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Standing With Christ in the Day of Battle

"Fight the good fight of faith," 1 Timothy 6:12.

"Then the spirit came upon Amasai, who was chief of the captains, and he said, Thine are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse: peace, peace be unto thee, and peace be to thine helpers; for thy God helpeth thee. Then David received them, and made them captains of the band," 1 Chronicles 12:18.

The child of God is a warrior. He takes after His Heavenly Father Who is a man of war. "The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name. Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red sea," Exodus 15:3-4. "Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle," Psalm 24:8.

Every true child of God partakes of the divine nature and therefore bears the image of the heavenly upon their character. "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust," 2 Peter 1:4. That does not mean that we are partakers of the essence of God, so as to be deified. This is impossible, for the nature, perfections and glory of God are incommunicable to creatures. Rather, we partake of His resemblance and likeness, the new man or principle of grace being formed in the heart in regeneration, after the image of God, and bearing a likeness to the image of His Son.

Thus Paul wrote to Timothy: "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ," 2 Timothy 2:3. The whole pilgrimage of the child of God through this world is, as John Bunyan depicts it in his masterpiece: 'Pilgrim's Progress', one of war, requiring the pilgrim to be attired in armour. This concurs with what Paul wrote to the Ephesians. "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil," Ephesians 6:11.

There never has been a generation of believers who have not experienced battle. "But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions," Hebrews 10:32. These words, addressed to the Hebrew believers, may be applied universally to all Christians throughout the ages.

It has to be confessed that despite being a partaker of the divine nature, the Christian often seeks to avoid conflict with the powers of darkness. The old nature within us would turn us into cowards as it did Peter on the night of betrayal. That being so, the need for us to wage war is so often denied, the danger that threatens the cause of Christ ignored and the faithful contender for the faith miscalculated.

Perhaps we might consider some matters related to this great subject.

1. THE CHARACTER OF THE BATTLE

1. The battle for the truth of God is ongoing.

"And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovahnissi: for he said, Because the LORD hath sworn that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation," Exodus 17:14-16. That declaration of ongoing war against Amalek has often been used as an illustration of the ongoing war God wages against the devil's kingdom and sin.

Ongoing war is necessitated by the devil's ongoing attacks against Christ and His people and his ongoing campaign of lies, falsehoods and deception. He is a murderer and a liar from the beginning the Saviour tells us in John 8:44. He has unrelentingly waged war against the people of God and the cause of truth.

Our Warrior Saviour stands guard over His flock and calls upon the members of it to be watchful. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may de-



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our," 1 Peter 5:8.

Furthermore, he appoints under-shepherds to maintain vigilance with Him over the wellbeing of the flock. "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away," 1 Peter 5:1-4.

The reference to Christ as the Chief Shepherd underlines the role of elders as under-shepherds with the task of overseeing or watching out for the welfare of the flock. As long as there is a devouring lion on the loose there is a need for us all to be on our guard and girded for war.

2. A common feature of this warfare is the presence of traitors within our ranks.

There are many examples of this sad truth within Scripture. In the days of Nehemiah, there was the work of the traitor undermining the labours of the man of God. "And before this, Eliashib the priest, having the oversight of the chamber of the house of our God, was allied unto Tobiah: And he had prepared for him a great chamber, where aforetime they laid the meat offerings, the frankincense, and the vessels, and the tithes of the corn, the new wine, and the oil, which was commanded to be given to the Levites, and the singers, and the porters; and the offerings of the priests. But in all this time was not I at Jerusalem: for in the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon came I unto the king, and after certain days obtained I leave of the king: and I came to Jerusalem, and understood of the evil that Eliashib did for Tobiah, in preparing him a chamber in the courts of the house of God. And it grieved me sore: therefore I cast forth all the household stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber. Then I commanded, and they cleansed the chambers: and thither brought I again the vessels of the house of God, with the meat offering and the frankincense," Nehemiah 13:4-9.

This Tobiah, with whom Eliashib had allied himself, had long been an opponent of the work of Nehemiah. "When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel," Nehemiah 2:10.

Just how such a man of Eliashib's standing - he was the high priest - could align himself with such a person as Tobiah is hard to understand. Tobiah is termed an enemy in Nehemiah 6:1. "Now it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies . . ." Of course, there was a family link. "And one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was son in law to Sanballat the Horonite," Nehemiah 13:28. The high priest's grandson was married into this evil circle of ungodly aliens and enemies of Israel. What an impact unscriptural marriages may have upon the work and testimony of God! This mixing with the enemy gave rise to the infiltration and defiling of the temple of God and contributed to the conflict that Nehemiah and his faithful supporters had to endure.

The most famous of all traitors is of course, Judas Iscariot. The record which Holy Scripture gives us of him serves to emphasise that the highest echelons of the professing church may be infiltrated by the devil's agents. It is clear that the other apostles never suspected Judas. They were astonished when the Saviour informed them of the presence of a traitor. "And they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing," Luke 22:23.

Today it is the same. God's people are easily deceived and astonished when they are informed of the presence of a traitor. It gives rise to questioning and disputes, for that is the meaning of the word 'enquire'. I am sure that many disputes followed the writing of Jude's epistle and the forceful warning it contained. "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord



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Jesus Christ," Jude 1:3-4.

To many, I am sure, it was a thing unthinkable that the first generation apostolic church should be so infiltrated. Nevertheless, the Holy Ghost said that it was. "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of," 2 Peter 2:1, 2.

If traitors and pretenders were present in the days of the Saviour and His apostles, then it certainly will be so in our day - days spoken of by the apostles as days when such deceivers shall flourish. "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, TRAITORS, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away," 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

It has to be noted that even the most earnest of souls may act and speak as traitors. This comes about as a result of folly and ignorance and misplaced zeal on their part.

The best example of this is Peter. In Matthew 16:23 it is recorded that the Saviour severely rebuked Peter. "But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." This rebuke was the result of Peter foolishly and most presumptuously rebuking the Saviour after He had revealed to His disciples that He must die at the hands of the elders at Jerusalem. "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee," Matthew 16:21-22.

Here is a child of God who believed himself to be acting sincerely and wisely and kindly toward the Lord yet, in his folly, opposing the Saviour and acting as an ally of the devil, as the Lord Jesus pressed forward toward the substitutionary death He had come to die for His elect in obedience to His Father's eternal will and purpose.

How wrong a child of God may be and how treacherously they may act toward the Saviour!

May the Lord save us from traitors and from befriending and defending them, or even acting as they do, as they work their evil work against Christ and His people!

3. Such traitors come heavily disguised.

They come pretending to be what they are not. "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves," Matthew 7:15. Like the Gibeonites, who deceived Joshua and the leaders of Israel as to their true identity, they appear to be what they are not. "And when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done unto Jericho and to Ai, they did work wily, and went and made as if they had been ambassadors, and took old sacks upon their asses, and wine bottles, old, and rent, and bound up; and old shoes and clouted upon their feet, and old garments upon them; and all the bread of their provision was dry and mouldy. And they went to Joshua unto the camp at Gilgal, and said unto him, and to the men of Israel, We be come from a far country: now therefore make ye a league with us. And the men of Israel said unto the Hivites, Peradventure ye dwell among us; and how shall we make a league with you?" Joshua 9:3-7. This was an elaborate hoax. They went to great lengths to deceive Joshua. In like manner infiltrators who desire to work the devil's will amongst the people of God come cleverly disguised and professing a knowledge of the Lord (Joshua 9:9) and seek to have the people of God accept them and live at peace with them when they should war against them with all their might. In accepting them at their word, Joshua and the princes of Israel made a grave error for they did not consult the Lord on the matter. "And the men took of their victuals, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD. And Joshua made



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peace with them, and made a league with them, to let them live: and the princes of the congregation swore unto them," Joshua 9:14-15.

It is essential to measure every doctrine and every profession of faith by the Word of God. The example of the Bereans has long been held forth as a wise course of action to take when it comes to the things of God. "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so," Acts 17:11. The word 'searched' carries the meaning of 'examine', 'question', 'discern'. Had Joshua done just that he would not have ended up with an agreement with those who were the enemies of Israel.

The enemies of God can imitate the outward appearances of the child of God. That is why the Lord calls upon us to look not on the outward but the inward man for an understanding of his true character. "But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart," 1 Samuel 16:7. The 'outward' sheep may be 'inwardly' a ravening wolf!

How clever then are the devil and his agents at disguising themselves! Paul actually says that we should not be surprised at this. "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works," 2 Corinthians 11:13-15.

The ultimate deception that the devil will seek to work will be that of passing off his mouthpiece as the Christ of God. Paul speaks of that event in 2 Thessalonians 2. "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?" 2 Thessalonians 2:3-5.

"He as God sitteth in the temple of God." What impudence! What brazenness! Yet this fraud is what this world will yet see.

The Word of God tells us that many, indeed all but a small remnant, will embrace the devil's counterfeit. "And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," Revelation 13:6-8.

A fraud on such a scale is not really so surprising when we bear in mind what the Saviour tells us has been going on since ever the gospel has been preached. "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. Beware of false prophets . . ." Matthew 7:13-15. Since ever the true message of salvation was first preached, the devil has presented his false way. It is wide and broad and therefore has none of the 'restrictions' of the path of holiness and obedience to God. As such it is so attractive to the ungodly man who loves his sin and will not give it up. While only 'few' find God's way which leads to life, 'many' clamour to follow the road that they do not realise ends in destruction and damnation.

Yes, the devil has disguised his lie and those who peddle it most convincingly to the eternal perishing of millions and millions of souls.

How vital it is to watch out for his deceptions!



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4. The threat to the gospel that we face is most dangerous.

"For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ," Jude 1:4. Here is the core of the evil plan that lies behind this attack upon the gospel. "Turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." These wicked men sought to abuse the doctrines of grace so as to give indulgence to corrupt and carnal inclinations. They would make the gospel a "liberty for a cloke of maliciousness," 1 Peter 2:16. We see this today in that evil men seek to justify every form of wicked behaviour from the Word of God. Church leaders seek support for their licentious views on sodomy and the ordination of women along with the whole raft of modernistic and ecumenical errors abroad today. They would make God the author and condoner of wickedness. This is to turn the "grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." They turn, or transpose sin into the place of holiness and claim it is God's will. They deny or disregard the essential holy nature of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ and pervert the clear assertions of His holy law.

Success for these perverting creepers would entail the utter destruction of the cause of Christ. "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" Psalm 11:3. There is an undermining of the very foundations of the religion of Jesus Christ from within the boundaries of Christendom and by those who profess to be Christians. There is the declaring of the death of the God of the Bible and an attempt to assume His throne by a god of man's invention.

From the very beginning, this has been the nature of this scheme. It is portrayed in Psalm 2 most succinctly. "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us," verses 1-3. This is the spirit that lay behind Calvary as the prayer of the early believers, gathered together in the face of the animosity of the Jewish leaders indicates, Acts 4:24-31.

It will reach its zenith in the manifesting of the Antichrist and his ten-kingdom empire in the last three and a half years of this age, Revelation 17:12-17.

This is the attack we face today and which we must resist steadfastly in the faith.

5. We must resist for we are commanded to resist.

"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints," Jude 1:3. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world," 1 Peter 5:8-9. We are thus called upon to contend against and to resist and withstand these attempts to subvert the gospel of Christ.

Christian, please note that ALL believers are called upon to engage in this warfare. The epistle of Jude was addressed to "to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called," verse 1.

There are no believers excluded. Peter's second epistle is addressed to those "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," 1 Peter 1:2. Again, there is a universality to the call to resist the devil.

There can be no place for "conscientious objectors" amongst Christians when it comes to contending for the faith. Nor is there a place of 'neutrality'. It is not just for certain ministers. It is a cause in which every believer has a part to play. It is true, as in any army, not all may be frontline troops. However, all have a part to play in defending the citadel of Christ that is the gospel.



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There are ministers who would claim exemption from contending by claiming that it is their duty to "stick to the gospel"! Note that Jude made a choice between expounding the doctrines of the gospel and contending for the faith. He chose contending because at that time it was "needful" for him; it was necessary for him to act so. As there is a time when the whole economy of a nation is geared toward war, so it is with the people of God. There are times we must leave the expounding and preaching of the gospel aside and take up a position of defending the gospel. That becomes the priority. That does not mean that there is an utter forsaking of the proclaiming of the simple truths of salvation, but we alter our emphasis and defend and guard as we declare the truths of the old paths.

Today, there are those who seek to be excused from 'active service'. This may be because of the place they feel they occupy in society or a particular position of employment. To use such as an excuse is nothing less than declaring oneself to be ashamed of Jesus Christ and His cause.

Oh how inclined we are to hold back and hide, as did the disciples on the night of the Saviour's arrest! We do not wish to bear the reproach of Him and His cross. What a cowardly spirit that is when we consider what He has borne for us! We cannot, in the light of Calvary, do anything other than rush to the aid of His cause and the defence of His name and honour. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God (the mercies displayed on the cross), that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service," Romans 12:1. "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach," Hebrews 13:13.

We can do none other than show our colours and stand up, stand up for Jesus!

In truth, if we are not contenders then we are not Christians. The lack of any exceptions from contention in Peter and Jude's exhortations clearly indicates that. It is further reinforced when we consider the words of the Saviour in Matthew 16:24-26. "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" To set anything before the Saviour is to refuse to deny ourselves and indicates that we are in danger of losing our soul.

How solemn this matter is!

6. The great danger of gullibility amongst God's people.

We must recognise how susceptible we are as Christians to embracing deceivers and deceptions. I have already mentioned the case of Joshua and the Gibeonites. We could add to that example the incident involving Absalom. "Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice! And it was so, that when any man came nigh to him to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him. And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel," 2 Samuel 15:4-6. The nation was deceived by the charm and smiling words of Absalom and a heavy price was paid for that folly.

This truth is further demonstrated in 1 Samuel 16:7. "But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart." Samuel was ready to anoint the wrong man as king of Israel. What a calamity that would have been!

Sadly, it is a folly that God's people engage in all too often. They follow the wrong man and the wrong doctrines.

Undoing that mistake is not so easy. Pride kicks in and, as in the case of the followers of the house of Saul, there was a reluctance to acknowledge that they had been backing the wrong man. "But Abner the son of Ner, captain of Saul's host, took Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim; and made



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him king over Gilead, and over the Ashurites, and over Jezreel, and over Ephraim, and over Benjamin, and over all Israel. Ishbosheth Saul's son was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and reigned two years. But the house of Judah followed David," 2 Samuel 2:8-10. As a result, "there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker," 2 Samuel 3:1. Blood was shed and division maintained simply because of pride and man's unwillingness to admit he was wrong.

Such folly has often rent the cause of Christ. Even today, there are good men on the wrong side of conflicts and controversies within Fundamentalism simply because they are unwilling to admit they were deceived and they backed the wrong man.

Their stubbornness and pride will yet prove costly to themselves and the holy cause of Christ.

2. THE INTENSIFYING OF THE BATTLE

The features we have just looked at have ever marked the battle for the gospel of Christ in which God's people have been involved since that moment God executed the promise He made in the Garden of Eden. "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel," Genesis 3:15.

It is a long time ago that I, as a new convert, heard Dr Ian Paisley say of the battle for the Crown Rights of King Jesus and the Crown Jewels of His Gospel, that it was God Who started this war. That was burned into my soul. This holy warfare is the result of the work of grace wrought within all true believers when they are put into Christ and made new creatures in Him (2 Corinthians 5:17).

However, we are plainly told that the battle for truth will intensify as the end of this age approaches. One such warning is found in Paul's second epistle to Timothy, chapter 3. "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away," verses 1-5.

The key words are "in the last days perilous times shall come." The word translated "perilous" appears in only one other place, that is Matthew 8:28. "And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way." There it is translated by the two words: "exceeding fierce." If we consider the actions of this poor demoniac under the power of the devil we will get some idea of how things are going to deteriorate in the last days. Mark gives us some details of this man's spiritual and mental state. "And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones," Mark 5:2-5.

The Gadara area was populated by unbelievers for the people required the Saviour to depart from amongst them, after they witnessed His miraculous deliverance of the man and wonderful change for good that grace had wrought within him, verse 14-17.

Yet even amongst these unbelievers, who rejected the Saviour, the actions of the demoniac were extreme and undesirable. This gives us some idea of how things will deteriorate in the closing days of this age and become much more difficult for the people of God.



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1. The last days will be days of increasing darkness.

Darkness deepens as the result of the withdrawal of light. We witness this phenomenon every evening at sunset. In the last days God, in judgment, will withdraw the light of the gospel from areas and regions where it has been resisted and rejected. Darkness came upon the nation of Israel because of its rejection of the Saviour and His Word. Paul confirms this in his epistle to the Romans. "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in," Romans 11:25. He also issued a warning to the Gentile nations to whom the gospel was sent at that time. It was a warning not to act toward God and His truth as did Israel or else the same thing would happen to them. "Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee," Romans 11:20-21.

As we survey the spiritual state of those lands which were mightily blessed of God in years past, what do we see? Is there not a repeat of the dreadful decline that engulfed Israel prior to her rejection of Christ? The great churches of John Knox, of Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley, of George Whitefield and John Wesley are sunk down into the deepest of apostasy and sin. They have consented to and become the promoters of every moral vileness in the nation. They have sanctioned immorality, divorce, sodomy and even abortion. They have been to the fore in rejecting the inspiration of the Word of God, the deity of Christ, His virgin birth, His substitutionary death, His atoning blood and His bodily resurrection. They have long ago substituted a gospel of works for the gospel of sovereign, saving grace.

The United Kingdom has become a nation of every religion but that of the Lord Jesus Christ. Allah and Bud-dha are more revered than the true and living God, while the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is the butt of every foul-mouthed comedian and entertainer. Government agencies, such as the police, are swift to act against any who are deemed to have insulted these heathen deities - usually by the preaching of the Bible - while the grossest of blasphemies on the street, the stage, on radio and television are tolerated and protected in the name of free speech.

The USA is no better. There, easy-believism and empty professions and godless lives mark the 'Church' of Christ. Its airwaves are filled with the most profane and wicked abominations masquerading as a presentation of the gospel of Christ. The proponents of such wickedness are the greediest self-seeking sycophants and leeches that ever emerged from the dark recesses of the pit.

In such an environment it is surely understood that preaching the gospel and maintaining its purity is going to become increasingly difficult and fraught with danger.

One of the results of such opposition is SILENCE on the part of some believers. "All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved," Matthew 24:8-13.

Love for God and His truth will "wax cold"! A cold wind will blow (this is the meaning of the words 'wax cold') upon hearts and make them cool toward the Lord. Such a draught may be felt and seen at work today amongst churches and groups and publications which not so long ago were burning and shining lights for the Saviour. The old paths are despised and those who call for a return to them and point out the many departures from them are treated with disdain and despised and miscalled as dividers of the brethren and disturbers of the faithful.

It seems that things have come full circle once again as has happened before as the following portions of Scripture show.

"And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel?"



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And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim," 1 Kings 18:17-18.

"Thus saith the LORD, This city shall surely be given into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which shall take it. Therefore the princes said unto the king, We beseech thee, let this man (Jeremiah) be put to death: for thus he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them: for this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt," Jeremiah 38:3-4.

"For many bare false witness against him (the Lord Jesus), but their witness agreed not together. And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying, We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands. But neither so did their witness agree together," Mark 14:56-59.

"And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he (Stephen) spake. Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God. And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council, and set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law: for we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us," Acts 6:10-14.

"But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus," Acts 17:5-7.

"Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man (Paul), that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place," Acts 21:28.

There is indeed "no new thing under the sun," Ecclesiastes 1:9.

2. Restraints will be lifted from the devil.

One of the most effective restraints upon the devil is the preaching of the gospel. When the Saviour came preaching in Israel, after it had not had a God-sent prophet for some four hundred years, it was clearly a land marked by devil-possession. That is why the casting out of devils featured so much in His ministry. Where there is no preaching there will be satanic activity. "Thou makest darkness, and it is night: wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth," Psalm 104:20. Darkness brings out the creatures of the night. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil," John 3:19.

In the deepening darkness that is advancing over the nations as a result of gospel-rejection, it is inevitable that we will see an increase of satanic activity. That can only mean more opposition and trouble for the faithful remnant of God's people. "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth," Revelation 2:13.

As it was in the early years when the gospel encountered the powers of darkness as it advanced against heathendom, so it will be again as the light is withdrawn and the darkness advances and reoccupies those lands from which it was driven in former times.

We specifically are told in Revelation 12 of a future time (maybe not so far away) when there will be a lift-



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ing of the divine restraints presently imposed upon the devil. "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time," Revelation 12:9-12.

This casting out of the devil from heaven is of great significance.

I quote from a book I wrote some years ago: *The Shadow of the Antichrist - a study in the book of the Revelation*.

'The exclusion of Satan and his angels from heaven must precede the attack upon the church on earth, with its particular emphasis upon the people of God in Jerusalem. Verse 12 supports this view. "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time."

"And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels," verse 7. There are things going on of which we know very little, indeed nothing at all. We have already referred to the watching of angels over the affairs and persons of the elect of Christ. Here we see the heavenly host engaged in war against the devil. His being cast out of heaven is the beginning of his final and total defeat. The devil had been cast out of heaven before the world began when he first sinned. It was to this the Saviour referred when He said: "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven," Luke 10:18. Although he was cast down forever from his position of honour as the chief of God's heavenly beings, he was allowed to appear in heaven as an accuser of the people of God. "The accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night," verse 10. It was as an accuser of Job that we read of Satan appearing among the angels of God in Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6. This evil accuser is answered in his accusations by our great "advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous," 1 John 2:1.

The stages of his downfall may be traced in the book of the Revelation.

Cast out of heaven. Please note that in verse 8 it says "neither was their place found any more in heaven." This event ends the licence that the devil exercised to appear in heaven as an accuser of the brethren. The word 'place' (topos) literally means 'a space marked off from the surrounding area.' This casting out takes place near to the end of the age, for we are told in verse 12; "he knoweth that he hath but a short time." The word translated 'short' (oligos) is translated by the word 'little' in James 4:14. It tells us exactly how much time is being referred to. "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

This casting out of the devil signals the near return of Christ. "And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night," verse 10. The kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ is signalled by this event. It is as if heaven were preparing for a new era, the day of Jesus Christ and His glory. Whatever access to heaven the devil had before, "their place," as verse 8 puts it, is now at an end as preparations are made for the coming Kingdom of God.

There remains only a short time until Christ comes to claim the earth and establish His kingdom.' (Page 128)

The righteous are indeed going to experience increasingly "perilous times" as the Day of Christ and the events at the end of this age draw near.



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3. Universal uniting of evil men.

The last time mankind was truly united is recorded in Genesis. "And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech," Genesis 11:1. That unity ended when mankind defied God's purpose for them to spread abroad and repopulate the earth. "And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth," Genesis 9:1. They sought instead to institute a regime in disobedience to God. "And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth," Genesis 11:4.

The judgment that fell upon mankind was a confusing of its language. "And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city," Genesis 11:6-8. It is easily understood why mankind broke up into its various language groups and thereby initiated emigration to facilitate their need for space.

The loss of a common language also hindered man's promotion of sinful activity for the simple reason that their diversity of tongue deprived them of the encouragement to sin that comes from peer pressure. The encouragement to evil that comes from the sharing of wicked desires and schemes was greatly minimised by their inability to communicate.

It does not take much imagination to recognise that the removal of the hindrances to communication will see a rise in the inducement to sin that will follow on from a sharing of depraved and corrupt ideas and notions.

Today, we see all too clearly the impact of the ideas and views of Hollywood on this world as a result of the stream of films with which it and many other sources have flooded the world. Add to that television and more recently the internet and we can see how the floodgates of hell have been opened upon society worldwide. News reports of the impact of pornography, freely available on the internet and, indeed, on regular television channels, appear almost daily. The horrific crimes that are reported also clearly indicate the ramifications of this exposure to obscenity.

We are descending into what society was before the flood, what it was in Sodom, in the Greek and Roman empires, before they all came to their demise.

Is this not what the Saviour said? "And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man," Luke 17:26.

The days of Noah are described for us in Genesis 6:5, 11-12 "And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." "The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth."

Do not these words aptly describe today's society? I believe that they do. It will come as no surprise that in such an environment the preaching of the gospel and the practising of its precepts will meet with much opposition. It will be hard to be a Christian.

The whole demeanour and deportment of Lot in Sodom is prophetic of the activities and spirit of many professing believers when faced with the same opposition and depravity.

Lot sought to witness to his family about the coming judgment. "And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law," Genesis 19:14. Quite literally, they thought that he was joking! He had lived as one conformed to the ways of Sodom. Surely this is seen in the subsequent behaviour of his two surviving daughters? Indeed, if it were not for the inspired record given us by Peter, who amongst us would believe that the man depicted in the Genesis 19 account was truly a child of



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God? Peter tells us, however, that Lot was a just, that is a righteous man. "And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked," 2 Peter 2:7.

Yes, man's increasing ability to communicate has resulted in a sharing of corrupt and wicked ways and is hastening on the judgment of God. That being so, times will become harder for the faithful witness of Christ. "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn," Proverbs 29:2.

Times of mourning draw on.

3. THE CONCLUSION OF THE BATTLE

But there is an end to our warfare. "Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins," Isaiah 40:2.

These words were spoken specifically to Jerusalem and must not be misapplied. However, they refer to a time when not only Jerusalem's wars will be over but also the warfare of all the redeemed of the Lord. Israel's deliverance will come through the same event that will bring an end to the troubles of the Church - the glorious and victorious return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. The peace that Christ will instigate when He returns.

The peace that will ensue upon the coming again of the Prince of Peace is symbolised for us in the wonderful words which describe the tranquil calm that will embrace not just Israel but the whole world at His coming. "And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more," Isaiah 2:4.

Please notice that the Saviour will judge amongst the nations. It is not just Israel that will be affected by this peace. He will inaugurate a holy regime amongst the nations. He will take direct control. It is that moment which is spoken of in Revelation 11:15. "And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." With the instituting of His rule, warfare ends and wonderful peace ensues. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea," Isaiah 11:9.

Let me just point out that these verses and the many like them, are not speaking of this gospel era. There are primitive parallels of course. The gospel brings great peace to the sinner who calls upon the Lord in response to its commands. It is a peace of heart and soul with God but it does not impact upon the world around to any great degree. The world remains at war with God. These words we have just quoted can only have a world-wide, universal application. While there is a faint resemblance in the results which have followed the preaching of the gospel to what is described in the prophecies I have quoted, that is all that can be said. The fulfillment of God's promises will not merely have a "faint resemblance" to what has been promised but a fulness which we cannot presently begin to anticipate.

Psalms 2 begins with the heathen raging, and the people imagining a vain thing, verse 1. There is a tumultuous rebellion fomenting. But at the end of the psalm we find a very different situation in the earth. "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him," verses 9-12.



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This is the earth subdued under Christ and delivered from war and rebellion.

2. The believer will experience to the full what he experiences now only in part.

I refer to our experience of peace. "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them," Psalm 119:165. Yes, great is the peace that the believer enjoys. It remains undisturbed amidst the greatest trials. But we know the griefs and sorrows which are also the experience of the Christian. Consider what Paul endured in his labours for Christ. "For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears," 2 Corinthians 7:5.

That is the common lot of the child of God. Our souls, like the surface of the Sea of Galilee, are often disturbed and troubled by storms!

Even so, we enjoy in a limited fashion that which will be ours in full when Christ returns. "When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him," Proverbs 16:7. We have seen that in the history of the faithful men of God. How often the Lord calmed the spirit of enmity amongst their enemies and they were shielded and sheltered from the fierce animosity which otherwise would have destroyed them. The days of the Reformation and the Covenanting struggle in Scotland are filled with examples of such divine interventions.

However, the peace which will flood the world when Christ returns will be without interruption, limitation or cessation. There will be no opposition to the rule of Christ or the preaching of His Word during His reign on earth. How glorious is this to contemplate amidst today's apathy and spurning. "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem," Isaiah 2:2-3.

The knowledge of God, which will cover the earth "as the waters cover the sea," Isaiah 11:9, will be spread as it always has been spread - by the preaching of God's Word.

The Millennial reign will see the conversion of Israel as its first event. "And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD," Isaiah 59:20. The visible glory of the Saviour as He descends the skies will have a humbling impact upon Israel. "Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south," Zechariah 14:3-4. "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn," Zechariah 12:10. "And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one," Zechariah 14:9.

This work of wonderful grace, which will have Jerusalem as its fountainhead, as was the case in the days of the Saviour and His apostles at the beginning of the gospel age, will spread throughout the world as redeemed Israel becomes His willing servant in the spreading of the message of salvation. Let me give you some verses related to this truth.

"The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be



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called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified. And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations. And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers. But ye shall be named the Priests of the LORD: men shall call you the Ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves. For your shame ye shall have double; and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess the double: everlasting joy shall be unto them. For I the LORD love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt offering; and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the LORD hath blessed," Isaiah 61:1-9.

When the Lord quoted these verses in Nazareth as He began His ministry, He stopped the quotation at the words, "To preach the acceptable year of the Lord." The verse in Isaiah continues with: "and the day of vengeance of our God," Isaiah 61:2. Why did the Saviour not quote the rest of the verse? Simply because that day in Nazareth saw only a partial fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. But a day of its total fulfillment is coming when the Saviour returns and it will be a "day of vengeance"! "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power," 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9.

But Isaiah 61 speaks of restoration for Israel. "To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified," verse 3.

They become the Lord's instrument in a great work of restoration as they are elevated to the position of chief amongst the nations. "And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations. And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers," Isaiah 61:4-5.

Furthermore, they become God's ministers amongst the nations. "But ye shall be named the Priests of the LORD: men shall call you the Ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves. For your shame ye shall have double; and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess the double: everlasting joy shall be unto them," Isaiah 61:6-7.

This wonderful change from shame to service wrought by God's grace amongst His ancient people is referred to again in Isaiah 66:21-23. "And I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the LORD. For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD."

Jeremiah refers also to these future events. "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. And first I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double; because they have defiled my land, they have filled mine inheritance with the carcasses of their detestable and abominable things. O LORD, my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit. Shall a man make gods unto himself, and they are no gods? Therefore, behold, I will this once cause them



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to know, I will cause them to know mine hand and my might; and they shall know that my name is The LORD," Jeremiah 16:14-21.

Again, there has been a partial fulfillment of these verses in the deliverance from Babylon in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah but it can be easily seen that there are elements of this prophecy which have not been fulfilled. There has not been that coming unto the God of Israel by the Gentiles from all the ends of the earth and an acknowledging their wickedness. That will happen under the ministry of the Jews in the Day of the Lord.

"Thus saith the LORD of hosts; It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts: I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you," Zechariah 8:20-23. God is not with the Jewish people today. They are in rebellion and rejection. A day is coming when the Gentile nations will know that God is once again amongst His covenant people and that they will be guides unto them as they seek the mercy of the God of Israel. Glorious day indeed!

Micah puts the matter so poetically and beautifully! "And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the LORD, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men. And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep: who, if he go through, both treadeth down, and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver. Thine hand shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off," Micah 5:7-9.

Here is Israel raised to dominance and made a blessing amongst the nations - "as a dew from the LORD." How precious that is. They who presently are an irritant amongst the nations will be as refreshing and blessed as dew. The manna came down in the camp of Israel as dew (Numbers 11:9); the doctrine of God's Word is as a dew (Deuteronomy 32:2); the blessing of God's grace is as dew (Psalm 133:3); the Lord Himself is as dew amongst His people (Hosea 14:5). So it will be with Israel. They will know the Lord and have His blessing resting upon them as they go forth amongst the nations with the Manna of heaven, the message of the Lord Jesus Himself.

Zephaniah also speaks of this wonderful day. "At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the LORD," Zephaniah 3:20. Whatever mercies Israel has enjoyed in the past, and they are many, here is a mercy which must lie in the future. It will be at a time when the Lord "will make you (the Jews) a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the LORD." It will happen when the Lord Jesus comes again to reign over this earth and cause wars to cease and His truth to flourish.

3. The last mention of the word 'battle' in the Bible.

The last mention of the word "battle" serves to illustrate that war for the child of God and indeed for this world will cease when Jesus comes again.

"And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever," Revelation 20:7-10.



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This scene is at the end of the Millennial reign of Christ. The devil, having been bound throughout it and unable to deceive the nations, is released for a little season. His inability to deceive is a contributing factor to the peace which the earth enjoys under the Saviour's reign. As soon as he is released he goes back to his old trade. Imprisonment has not cured him of his wickedness! He immediately gives vent to his murderous hatred of God's people and his bitter enmity toward God by setting out to attack the camp of the saints. He gathers together those who remain unregenerate, for there will be such on the earth during the Saviour's reign though their antipathy toward the gospel is under divine restraint. A consideration of Zechariah 14:17-19 will illustrate this. "And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles."

As soon as the devil is released he returns again to his works of deception - the activity he is engaged in today - and encourages rebellion against the Lord. He gathers his forces to "battle". But there is no battle! Not one saint will be required to prepare for defence or hurriedly seek out a weapon of which there has been none since the beginning of the Millennial reign, Isaiah 2:4. No, instant fiery judgment from God is poured upon the devil and his forces.

We close with a some words of encouragement and incentive to faithfulness.

When David came to the throne of Israel after his years of suffering he did not forget the men who were faithful to him during his years of trouble when he was hunted as "a partridge in the mountains," 1 Samuel 26:20. They were promoted in his kingdom. "These also are the chief of the mighty men whom David had, who strengthened themselves with him in his kingdom, and with all Israel, to make him king, according to the word of the LORD concerning Israel," 1 Chronicles 11:10. The men who shared in David's reproach and shame partook of his glory and occupied high positions in his kingdom.

What was true of David is even more true of great David's greater Son - the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who have 'fought a good fight' will be richly rewarded. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing," 2 Timothy 4:7-8.

Please note the last phrase of Paul's great statement. "And not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." Faithfulness in battle is equated with loving Christ's appearing in glory. That is most significant. I have no doubt that a constant bearing in mind and a longing for the return of Christ is the essence of true faithfulness just as a forgetting of His return breeds carelessness, disobedience and indifference regarding His honour and cause. Remembering, waiting and watching, as did the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 1:10) will stir our hearts to labour in the light of that Day when He returns.

Consider what the Saviour taught in His parable in Luke 19:12-17. "He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities."

This same truth was expressed to the apostles in Luke 22:28-30. "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." If David forgot not his faithful supporters we may rest in the assurance that most certainly neither will the Saviour.



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Contending, battling and labouring in the light of Christ's assured return will bring its glorious reward. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord," 1 Corinthians 15:58.

Ivan Foster.

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