discipline and after his life long trials, tests and tribulation, in Genesis chapter 49, he outlined prophetically God's program for "the twelve tribes of Israel" (Genesis 49:28). In this outline of Divine Sovereignty and human responsibility, the man so long interested only in himself, has learned to trust only upon God, calls down the blessing of God upon his progenitors. His thoughts extend beyond their tribulations until the coming of Christ, "Shiloh", the Prince of Peace. His dying words are marvellous in accuracy, sublime in beauty and splendid in prophecy. "He gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost" (Genesis 49:33). This final act of Jacob was his ultimate yielding to God Almighty. God is pleased, especially throughout the book of Psalms and Isaiah to be called, "The God of Jacob". "The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge" (Psalm 46:7,11).

Gathering-Together-Unto

Epi-sun-agoge

G. C. Willis

"Hidden Treasures found in the New Testament"

Some years ago, vast crowds in every part of Canada gathered together to honor Princess Elizabeth, later Queen, and her husband. It was the Princess, whom all the British Empire loved, who attracted the people. They were gathered together unto her. She was the attraction. Most of the people had known her from the time she was a little child and had watched her grow up. Our children had pictures of her, with her little sister and her dogs, and they had learned to love the charming girl with the sunny face. So when Canada was honored by a visit from her, all who possibly could were gathered together unto her.

We read of great gatherings almost every day. People gather together to help some cause they love and admire. They gather together to a cause, to a Doctrine, for a Purpose; but how different such a gathering is to those who are gathered together unto a living person in their midst, whom they love.

You will note that the word we propose to consider is really made up of three words; and the second and third together, sunagoge, make a very common English word: "synagogue." One is the Greek way, the other the English way, of spelling the same word. As you may guess, it really means "A-Gathering-together," and in this way, it is often used in the Greek Old Testament. In the New Testament, it has generally come to mean the place where they gathered. And today, the Jews gather together in the Synagogues to hear the Law and the Prophets and to pray. This is a "Gathering-together," but not a Gathering-Together unto any loved or living Person. All over the world, we hear of religious meetings of one kind or another, which for the most part are "Gatherings-Together", but not "Gatherings-Together-Unto" one they love. It is the living Person we love, unto whom we gather, that makes the difference.

This word, epi-sun-agoge, a "Gathering-Together-Unto," as a noun, is only used twice in the Greek New Testament, but the verb is used seven or eight times. We find it first in Matthew 23:37, in which verse it occurs twice: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together unto (Myself) even as a hen gathers her chickens unto (herself) under her wings, and ye would not".

This, the first time the word is used, beautifully illustrates its meaning. We have all heard the mother hen give that special little cluck that calls the little chicks—calls them, where? Calls them unto herself. That is just the thought in this lovely word. You may look up the other places where we find this verb, all of which, you will note, are in the Gospels, telling of our Lord down here on earth: Matthew 24:31, Mark 1:33, 13:27; Luke 12:1,

Serving the Lord is important, but more important is knowing the Lord who we serve.

J. Portman

13:34, and perhaps 17:37, but the reading here is, I believe, doubtful. If you examine these Scriptures, I think you will find that all, except the last, refer to gathering together unto our beloved Lord and Savior. Christ, and Christ alone, is the Object and Center of our gathering. May the Lord help us to bear this in mind when we come together to remember our Lord's death; it is not only a "gathering together" (the synagogue was that), but a Gathering Together Unto the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Many today gather together unto a Doctrine, such as baptism; others gather together unto a great leader, such as Luther or Wesley; others to a form of Worship or church Government, or to a National Church. Such gatherings have no right to claim they are gathered together unto Christ and Christ alone.

But let us look a little at the two Scriptures (and only two) where we find this word as a noun. The first is in 2 Thessalonians 2:1: "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled". Here, this word tells us of that great gathering in the air, described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, and in 1 Corinthians 15:51-57, when all the true believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, whether living or sleeping, shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. What a gathering together that will be, and all unto Him! Not one saint, from the thief on the cross to the last one brought to the Savior before He comes again, will be missing then; then all will be gathered together unto their Lord, and He will be the Center, the only Center and Object, of that vast throng. And, note, the One unto Whom we are gathered is not left to be understood (as it is in some cases), but is plainly told us: "unto Him."—unto the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The archangel will be there and will utter his voice, but he is not the Center or Object, the One to whom that vast throng is gathered! No! It is unto the Lord Himself, the Lord alone, He is the Center of all: "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout." The Lord Himself is our only Object and Center then.

Who would be willing to miss that meeting in the air, with the Lord Himself in the midst? Who then, at that moment, will want any other center, any other object, than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself? Why any other center or any other object now?

The only other place where we find this word is in Hebrews 10:25: "Not forsaking the gathering-together—unto (Him)— of yourselves, as the manner is with some." This tells us of our gathering together unto Himself down here on this earth, in the present day, just as the other occasion on which this word was used told us of that mighty gathering together unto Him in that coming day, that gathering together unto Him in the air. How amazingly sweet that the Spirit of God should choose exactly the same word for each of these gatherings! Thus, the Lord tells us that this gathering together unto "my Name, as we get in Matthew 18:20 (for almost the

same words are used), is, in His sight, the same as that wondrous gathering together unto Him in the air.

And in both of these gatherings, He promises to be there. In the one, "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout;" and in the other, "There am I in the midst of them." It is the presence of the Living Lord we love that makes all the difference, the One down here, the other in the air, but the Lord Jesus Christ Himself present in each case. His presence makes these meetings different to all other meetings that can be arranged by men.

Very likely today, that meeting is held in some upper room, or down a back street, or in a private house, as in New Testament days. Adornment is not there. The organ and the choir of the world, or even the music of Old Testament days, are all missing. It may be there are only "two or three" present, but, dear Reader, do not scorn it, for in the sight of God, it is just as truly a gathering-together-unto the Lord Jesus as is that glorious meeting in the air, with countless myriads, from the grave and from the earth and He himself in all His glory, the visible Center of that mighty throng. Then we shall see Him with our own eyes for the first time, and through that sight, we shall be changed to be "like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

It is amazing, is it not, that the Holy Spirit chooses exactly the same word for each of these gatherings? It tells us that the Lord Himself is just as truly present in that bare upper room with the despised two or three, as He is visibly present in that glorious gathering to which we all look forward with hope and joy.

And just one word more. The Holy Spirit adds this admonition: "And so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." Beloved, do we not see the Day approaching now? Never was "the Day" so near as in our day! May you and I love that blessed place where Jesus Himself is in the midst and love and treasure it the more as we see the Day approaching now. May other gatherings together love their attraction as we find an irresistible attraction in that "Gathering-Together-Unto Him"!

The robes of heaven are bought from Christ while here on earth.

Jim Allen

Elders, Overseers, Shepherds

To know the elders among them, and acknowledge their God-assigned service by submitting to their guidance is a responsibility upon all in assembly fellowship. It was to a very young assembly, probably not

twelve months old, that Paul wrote, "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13). The word here translated "are over" is also translated "rule" in four other places, namely, 1 Timothy 3:4 and 5, where a man's rule in his own house is referred to, and 1 Timothy 5:17 and Rom. 12:8, where rule within the assembly is in view.

It is evident, then, that one of the earliest manifestations of the work of the Holy Spirit in a scripturally constituted assembly is the distinguishing of men with a fitness for rule given them by the Lord—who are over the assembly IN THE LORD. They are characterised by "labour" among their brethren, part of which is admonishing or warning. In Hebrews 13 there are three references to the same men (verses 7, 17, and 24) as "them that have the rule over you," but the word used is different from that referred to above. In a slightly varied form it is translated "governor" with reference to both Pontius Pilate and Felix. The idea of guidance or leadership, as indicated in the A.V., Margin, is prominent in it.

Thus it is seen that a feature of New Testament churches is rule, guidance or leadership exercised by men raised up and fitted by the Lord. These are termed elders or overseers. The word "elder" lays emphasis on the age or experience of the one called into this service, while the word "overseer" stresses the character of his work—he oversees. When Paul called the elders of the church at Ephesus to meet him at Miletus (Acts 20:17), he charged them with responsibility expressed in the words, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood" (v. 28). Comparison of these two verses shows that, firstly, it is the man of experience in divine things who is made the overseer (and this is emphasised in 1 Tim. 3:6, where a novice, or one newly come to the faith, is prohibited from the work), and, secondly, that it is the Holy Spirit's distinctive work upon him that fits him for the service, — "the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers."

Here is the secret of the rule that these men exercise. The Holy Spirit's work in maintaining those whom He indwells in communion with their Lord on the throne above is specially manifest in them, so that they readily interpret His ways to the flock. It is their fellowship with the Lord as to His rule and direction of the assembly that gives them their service and commends them as overseers to the saints. Knowing His loving care for His own sheep they render faithful and willing service to Him as under-shepherds, and will receive their reward at His manifestation (1 Peter 5:1-5).

Mr W. E. Vine, commenting on the two words used by the Lord in directing Peter to the care of His sheep (John 21), writes, "The lesson to be learnt, as

Trench points out (Syn. § xxv) is that, in the spiritual care of God's children, the feeding of the flock from the Word of God is the constant and regular necessity; it is to have the foremost place. The tending (which includes this) consists of other acts, of discipline, authority, restoration, material assistance of individuals, but they are incidental in comparison with feeding."

Such is the nature of the work of the under-shepherd, the overseer or elder. It is therefore essential that he be apt to teach, a characteristic shown as belonging to him in 1 Timothy 3:2, and implied in Titus 1:9. The understanding of this would lead to deeper exercise of heart that men fitted by the risen Lord for this service might be raised up among the assemblies, and would also prevent those whose lack of fitness is evident from attempting the work.

Where there are no elders in assemblies there is evidence of a falling short of the pattern given in the Word of God, for in the divine order they are provided in each assembly. As we aim at scriptural standards human weakness and failure are seen; but it is far better always to have those standards in view than to accept anything lower than the Word of God sets. — O. B. Wyllie.

It is always the case that those who think much of Christ think little of themselves, while those who think little of Christ think much of themselves.

F. B. Hole

Ephesians 4:8-24

Commentary from Expositor's Bible

The Galilean conquered! The new man was destined to convict and destroy the old. "God sending His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh". (Romans 8:3). When Jesus lived, died, and rose again, an inconceivable revolution in human affairs had been effected. The cross was planted on the territory of the god of this world; its victory was inevitable. The "grain of wheat" fell into the ground to die: there might be still a long, cruel winter; many a storm and blight would delay its growth; but the harvest was secure. Jesus Christ was the type and the head of a new moral order, destined to control the universe.

To see the new and the old man side by side was enough to assure one that the future lay with Jesus. Corruption and decrepitude marked every feature of Gentile life. It was gangrened with vice, "wasting away in its deceitful lusts."

St. Paul had before his eyes, as he wrote, a conspicuous type of the decaying Pagan order. He had

appealed as a citizen of the empire to Caesar as his judge. He was in durance as Nero's prisoner, and was acquainted with the life of the palace. (Philippians 1:13). Never, perhaps, has any line of rulers dominated mankind so absolutely or held in their single hand so completely the resources of the world as did the Caesars of St. Paul's time. Their name has ever since served to mark the summit of autocratic power. It was, surely, the vision of Tiberius sitting at Rome that Jesus saw in the wilderness, when "the devil showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; and said, All this hath been delivered to me, and to whomsoever I will I give it." The Emperor was the topstone of the splendid edifice of Pagan civilization, that had been rearing for so many ages. And Nero was the final product and paragon of the Caesarean house!

At this epoch, writes M. Renan, "Nero and Jesus, Christ and Antichrist, stand opposed, confronting each other, if I may dare to say so, like heaven and hell." In face of Jesus there presents itself a monster, who is the ideal of evil as Jesus of goodness. Nero's was an evil nature, hypocritical, vain, frivolous, prodigiously given to declamation and display; a blending of false intellect, profound wickedness, cruel and artful egotism carried to an incredible degree of refinement and subtlety. He is a monster who has no second in history, and whose equal we can only find in the pathological annals of the scaffold. The school of crime in which he had grown up, the execrable influence of his mother, the stroke of parricide forced upon him, as one might say, by this abominable woman, by which he had entered on the stage of public life, made the world take to his eyes the form of a horrible comedy, with himself for the chief actor in it. At the moment we have now reached [when St. Paul entered Rome], Nero had detached himself completely from the philosophers who had been his tutors. He had killed nearly all his relations. He had made the most shameful follies the common fashion. A large part of Roman society, following his example, had descended to the lowest level of debasement. The cruelty of the ancient world had reached its consummation. The world had touched the bottom of the abyss of evil; it could only reascend.

Such was the man who occupied at this time the summit of human power and glory, the man who lighted the torch of Christian martyrdom and at whose sentence St. Paul's head was destined to fall, the Wild Beast of John's awful vision. Hero of Rome, the son of Agrippina, embodied the triumph of Satan as the god of this world. Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Mary, reigned only in a few loving and pure hearts. Future history, as the scroll of the Apocalypse unfolded it, was to be the battlefield of these two confronting powers, the war of Christ with Antichrist.

Could it be doubtful, to any one who had measured the rival forces, on which side victory must fall? St. Paul pronounces the fate of the whole kingdom of evil in this world, when he declares that "the old man"

is "perishing, according to the lusts of deceit": It is an application of the maxim he gave us in Galatians 6:8: "He that soweth to his own flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption." In its mad sensuality and prodigal lusts, the vile Roman world he saw around him was speeding to its ruin. That ruin was delayed; there were moral forces left in the fabric of the Roman State, which in the following generations reasserted themselves and held back for a time the tide of disaster; but in the end Rome fell, as the ancient world-empires of the East had fallen, through her own corruption, and by "the wrath" which is "revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." For the solitary man, for the household, for the body politic and the family of nations the rule is the same. "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

The passions which carry men and nations to their ruin are "lusts of deceit." The tempter is the liar. Sin is an enormous fraud. "You shall not die," said the serpent in the garden; "Your eyes will be opened, and you will be as God!" So forbidden desire was born, and "the woman being deceived fell into transgression."

"So glistered the dire Snake, and into fraud Led Eve, our credulous mother, to the tree Of prohibition, root of all our woe."

By its baits of sensuous pleasure, and still more by its show of freedom and power to stir our pride, sin cheats us of our manhood; it sows life with misery, and makes us self-despising slaves. It knows how to use God's law as an incitement to transgression, turning the very prohibition into a challenge to our bold desires. "Sin taking occasion by the commandment deceived me, and by it slew me." Over the pit of destruction play the same dancing lights that have lured countless generations, the glitter of gold; the purple robe and jeweled coronet; the wine moving in the cup; fair, soft faces lit with laughter. The straying foot and hot desires give chase, till the inevitable moment comes when the treacherous soil yields, and the pursuer plunges beyond escape into sin's reeking gulfs. Then the illusion is over. The gay faces grow foul; the glittering prize proves dust; the sweet fruit turns to ashes; the cup of pleasure burns with the fire of hell. And the sinner knows at last that his greed has cheated him, that he is as foolish as he is wicked.

Let us remember that there is but one way of escape from the all-encompassing deceit of sin. It is in "learning Christ." Not in learning about Christ, but in learning Him. It is a common artifice of the great deceit to "wash the outside of cup and platter." The old man is improved and civilized; he is baptized in infancy and called a Christian. He puts off many of his old ways, he dresses himself in a decorous garb and style; and so deceives himself into thinking that he is new, while his heart is unchanged. He may turn ascetic, and deny this or that to himself; and yet never deny himself. He observes religious forms and makes charitable benefactions, as though he would compound with God

for his unforsaken sin. But all this is only a plausible and hateful manifestation of the lusts of deceit.

To learn the Christ is to learn the way of the cross. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me," He bids us; "for I am meek and lowly in heart." Till we have done this we are not ever at the beginning of our lesson.

From the perishing old man the apostle turns, in Ephsians 4:23-24, to the new. These two clauses differ in their form of expression more than the English rendering indicates. When he writes, "that ye be renewed in the spirit of your mind," it is a continual rejuvenation that he describes; the verb is present in tense, and the newness implied is that of recency and youth, newness in point of age. But the "new man" to be "put on" (Ephesians 4:24) is of a new kind and order; and in this instance the verb is of the aorist tense signifying an event, not a continuous act. The new man is put on when the Christian way of life is adopted, when we enter personally into the new humanity founded in Christ. We "put on the Lord Jesus Christ," (Romans 13:14) who covers and absorbs the old self, even as those who await in the flesh His second advent will "put on the house from heaven," when "the mortal" in them will be "swallowed up of life". (2 Corinthians 4:2-4). Thus two distinct conceptions of the life of faith are placed before our minds. It consists, on the one hand, of a quickening, constantly renewed, in the springs of our individual thought and will; and it is at the same time the assumption of another nature, the investiture of the soul with the Divine character and form of its being.

Borne on the stream of his evil passions, we saw "the old man" in his "former manner of life," hastening to the gulf of ruin. For the man renewed in Christ the stream of life flows steadily in the opposite direction, and with a swelling tide moves upward to God. His knowledge and love are always growing in depth, in refinement, in energy and joy. Thus it was with the apostle in his advancing age. The fresh impulses of the Holy Spirit, the unfolding to his spirit of the mystery of God, the fellowship of Christian brethren, and the interests of the work of the Church renewed Paul's youth like the eagle's. If in years and toil he is old, his soul is full of ardor, his intellect keen and eager; the "outward man decays, but the inward man is renewed day by day." This new nature had a new birth. The soul reanimating itself perpetually from the fresh springs that are in God, had in God the beginning of its renovated life. We have not to create or fashion for ourselves the perfect life, but to adopt it, to realize the Christian ideal (Ephesians 4:24). We are called to put on the new type of manhood as completely as we renounce the old (Ephesians 4:22). The new man is there before our eyes, manifest in the person of Jesus Christ, in whom we live henceforth. When we "learn the Christ," when we have become His true disciples, we "put on" His nature and "walk in Him." The inward reception of His Spirit is attended by the outward assumption of His character as our calling amongst men.

Now, the character of Jesus is human nature as God first formed it. It existed in His thoughts from eternity. If it be asked whether St. Paul refers, in Ephesians 4:24, to the creation of Adam in God's likeness, or to the image of God appearing in Jesus Christ, or to the Christian nature formed in the regenerate, we should say that, to the apostle's mind, the first and last of these creations are merged in the second. The Son of God's love is His primeval image. The race of Adam was created in Christ. (Colossians 1:15-16) The first model of that image, in the natural father of mankind, was marred by sin and has become "the old man" corrupt and perishing. The new pattern replacing this broken type is the original ideal, displayed "in the likeness of sinful flesh"- wearing no longer the charm of childish innocence, but the glory of sin vanquished, and sacrifice endured in the Son of God made perfect through suffering. Through all there has been only one image of God, one ideal humanity. The Adam of Paradise was, within his limits, what the Image of God had been in perfectness from eternity. And Jesus in His human personality represented, under the changed circumstances brought about by sin, what Adam might have grown to be as a complete and disciplined man.

The qualities which the Apostle insists upon in the new man are two: "righteousness and holiness [or piety] of the truth." This is the Old Testament conception of a perfect life, whose realization the devout Zacharias anticipates when he sings how God has "shown mercy to our fathers, in remembrance of His holy covenant, that we being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life." Enchanting vision, still to be fulfilled!

"Righteousness" is the sum of all that should be in a man's relations towards God's law; "holiness" is a right disposition and bearing towards God Himself. This is not St. Paul's ordinary word for holiness (sanctification, sanctity), which he puts so often at the head of his letters, addressing his readers as "saints" in Christ Jesus. That other term designates Christian believers as devoted persons, claimed by God for His own; it signifies holiness as a calling. The word of our text denotes specifically the holiness of temper and behavior-"that becometh saints." The two words differ very much as devotedness from devoutness.

A religious temper, a reverent mind, marks the true child of grace. His soul is full of the loving fear of God. In the new humanity, in the type of man that will prevail in the latter days when the truth as in Jesus has been learned by mankind, justice and piety will hold a balanced sway. The man of the coming times will not be atheistic or agnostic: he will be devout. He will not be narrow and self-seeking; he will not be pharisaic and pretentious, practicing the world's ethics with the

Christian's creed: he will be upright and generous, manly and godlike.

God never commands or commends the search for pleasure. To hunt after happiness is the sure way to miss it. Blessedness is the fruit of faith, obedience, and self-denial.

Misrepresenting Christ

WIS Apr 1941

"But ye have not so learned Christ." "But ye did not so learn Christ" (Ephesians 4:20, R. V.).

"Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men."

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 3:2; 5:17)

In the first passage Paul indicates that some were misrepresenting Christ, because "ye did not so learn Christ." The second passage indicates that a truly converted person is a new creation and should be through with the old life and its sins. The world looks to Christians for higher standards, ideals, and the exemplification of the Christ life within and without. Every observer may not see the halo of Divine glory about the heads of those who profess to live the Christian life, but they expect to see the Christians so different from themselves and other unsaved people.

Most Christian people wish to properly represent Christ before men. This means a re-presentation of Christ Himself in human lives to present a somewhat similar likeness to Him. How do Christians sometimes misrepresent Christ, their Lord?

As to place, Christians may misrepresent Christ almost anywhere. They may fail to show forth the Christlikeness in the home, or the street, in their business dealings, in the office or factory, or even in religious meetings in the House of God.

Christians may misrepresent Christ by unkindness, discourtesy, unfairness in minor matters, by carelessness and thoughtlessness about other people's rights and feelings. They may misrepresent Christ by being too much like the world. Dr. Bonar once said: "I look for the Church and find it in the world, I look for the world and find it in the Church." The line of demarcation is not definite enough for Christians today.

Christians misrepresent Christ by a backward timidity, fear, and false modesty in standing up for God and the truth. Christ was no coward and He truly defended the truth and the helpless masses. Christians may misrepresent Christ by foolish talking, frivolity, low jesting, and vulgar actions. There is too much of this among professing Christians. Cheerfulness, joyfulness, and true happiness is to be com-

mended, but these are so different from foolish jesting which the Scriptures forbid (Ephesians 5:4). If youth, and adults too, only knew how much such jesting and foolishness "kills" and grieves the life of the Spirit, they would quit it like a bad habit.

Christian girls and women may misrepresent Christ by their worldly dress, their artificiality of personality, and their superficiality in daily living. Take your styles from Christ and the Bible, not from the fashion shops of Paris, London, and New York! (1 Peter 3:3, 4; 1 Timothy 2:9, 10). Does your life, your dress, your manner ever attract anyone to say: "There is a real Christian man or woman, if there ever was one!"

Some Christians are judged largely by the company they keep; is yours saved or unsaved, worldly, or unworldly? Do they love the spiritual things or are they adverse to them? Beware lest worldly companions draw you away with them, for Paul said: "Evil company doth corrupt good morals" (1 Corinthians 15:33, R. V.). Christ is judged by your life, by your spiritual or carnal walk before men. Do you frequent places where His Name is unwelcome? Do you walk in a carnal manner before men? "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked" (1 John 2:6). None need fear that they will ever be perfect in this life, but we should strive by His grace to please Him.

Some people misrepresent Christ by doubting His providence, by anxiety, worry, fretfulness, and needless care—as if Christ was not in power in His Kingdom sufficiently to care for all of them.

"Take heed unto thyself," said Paul. If we all will do that, we will not so unjustly condemn and criticize others. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation."

The remedy for such misrepresentation of Christ by professed Christians, would be to surrender their lives, their tongues, and their future, entirely to Christ, seeking His complete control. He will take possession of His own. He will abide in the humble heart. He will give the weakest the victory they crave, for "we will triumph in Thy victory." Walk in total dependence upon Him. Live a life of obedience to His revealed will. "Whatsoever He bids you do, do it." "To obey is better than sacrifice." Sit at the feet of Jesus Christ and learn from Him. He excels all other universities combined. Look to Jesus Christ for faith, hope, love, and strength to live the Christian life. He never misrepresents Himself in any life, therefore allow Christ to live His life in you, so that you may truly say with Paul, "It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me."

"Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead." "Be filled with the Spirit." Rejoice in the Lord always." "Pray without ceasing." Seek the fellowship of Christ and His people, but flee from sinners who would entice you.

Remember there is great reward to the ambassadors who truly represent their Lord and His message to men, even in the face of opposition. Ours is the duty, the obligation, the privilege, and the responsibility of so doing. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them," said the Lord.

A Call to Commitment

B. D. Goatley

The purpose of this present article is to focus our attention on the arresting words of Matthew 21:28 . . . "Son, go work today in my vineyard", so that their impact may be felt in our hearts.

Although spoken in parable form by the Lord Jesus, when compared in the light of other passages, these words have a pointed message for us. Let us look at them one by one.

"Son" — In Exodus 4:22, 23 the Lord states, "Israel is My son, My firstborn. Let My son go, that he may serve Me". Three important features are seen here: (a) possession — My son, (b) privilege — My firstborn, and (c) purpose — serve Me. Regarding the firstborn in Israel, three great truths are linked with him: (a) redemption, (b) sanctification, and (c) priesthood. In the New Testament two words translated "son" present a wealth of truth belonging to the believer today. One (Jn. 1:12) indicates the eternal relationship to God by the new birth: the other, (Ephesians 1:5) conveys the concept of position before the Father, able to share in His purposes and plans. May our hearts so thrill to the wealth of truth conveyed in this word "son" that we rise in glad response to God for His rich purposes in grace towards us in Christ Jesus.

"Go" — immediately we think of the words of Matthew 28:19,20. Linked with this little word are the words "make disciples", "baptise", "teach". The authority to go is vested in the Risen Lord, and the assurance of the Divine presence each day with those who venture forth on the promise, infuses the required strength. The pertinent question arises, "who will go?" Who will leave the luxury, ease, security of homeland and friends; who will break free from the race for riches, refusing to bow to the pressures or accept the philosophies of a materialistic society? Who, moved by the lostness of the world in which we live, and constrained by the love of the compassionate Saviour, will reach out to the perishing? There is an urgency in this word "go". May the Holy Spirit burn this on all of our hearts, stirring us from complacency and indifference. Of our worthy Lord and Master it is recorded, "He must needs go through Samaria" — John 4:4.

"Work" — meaning "to be actively occupied in toil or labour for". What a high honour to be thus spent for His Name. His honour. His purposes, but it involves toil, labour, expending of self. Who will labour in prayer for Christian workers, their families, their sphere of service? Who will labour unsung in remote corners with a single eye for the glory of God and the good of man? Who will patiently labour in the Word and doctrine, that Christ might be formed in new believers, and older ones led on to greater spiritual development? There is no glamour in this work, nor statistics to report, but it is of vital importance if a work for God is to be consolidated

capable of self-propagation. The Lord Jesus said "I must work while it is day, the night cometh when no man can work" — John 9:4. He also stated clearly in John 12:25 "He that loveth his life shall lose it: and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal". The selfish life is the barren life. Only as there is death to self and abandonment to Christ can true work be done for God. This "life-out-of-death" principle was never more fully displayed than in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, and it is indelibly stamped on the lives of all who follow Him in service.

"Today" — these words strike home the reality of time. Yesterday has gone out into eternity — gone forever. Tomorrow never comes. How often with urgency we warn in preaching the Gospel that NOW is the accepted time, that TODAY if ye will hear His voice, that procrastination is the thief of time, yet for us as Christians the great risk is that we squander the precious hours, days, weeks, months and years as if we were numbed to eternal realities. Oh may God awaken us to the fleeting nature of time. We are permitted one trip only through this life, and if we fail to live for God, fail to invest for eternity, reaching out to others, then there will be NO opportunity to rectify the tragic mistake. May we pray with Moses the man of God, "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" — Psalm 90:12.

"In my vineyard" — this is the area of Divine interest and purpose. Acts 15:14-18 presents in a nutshell the plan of God for this age, i.e. "to take out from the nations a people for His Name". The out-calling of the Church is the supreme purpose of God at present. In wonderful grace we are permitted to have a part in it, but let us never forget that the Word is His, the Power is His, the Servants are His, and when completed the Glory will be forever His. Truly the vineyard is His and not ours. In all things He must have the pre-eminence.

We stand on the threshold of the Lord's coming in the will of the Lord. What will it mean for us? Shall we evaluate afresh our lives with the prayer that they be re-directed to find again their true centre which is Christ, and their true purpose which is living for Him — Philippians 1:20,21. May this brief meditation have an impact on our hearts and lives, stimulating zeal and fervour, causing us to redeem the time, so that we serve in our generation by the will of God before falling asleep in Jesus.

Scripturally and historically it seems that true spiritual revival hasn't taken place during times of prosperity.