

Ellen G. White Estate

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

VOLUME 3

ELLEN G. WHITE

Spiritual Gifts. Volume 3

Ellen G. White

1864

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Overview

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About the Author

Ellen G. White (1827-1915) is considered the most widely translated American author, her works having been published in more than 160 languages. She wrote more than 100,000 pages on a wide variety of spiritual and practical topics. Guided by the Holy Spirit, she exalted Jesus and pointed to the Scriptures as the basis of one's faith.

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Preface to Facsimile Edition

Volumes III and IV of *Spiritual Gifts* were both issued in 1864, completing this four-volume series. Except for the last half of Volume IV, these two small works are devoted to a record of the history of mankind from creation to the days of Solomon, the first detailed writing by Mrs. White on this subject.

Following the historical account, there is in Volume IV an extended article entitled "Health", in which Mrs. White first presents a comprehensive statement of the momentous health reform vision of June 6, 1863. In this the author passes rapidly from one phase of the great health question to another, laying down the basic principles which form the groundwork of Spirit of prophecy health teaching.

Volume IV is closed by a grouping of "Testimony" articles selected by Mrs. White from the originally printed pamphlet *Testimonies for the Church*, Nos. 1 to 10. Her reasons for reprinting the articles in this form she stated at the opening of this last section following page 156.

Being here reproduced photographically, the pages carry with them, of course, such typographical errors as occurred in the first printing. One outstanding case of this kind will be noted in Volume III, page 301, in line 4 of the last paragraph, where, through inadvertently omitted, creating a seeming historical discrepancy in an incidental reference, which has given some careless readers, who wholly ignored the plain teaching of the earlier chapters, an opportunity to declare that the book teaches that the tower of Babel antedated the flood. This typographical error was soon discovered and was corrected in the next printing of the matter in 1870 in *Spirit of Prophecy*, Volume I. As corrected in this second printing, the sentence in question, referring to the sacrificial system established at the gate of Eden, reads: "This system was corrupted before the flood, and by those who separated themselves from the faithful followers of God and engaged in the building of the tower of Babel."

Mention should also be made of the relationship of Spiritual Gifts, Volumes III and IV, to the current editions of the E. G. White books. The later and much fuller Spirit of prophecy writings on early Bible history and on health have been widely distributed not only to the Seventh-day Adventist Church but to the general public in Patriarchs and Prophets (1890) and Ministry of Healing (1905). In these later books the subjects treated so tersely in the initial accounts as given for the church in Spiritual Gifts, have been greatly amplified as many repeated visions opened before the author more detailed information.

However, as the reading groups greatly broadened to include many who were not acquainted with the source of her information, the author, in keeping with her responsibility, omitted in these later works intended now for the general reader, a few points dealt with in the little volumes that were penned for the church alone. An instance of this is the statement that Adam as created was “more than twice as tall as men now living upon the earth.” (Volume III, p. 34.) This statement is of interest and in full harmony with the declaration of Gen. 6:4 that “there were giants in the earth in those days.” Being, however, so specific in its detail, the author, to avoid unnecessarily prejudicing the reader not informed with regard to her call and work, dropped out of the later account this point not vital to a reception of the general statement of truth presented.

In this facsimile edition of Spiritual Gifts, Volumes III and IV are bound in one book, as was often the case with the first printing, and the original cover stamp reproduced to make this facsimile volume an exact copy of the much treasured original issue.

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Preface

[iii]

[iv]

[v]

In presenting this, my third little volume, to the public, I am comforted with the conviction that the Lord has made me his humble instrument in shedding some rays of precious light upon the past. Sacred History, relating to holy men of old, is brief. Inspiration has dealt sparingly in praise of the noble deeds and holy lives of the faithful. For example, the life of righteous Enoch is summed up in these words: "And Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him."

On the other hand, the errors, sins, and vile apostasies of some, who had been the consecrated and favored servants of God, are dwelt upon in Sacred History at length, as a warning to after generations.

Infidelity has seized upon the sad history of apostasy, which occupies so large space in the Old Testament, and has deceived many with the base insinuation that the men of the Bible, without distinction, were bad men, and has even blasphemously asserted that the Sacred Scriptures sanction crime.

Since the great facts of faith, connected with the history of holy men of old, have been opened to me in vision; also, the important fact that God has nowhere lightly regarded the sin of the apostate, I have been more than ever convinced that ignorance as to these facts, and the wily advantage taken of this ignorance by some who know better, are the grand bulwarks of infidelity. If what I have written upon these points shall help any mind, let God be praised.

[vi]

When I commenced writing, I hoped to bring all into this volume, but am obliged to close the history of the Hebrews, take up the cases of Saul, David, Solomon, and others, and treat upon the subject of Health, in another volume.

E. G. W.

Battle Creek,

July, 1864.

Contents

| | |
|--|-------|
| Information about this Book | i |
| Preface to Facsimile Edition | iii |
| Preface | v |
| Spiritual Gifts | vii |
| Facts of Faith | xxiii |
| Chapter 1—The Creation | 24 |
| Chapter 2—The Temptation and Fall | 26 |
| Chapter 3—Cain and Abel | 33 |
| Chapter 4—Adam’s Life | 36 |
| Chapter 5—Seth and Enoch | 38 |
| Chapter 6—Crime before the Flood | 43 |
| Chapter 7—The Flood | 46 |
| Chapter 8—After the Flood | 54 |
| Chapter 9—Disguised Infidelity | 62 |
| Chapter 10—Tower of Babel | 66 |
| Chapter 11—Abraham | 68 |
| Chapter 12—Isaac | 74 |
| Chapter 13—Jacob and Esau | 77 |
| Chapter 14—Jacob and the Angel | 86 |
| Chapter 15—Joseph and his Brethren | 92 |
| Chapter 16—Moses | 117 |
| Chapter 17—The Plagues on Egypt | 130 |
| Chapter 18—The Passover | 142 |
| Chapter 19—Israel Leaves Egypt | 146 |
| Chapter 20—Their Journeyings | 158 |
| Chapter 21—The Law of God | 166 |

Spiritual Gifts

[vii]

We present as the ground-work of the scriptural doctrine of the perpetuity of spiritual gifts, the original commission.

Mark 16:15-20. “Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; But he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils, they shall speak with new tongues, they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them. They shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover. So then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.”

Matthew 28:18-20. “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go Ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

This high commission relates to the gospel, to faith, to baptism, to salvation, and to spiritual gifts. The gospel was to be preached as long as there were sinners to hear it. Faith is equally requisite throughout the Christian age. Baptism is a perpetual ordinance in the church, and the ministers of the nineteenth century baptize “In the name of the father, and of the son, and of the Holy Ghost,” Because the original commission requires it. The terms of salvation stated in this commission were to be held out as long as sinners might be saved. Running parallel with all these, we find in the same commission spiritual gifts. In the absence of proof that the gifts were to be restricted to any particular age of the Christian Church, this commission alone is sufficient evidence of their perpetuity.

[10]

Some make a distinction between the apostles, and those who should believe on their word, on this wise: the apostles had the gifts,

the believers were not to have them; and they think they see this distinction between the two classes in our Lord's prayer. [John 17](#). We reply to this by quoting the words of our Lord in the original commission, as follows; "And these signs shall follow them that *believe*." or, as Dr. Geo. Campbell translates, "These miraculous powers shall attend the *believers*." or, as Wakefield renders, "These signs will accompany *believers*." when it can be shown that to *believe* was required of the first Christians only, then it may be proved that the gifts were for them alone.

[11] The gracious promise of our Lord in this commission, when He says, "And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," is the strongest proof of the perpetuity of the gifts. He was not to be personally with His people, no; but how was He to be with them? The inspired record states that after the Lord was received up into heaven, "they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord *working with them*, and confirming the word with signs following."

This promise cannot be restricted to the lifetime of the chosen twelve, nor to the Christians of the first century, for it extends to the end of the world [*aion*] *age*. "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," to the end of the Christian age. If it be said that the Jewish age is her meant, we reply, that dispensation closed with the death of Christ, forty-two days before this commission was given. We give two passages as proof. [Colossians 2:14](#). "Blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." [Daniel 9:27](#). "In the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease." This prophecy was fulfilled at the death of the Messiah, in the middle of the last of the seventy weeks. There the Jewish typical sacrifices ceased to be of any virtue, when the great antitypical sacrifice was offered. Christ gave this commission just before His ascension, [Mark 16:19](#), which was at least forty-two days after His crucifixion.

Again, to suppose that the end of the world here means the close of the Jewish age, would be to carry back the gospel, with all the other specifications in the commission, to the Jewish age, to close with that dispensation, and leave the present without it. This view is too absurd to need any further comment.

[12] We now come to the testimony of Paul. [Ephesians 4:4-13](#). "There

is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, when he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.....and he gave some, apostles, and some, prophets, and some, evangelists, and some, pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

The apostle first presents the subject of unity, in the declaration that there is one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith; one baptism, one God and Father of all. He then presents the gifts as the means by which God designed to secure the unity of the church. He refers to Christ’s ascension, when He led up to heaven a multitude of captives from their graves, as the time when the gifts were bestowed. He then mentions some of the gifts, given at the same time, for the same objects, and all to extend to the same point of time.

It will be admitted that evangelists, pastors, and teachers, were to extend to the end of the Christian age. Then why not the others? If it be said that the state of unity and perfection described by the apostle is in the past history of the church, then we reply that evangelists, pastors, and teachers, ceased with that happy state of things. But he who admits the perpetuity of these, must acknowledge the perpetuity of the others. [13]

It is worthy of notice that Paul’s letter to the Eephesians was written A. D. 64, and that from that point it looks to the future for that unity and perfection of the church to be accomplished by the gifts, “till we all come in the unity of the faith,” says the apostle. If Paul could not see this unity and perfection in his day, or in the past, certainly we cannot see it in the past history of the church; hence the perpetuity of the gifts, and their revival in the last days in great power to unite and perfect the church ready for translation to heaven at the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, has spoken very definitely upon the subject of spiritual gifts. In [1 Corinthians 12:1](#), he says: “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you

ignorant.” He regarded this subject as one of the highest importance, and urges an understanding of it. But in all he has said relative to it, he has not once intimated that the gifts were to cease before the perfect day of glory should come. The apostle proposes to instruct the Corinthians on the subject. He would not have them ignorant in regard to it. Therefore if the gifts were designed for the first Christians only, we might expect to find somewhere in his epistles to them, some instruction on the point. We affirm that there is not an intimation of the kind to be found in his letters to them. But Paul does clearly point out the time when the gifts will cease. [1 Corinthians 13:8-12](#). “Charity [*agape—love,*] never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known.”

The apostle here contrasts the mortal state with the immortal; the present imperfect, with that which will be perfect; the cloudy present while we walk by faith, with the open glory of the life to come. Here, we only know in part, prophesy in part; there, that which is in part will be done away. Here, we see through a glass darkly; there, face to face. Here, we know in part; there, we shall know, even as we are known. Charity, or love, will never end. Here, it is the highest Christian grace; there, it will be the crowning glory of immortals forever and forever. In this sense, love will never fail. But prophecies will fail, tongues will cease, and knowledge will vanish away. The light of heaven through the dim medium of these, and the other gifts of the Holy Spirit, is represented as being only in part, and is to be superseded by the perfect day of glory when we may talk face to face with God, Christ, and angels, as our first parents talked with God in Eden before sin entered. But when? This is the vital question. When were the gifts to be done away? Let Paul answer: “But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.” “And let all the people say, Amen.”

The apostle presents the gifts more fully in [1 Corinthians 12:28](#). “And God set some in the church; first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that, miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.”

God set them in the church. And where is the text that declares that they have been set out of the church? Here are eight gifts mentioned, and given in their order of importance. That “first,” “secondarily,” “thirdly,” and so on, refer to importance, and not to time, is evident from the fact that Paul in this connection dwells largely upon the relative value of some of the gifts, and in [verse 31](#) says, “Covet earnestly the best gifts.”

[1 Corinthians 1:4-8](#). “I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; That in everything ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you; So that ye come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his son Jesus Christ our Lord. Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; But that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”

The gifts were planted in the Christian church. God set them there. And we judge that the Corinthians shared largely of their benefits, from the fact that Paul in his epistles to them, occupies much space in speaking definitely in regard to their proper exercise. In the above quotation the apostle thanks God on their behalf for the grace bestowed upon them by Jesus Christ; that they were enriched in all utterance and knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in them. If we turn to [Revelation 19:10](#), for an inspired definition of the testimony of Jesus, we read, “For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” By this they were enriched in knowledge and utterance. [16]

However applicable this testimony might have been to the church at Corinth at the time the apostle wrote, or to Christians from that day to this, certainly especial reference is made to the last days in the expressions, “waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,”

“the end,” “the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Hence [verse 7](#), “So that ye come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,” teaches the perpetuity of the gifts, and the privilege of the waiting ones to enjoy them all. The end here mentioned is evidently the end of the age.

[17] Here, in this very connection, the subject of perfect unity is introduced. Read [verse 19](#). Paul taught the [Ephesians 4:11-14](#), that the gifts were given “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith.” He exhorts the corinthians to “all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment;” and this, too, in connection with the statement, “that ye come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Then right here comes in the restitution of the gifts to unite and prepare the waiting ones for the second coming of Jesus Christ.

If an effort be made to carry this testimony back, and restrict it to the very members of the Corinthian church living when Paul wrote, then we inquire, was that what the apostle calls the day of our Lord Jesus Christ? Did they scripturally wait for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ? Did “the end” then come? All well-instructed Adventists will answer these questions negatively. The present is the time to scripturally wait for the second coming of Christ, which event is associated in the New Testament with “the end.”

[18] The epistles to the corinthians were written for the benefit of the Christian church, not for those Christians only then living at Corinth, but for the church, and some portions have a special application to the present time. We will call attention to two passages where the apostle apparently, by the use of the word *we*, addresses only those then living, and yet the events of which he speaks are in the future. In [Chapter 15:51, 52](#), Paul says, “Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” Shall we say that the word “we” used three times in this quotation, embraces only Paul and the members of the Church at Corinth then living? Circumstances will not admit of so narrow an application. Paul and his brethren at Corinth did sleep—die. The

last trump did not then sound. And none of them were changed to immortality in the twinkling of an eye. Hence this testimony has a special application to Christians who are alive on earth at the second coming of Christ.

The apostle says, [1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17](#), “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” Here he again uses the word, we, but the events mentioned did not occur in Paul’s day. He and his brethren at Thessalonica were not translated to heaven without seeing death. The chapter closes with the above quotation, and the next opens with the continuation of the same subject.

[Chapter 5:1-4](#). “But of the times and seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For, when they shall say, peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.” The day of the Lord is the day of “sudden destruction.” It is the day of wrath which is in the Old and New Testaments associated with the second advent of Christ. This day is not in the past, hence the language is not applicable to the Christians of past generations. The Christians of the last generation—the very men and women who are to be living on the earth when the day of the Lord comes—are here addressed. Hence all true Adventists will regard themselves as the “brethren” Paul addresses, and his language especially applicable to the present time. He continues in this chapter without change, setting forth practical duties applicable to those who are watching for the approach of the day of the Lord, and in [verses 19-21](#), says, “Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” Here are three very important injunctions.

[19]

1. “Quench not the Spirit.” We quench fire with water. And prominent among the means of quenching the Spirit of God is unbelief. Jesus, in His own country, did not many mighty works because

of their unbelief. There is at the present time almost a universal state of unbelief in regard to the operations of the Holy Spirit, especially in the manifestation of the gifts. Unbelief shuts the Spirit of God away from the mind. It quenches the Spirit, and leaves the masses exposed to the delusions of these last days.

[20] Again, those who by unbelief quench the Spirit in these last days will be illy prepared to share in the great blessings which God promises by the prophet Joel, quoted by Peter, [Acts 2:17, 18](#). “And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.” The “Former Rain” was given on the day of Pentecost, and enjoyed by the early Christians, to cause the Gospel seed to germinate and take root. The “Latter Rain” is coming to ripen the golden harvest for the garner of God. Take care, dear reader, lest unbelief in you quench the Spirit, and shut you away from this great blessing designed for “them that believe.”

2. “Despise not prophesyings.” We are here warned of one of the dangers of the last days. The pretensions of Ann Lee, the mother of the Shakers, the corrupt prophets of Mormonism, and the one thousand and one of Satan’s medium prophets, devoted to the cause of spiritualism, with all its baseness, have struck the world with disgust at anything like the supernatural. The devil got these things up to not only destroy many souls by them, but to disgust and drive others as far as possible to unbelief in regard to the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Hence the danger of indiscriminately despising all prophesyings.

[21] 3. “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” The three declarations, “Quench not the Spirit; despise not prophesyings; prove all things, hold fast that which is good,” have a close relation to each other. Therefore the “all things” to be proved, do not mean every thing in the wide world, for this would be imposing an unreasonable tax upon believers; hence the expression must be limited to the subject of prophesying. Despise not prophesyings, but prove them, and separate the genuine from the counterfeit coin of the devil; and that which is good, which is from the Spirit of God, which will stand the

test, *hold fast*. We will here give three rules by which true and false prophesyings may be known:

1. [Matthew 7:15-20](#). “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.”

2. [Isaiah 8:19, 20](#). “And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”

3. False prophets speak smooth things, prophesy lies, and cry, Peace and safety, which has ever been pleasing to unconsecrated professors; hence the love of the peace and safety in the delusion of spiritualism. [Jeremiah 14:14](#). “Then the Lord said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name. I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them. They prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart.” [Chapter 23:16, 17](#). “Thus saith the Lord of hosts, hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you. They make you vain. They speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord. They say still unto them that despise me, the Lord hath said, ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, no evil shall come upon you.” [Chapter 8:10, 11](#). “For every one from the least even unto the greatest is given to covetousness. From the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely. For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace.”

[Chapter 5:30, 31](#). “A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land: The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means, and my people love to have it so; and what will ye do in the end thereof?”

[Isaiah 30:8-11](#). “Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come forever and ever, that this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord; which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits; get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.”

[23] On the other hand the prophets of God have faithfully reproved sin, and borne a testimony which has called down upon their heads the wrath of the self-righteous deceived.

[Joel 2:28-32](#), next claims our attention. “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.”

We call attention to the following points in this prophecy:

1. The manifestations of the Holy Spirit noted in this prophecy, are in connection with the signs of the near approach of the great and terrible day of the Lord. In fact, they constitute one of those signs.

[24] 2. The calling on the name of the Lord, and the deliverance of the remnant, spoken of in close relation to the great day of the Lord, evidently refer to the closing scenes of the history of the church in this mortal state. The oppressed people of God are yet to raise to heaven one united day and night cry for deliverance. [Luke 18](#). This is symbolized by the message of prayer of the fourth angel of [Revelation 14:15](#). And in answer to this prayer, the remnant which will find deliverance.

3. We object to that narrow-souled theology which will not allow the old ladies to have dreams because the prophecy says, “Your old

men shall dream dreams;" And that will not allow young women to have visions because the prophecy says, "Your young men shall see visions." These stingy critics seem to forget that "man," and "men," in the Scriptures, generally mean both men and women, the book says that it is "appointed unto men once to die." Don't women die? "Unto you, o man, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men." Don't the Lord call women? But the prophecy does say, "Your sons and your daughters shall prophecy."

On the day of Pentecost the believers were filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, to the great amazement of the multitude. Some, unacquainted with the operations of the Holy Spirit, said, "These men are full of new wine." Peter answered, "These men are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel, and it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit," &C.

The prophecy of Joel applies to the Christian age. And we do not object to applying the term, "last days," here used by Peter, to this entire age, though it may have a more limited meaning. But let this fact be borne in mind, that the great events of the prophecy are in close connection with, and are signs of, the great and notable day of the Lord. The Spirit was given on the day of Pentecost; hence Peter, pointing to its influence upon believers on that occasion, could say, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." That was the Early Rain. Believers have ever since enjoyed a degree of the Holy Spirit, and from time to time God has wonderfully manifested his power. But, for the close of the dispensation, is reserved the Latter Rain, the pouring out of the Spirit. Here is the fulfillment of the burden of the prophecy of Joel. [25]

We object to that stupid blindness which has the entire prophecy fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, and hence, the "last days" were past more than eighteen hundred years ago. We find in the record only the exercise of the gift of tongues. There is no account of dreams or visions on that day. Certainly the outsiders might well have been amazed on beholding old men asleep, dreaming in the midst of the excitement and uproar of the occasion. And well might they have supposed such to be stone drunk. Again, was the sun turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, on the day of Pentecost? And

was that the great and terrible day of the Lord? No! No! The “last days” must embrace the last day. Should we say that the leaves of the New Testament were the last leaves of our Bible, we should speak correctly; yet they would embrace the last leaf. It would be equally correct to call the book of Revelation, or the two last leaves of the Bible, the last leaves. But in each case, the last leaves embrace the very last leaf. So with the last days. If we call the whole Christian age, or the last century, or the last thirty years, the last days, in each case the last days must embrace the very last day. With this view of the subject we read with delight the prophetic description, [Joel 2:28-32](#), of the termination of the present age with gracious blessings upon the people of God. The Christian age will terminate with glory to the righteous; yet a severe conflict with the dragon host is just ahead.

[Revelation 12:17](#). “And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

The woman is a symbol of the church, and the remnant of the church represents the Christians of the last generation of men, living just prior to the second advent. The dragon makes war on these for keeping the commandments of God, Sabbath and all, and having the testimony of Jesus Christ, which, according to the inspired definition of [chapter 19:10](#), “is the spirit of prophecy.” Here, then, are the causes of the dragon’s warfare upon the remnant. They teach the observance of the Ten Commandments, and the revival of the gifts, and acknowledge the gift of prophecy among them. When the devil got one foot upon the fourth commandment, and the other upon the gifts planted in the Christian church by Jesus Christ, then his satanic majesty was filled with revengeful delight. But when the remnant, whom God designs to fit for translation to heaven without seeing death, “ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein,” then the dragon is wroth, and makes war on them.

The true spirit of the dragonic host, which is already being somewhat developed, is vividly described in [Isaiah 30:8-13](#), as being manifested just prior to the sudden destruction of those who hate the pure testimony, and love smooth and deceitful things.

“Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come forever and ever [margin, “the

latter day”]; That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord; which say to the seers, See not, and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits; get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the holy one of Israel to cease from before us. Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, because ye despise this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness, and stay thereon; therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant.”

But the skeptical objector inquires, “Where are the gifts? If your position be correct, why have they not been manifested in the church all along down ever since God set them in the church? Why are not the sick healed by faith now?” We are aware that this is the principal objection brought against the scripture doctrine of the perpetuity of the gifts, therefore it demands special notice. We reply to it as follows:

1. The sick were not always healed by faith in Paul’s day. He says, [2 Timothy 4:20](#), “Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick.” Again he says to Timothy, [1 Timothy 5:23](#), “Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities.” God could have answered the prayers of his servant Paul, and raised up Trophimus, and healed Timothy’s infirmities, if this had been best. We conclude that God has not designed in any age of the church to manifest His power so far that there should be no sick among Christians. But in cases where it would be for the good of the afflicted, and for His own glory, He has manifested His power, and will manifest it. [28]

2. The unbelief of the professed followers of Christ in the manifestation of spiritual gifts is sufficient reason why they are not more fully manifested. It is said of Christ, “And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.” [Matthew 13:58](#). There is an impious unbelief with many at this day who profess to take the Bible as their guide, which resembles that of those who, mockingly, said of Christ as he hung on the cross, “Let Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe.” It is sometimes said in reply to the Bible evidences of the perpetuity of spiritual gifts, “Just work a few miracles, and we will believe your

doctrine.” It is not God’s plan to gratify such spirits; for should they see as powerful manifestations as were seen in the days of Christ, of Paul, and Peter, they would scoffingly attribute it to the power of Satan or some other cause besides the power of God.

It is humble, confiding faith that moves omnipotence. Those only who have this faith may expect the manifestation of the gifts. [Mark 2:5](#). “When Jesus saw *their faith*, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.” [Chapter 9:23](#). “Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.” [Matthew 9:21, 22](#). “For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole. But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her he said, Daughter, be of good comfort, *thy faith* hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.” [Chapter 15:28](#). “Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is *thy faith*; be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.”

3. The gifts have been superseded in the popular churches by human creeds. The object of the gifts, as stated by Paul, was “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith.” These were heaven’s appointed means to secure the unity of the church. Christ prayed that his people might be one, as he was one with His father. Read [John 17](#). Paul exhorted the Corinthians in the name of Christ to be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment. Read [1 Corinthians 2:10](#); [Romans 15:5](#); [Philippians 2:1, 2](#); [1 Peter 3:8](#); V, 5. The gifts were given to secure this state of unity.

But the popular churches have introduced another means of preserving unity, namely, human creeds. These creeds secure a sort of unity to each denomination; but they have all proved inefficient, as appears from the “new schools” and “reformed” of almost every creed-bound denomination under heaven. Hence the many kinds of Baptists, of Presbyterians, and of Methodists, &C., &C. There is not an excuse for this state of things anywhere to be found in the book of God. These sects are not on the foundation of unity laid by Jesus Christ, and taught by Paul, the wise Master Builder. And the smaller sects who reject human creeds, professing to take the Bible as their rule of faith and practice, yet reject the gifts, are not a whit better

off. In these perilous times they shake to fragments, yet crying, The Bible! The Bible! We, too, would exalt the Bible, and would say to those who would represent us as taking the gifts instead of the Bible, that we are not satisfied with a part of the sacred volume, but claim as ours the Bible, and the whole Bible, gifts and all.

All the denominations cannot be right, and it may not be wrong to suppose that no one of them is right on all points of faith. To show that they cannot have their creeds and the gifts too, that creeds shut out the gifts, we will suppose that God, through chosen instruments taken from each sect, begins to show up the errors in the creeds of these different denominations. If they receive the testimony as from heaven, it would spoil their creeds. But would they throw them away and come out on the platform of unity taught by Christ, Paul, and Peter? Never! Never! They would a thousand times sooner trample the humble instruments of God's choice into the dust. It is evident that if the gift's were received, they would destroy human creeds, and that if creeds be received, they shut out the gifts. The second angel's message brought the Adventists from the creed-bound churches, where they could be reached by the gifts, be united and prepared for the coming of the Lord.

4. When we consider the great apostasy of the church, the corruption of her pure doctrines, and her sojourn of 1260 years in the wilderness, we are not surprised that we do not find on the pages of her sad history any clearer records of the manifestation of spiritual gifts. We would here call attention to a work compiled by Eld. M. E. Cornell, entitled "Miraculous Powers," in which may be found testimonies from not only the eminently pious, but from many of the learned, and from some of the most reliable historians, fairly representing the faith of the church upon the subject of spiritual gifts. We do not rely upon the testimony of men as proof of our position; but after being established in the doctrine of the perpetuity of spiritual gifts from the plain testimony of God's word, it is a matter of unspeakable joy to find that on this vital doctrine our faith is in harmony with the good, the humble, and the prudent, ever since Christ said to his first ministers, "These signs shall follow them that believe." [31]

Infinite wisdom has doubtless withheld them to a great extent lest Satan take advantage of the ignorance and weakness of the people of

God, and push them over into fanaticism. Many who have supposed that they were favored with manifestations of the spirit of God, have regarded themselves as being quite out of danger. They soon became lifted up with pride in spiritual things, and were Satan's easy prey.

[32] If it was necessary that Paul should have a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, to buffet him, lest he become exalted through the abundance of revelations with which he was favored, it is a reasonable conclusion that all who seek to walk with God, and share all the spiritual blessings of the Christian age, are also in danger of exaltation and the wiles of the devil. If he can push one such to extremes and fanaticism, he disgraces the vital part of Christianity, and gains a greater victory than in holding a hundred souls in cold formality. The history of Luther, the Wesleys, and others, who by the power of a living faith led the church from the dark shades of error and formality to a clearer light, proves the necessity of the mind's being well balanced with caution. And he who sees no need of caution here is not far from some delusive snare of Satan. But in walking softly and humbly before God, in strict watchfulness and fervent prayer to be kept by the power of God from the wiles of Satan, there is safety. God has great blessings in store for his people, and will bestow them as fast as they can make a right use of them to their good, and his glory. Amen.

Facts of Faith

[33]

Chapter 1—The Creation

When God had formed the earth, there were mountains, hills, and plains, and interspersed among them were rivers and bodies of water. The earth was not one extensive plain, but the monotony of the scenery was broken by hills and mountains, not high and ragged as they now are, but regular and beautiful in shape. The bare, high rocks were never seen upon them, but lay beneath the surface, answering as bones to the earth. The waters were regularly dispersed. The hills, mountains, and very beautiful plains, were adorned with plants and flowers, and tall, majestic trees of every description, which were many times larger, and much more beautiful, than trees now are. The air was pure and healthful, and the earth seemed like a noble palace. Angels beheld and rejoiced at the wonderful and beautiful works of God.

[34] After the earth was created, and the beasts upon it, the Father and Son carried out their purpose, which was designed before the fall of Satan, to make man in their own image. They had wrought together in the creation of the earth and every living thing upon it. And now God says to his Son, “Let us make man in our image.” As Adam came forth from the hand of his Creator, he was of noble height, and of beautiful symmetry. He was more than twice as tall as men now living upon the earth, and was well proportioned. His features were perfect and beautiful. His complexion was neither white, nor sallow, but ruddy, glowing with the rich tint of health. Eve was not quite as tall as Adam. Her head reached a little above his shoulders. She, too, was noble—perfect in symmetry, and very beautiful.

This sinless pair wore no artificial garments. They were clothed with a covering of light and glory, such as the angels wear. While they lived in obedience to God, this circle of light enshrouded them. Although everything God had made was in the perfection of beauty, and there seemed nothing wanting upon the earth which God had created to make Adam and Eve happy, yet he manifested his great love to them by planting a garden especially for them. A portion of

their time was to be occupied in the happy employment of dressing the garden, and a portion in receiving the visits of angels, listening to their instruction, and in happy meditation. Their labor was not wearisome, but pleasant and invigorating. This beautiful garden was to be their home, their special residence.

In this garden the Lord placed fruit-trees of every description, for usefulness and beauty, also lovely flowers which filled the air with fragrance. Everything was tastefully and gloriously arranged. In the midst of the garden stood the tree of life, the glory of which surpassed all other trees. Its fruit looked like apples of gold and silver, and was to perpetuate immortality. The leaves contained healing properties.

[35]

Very happy were the holy pair in Eden. Unlimited control was given them over every living thing. The lion and the lamb sported together peacefully and harmlessly around them, or slumbered at their feet. Birds of every variety of color and plumage flitted among the trees and flowers, and about Adam and Eve, while their mellow-toned music echoed among the trees in sweet accord to the praises of their Creator.

In the midst of the garden, near the tree of life, stood the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Of this tree the Lord commanded our first parents not to eat, neither to touch it, lest they die. He told them that they might freely eat of all the trees in the garden except one; but if they ate of that tree they should surely die.

[36]

Chapter 2—The Temptation and Fall

Before the fall of Satan, the Father consulted his Son in regard to the formation of man. They purposed to make this world, and create beasts and living things upon it, and to make man in the image of God, to reign as a ruling monarch over every living thing which God should create. When Satan learned the purpose of God, he was envious at Christ, and jealous because the Father had not consulted him in regard to the creation of man. Satan was of the highest order of angels; but Christ was above all. He was the commander of all Heaven. He imparted to the angelic family the high commands of his Father. The envy and jealousy of Satan increased. Until his rebellion all Heaven was in harmony, and perfect subjection to the government of God. Satan commenced to insinuate his dissatisfied feelings to other angels, and a number agreed to aid him in his rebellion. Satan was dissatisfied with his position. Although very exalted, he aspires to be equal with God; and unless the Lord gratifies his ambition, determines to rebel, and refuse submission. He desires, yet dare not at once venture to make known his envious, hateful feelings. But he contents himself with gaining all he can to sympathize with him, as though deeply wronged. He relates to them his thoughts of warring against Jehovah.

[37]

True, faithful angels, listening, hear the awful threats of Satan, and immediately report to their great commander. Christ tells them that he and the Father are acquainted with the purposes of Satan, and that they are forbearing only to see how many will unite with him to rebel against the government of God. He tells them that every purpose of Satan is understood. It was the highest crime to rebel against the government of God. All Heaven seemed in commotion. The angels were marshaled in companies, each with a higher commanding angel at their head. All the angels were astir. Satan was warring against the government of God, because ambitious to exalt himself and unwilling to submit to the authority of God's Son, Heaven's great commander.

While some of the angels joined Satan in his rebellion, others reasoned with him to dissuade him from his purposes, contending for the honor and wisdom of God in giving authority to his Son. Satan urged, for what reason was Christ endowed with unlimited power and such high command above himself! He stood up proudly, and urged that he should be equal with God. He makes his boasts to his sympathizers that he will not submit to the authority of Christ.

At length all the angels are summoned to appear before the Father, to have each case decided. Satan unblushingly makes known to all the heavenly family, his discontent, that Christ should be preferred before him, to be in such close conference with God, and he be uninformed as to the result of their frequent consultations. God informs Satan that this he can never know. That to his Son will he reveal his secret purposes, and that all the family of Heaven, Satan not excepted, were required to yield implicit obedience. Satan boldly speaks out his rebellion, and points to a large company who think God is unjust in not exalting him to be equal with God, and in not giving him command above Christ. He declares he cannot submit to be under Christ's command, that God's commands alone will he obey. Good angels weep to hear the words of Satan, and to see how he despises to follow the direction of Christ, their exalted and loving commander.

[38]

The Father decides the case of Satan, and declares that he must be turned out of Heaven for his daring rebellion, and that all those who united with him in his rebellion, should be turned out with him. Then there was war in Heaven. Christ and his angels fought against Satan and his angels, for they were determined to remain in Heaven with all their rebellion. But they prevailed not. Christ and loyal angels triumphed, and drove Satan and his rebel sympathizers from Heaven.

When Adam and Eve were placed in the beautiful garden, they had everything for their happiness which they could desire. But he chose in his all-wise arrangements to test their loyalty before they could be rendered eternally secure. They were to have his favor, and he to converse with them, and they with him. Yet he did not place evil out of their reach. Satan was permitted to tempt them. If they endured the trial they were to be in perpetual favor with God and the heavenly angels.

[39]

Angels of God visited Adam and Eve, and told them of the fall of Satan, and warned them to be on their guard. They cautioned them not to separate from each other in their employment, for they might be brought in contact with this fallen foe. If one of them were alone, they would be in greater danger than if both were together. The angels enjoined upon them to closely follow the instructions God had given them, for in perfect obedience they were safe, and this fallen foe could then have no power to deceive them. God would not permit Satan to follow the holy pair with continual temptations. He could have access to them only at the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

[40] Eve wandered away from the side of her husband, and was gazing with mingled curiosity and admiration upon the fruit of the forbidden tree. Satan, in the form of a serpent, conversed with Eve. The serpent had not the power of speech, but Satan used him as a medium. It was Satan that spoke, not the serpent. Eve was deceived, and thought it was the serpent. This serpent was a very beautiful creature with wings; and while flying through the air his appearance was very bright, resembling the color of burnished gold. He did not go upon the ground, but went from place to place through the air, and ate fruit like man.

Eve's curiosity was aroused. Instead of fleeing from the spot, she listened to hear a serpent talk. That strange voice should have driven her to her husband's side to inquire of him why another should thus freely address her. But she enters into a controversy with the serpent. And he said unto the woman, "Yea, hath God said ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" He begins his controversy in the form of a question. Eve answers, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden. But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." The serpent answers, "Ye shall not surely die; for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods knowing good and evil."

Satan would convey the idea that by eating of the forbidden tree, they would receive a new and more noble kind of knowledge than they had hitherto attained. This has been his special work with great success ever since his fall, to lead men to pry into the secrets of the Almighty, and not to be satisfied with what God has revealed, and

not careful to obey that which he has commanded. He would lead them to disobey God's commands, and then make them believe that they are entering a wonderful field of knowledge, which is purely supposition, and a miserable deception. They fail to understand what God has revealed, and disregard his explicit commandments, and aspire after wisdom, independent of God, and seek to understand that which he has been pleased to withhold from mortals. They are elated with their ideas of progression, and charmed with their own vain philosophy; but grope in midnight darkness relative to true knowledge. They are ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. [41]

It was not the will of God that this sinless pair should have any knowledge of evil. He had freely given them the good, but withheld the evil. Eve thought the words of the serpent wise, and she received the broad assertion, "Ye shall not surely die; for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods knowing good and evil"—making God a liar. Satan boldly insinuates that God had deceived them to keep them from being exalted in knowledge equal with himself. God said, If ye eat "ye shall surely die." The serpent says, If ye eat "ye shall not surely die." She ate, and was delighted with the fruit. It seemed delicious to her taste, and she imagined that she realized in herself the wonderful effects of the fruit. She took the fruit and found her husband and related to him the words spoken by the serpent, and told him that by eating the fruit she had felt, instead of death, a pleasing influence. As soon as Eve had disobeyed, she became a powerful medium through which to occasion the fall of her husband. [42]

I saw a sadness come over the countenance of Adam. He appeared afraid and astonished. A struggle appeared to be going on in his mind. He told Eve he was quite certain that this was the foe that they had been warned against. If so, that she must die. She assured him she felt no ill effects, but rather a very pleasant influence, and entreated him to eat. Adam regretted that Eve had left his side, but now the deed was done. He must be separated from her whose society he had loved so well. How could he have it thus. His love for Eve was strong. And in utter discouragement he resolved to share her fate. He seized the fruit and quickly ate it, and like Eve felt not immediately its ill effects. Adam disobeyed and fell.

Eve thought herself capable of deciding between right and wrong. The flattering hope of entering a higher state of knowledge led her to think that the serpent was her especial friend, possessing a great interest in her welfare. Had she sought her husband, and they related to their Maker the words of the serpent, they would have been delivered at once from his artful temptation.

[43] God instructed our first parents in regard to the tree of knowledge, and they were fully informed in regard to the fall of Satan, and the danger of listening to his suggestions. God did not deprive them of the power of eating the forbidden fruit. He left them as free moral agents to believe his word, obey his commandments and live; or believe the tempter, disobey and perish. They both ate, and the great wisdom they obtained was the knowledge of sin, and a sense of guilt. Immediately the covering of light about them disappeared, and under a sense of their guilt, and loss of their divine covering, a shivering seized them, and they tried to cover their exposed forms. The Lord would not have them investigate the fruit of the tree of knowledge, for then they would be exposed to Satan masked. He knew that they would be perfectly safe if they touched not the fruit.

Our first parents chose to believe the words, as they thought, of a serpent, yet he had given them no tokens of his love. He had done nothing for their happiness and benefit; while God had given them every thing that was good for food, and pleasant to the sight. Everywhere the eye might rest was abundance and beauty; yet Eve was deceived by the serpent to think that there was something withheld which would make them wise, even as God. Instead of believing and confiding in God, she basely mistrusted his goodness and cherished the words of Satan.

[44] Their crime is now before them in its true and awful character. Adam censured Eve's folly in leaving his side, and being deceived by the serpent. They both flattered themselves that God, who had given them everything to make them happy, might yet excuse their disobedience, because of his great love to them, and that their punishment would not be so dreadful after all.

Satan exulted in his success. He had now tempted the woman to distrust God, to question his wisdom, and to seek to penetrate his all-wise plans. And through her he had also caused the overthrow

of Adam, who through his love for Eve, disobeyed the command of God and fell with her.

The news of man's fall spread through Heaven—every harp was hushed. The angels cast their crowns from their heads in sorrow. All Heaven was in agitation. The angels were grieved at the base ingratitude of man, in return for the rich bounties God had provided. A council was held to decide what must be done with the guilty pair. The angels feared that they would put forth the hand, and eat of the tree of life, and thus perpetuate a life of sin.

It had been Satan's plan to lead Adam and Eve to disobey God, receive his frown, hoping that they then would eat of the tree of life, and live in sin. But God said he would drive the transgressors from the garden. Angels were immediately commissioned to guard the way of the tree of life, that they might gain no access to it. As Adam and Eve hear the sound of God's majestic approach, they seek to hide themselves from his inspection, whom they delighted while in their innocence and holiness, to meet.

[45]

God cursed the ground because of their sin in eating of the tree of knowledge, and declared, "In sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life." He had apportioned them the good, but withheld the evil. Now God declares that they shall eat of it, that is, should be acquainted with evil all the days of their life.

The race from that time forward was to be afflicted by Satan's temptations. A life of perpetual toil and anxiety was appointed unto Adam, instead of the happy, cheerful labor that he had hitherto enjoyed. He told Adam, "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat of the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken, for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." God again sets the penalty of death before them, and declares they must suffer it. Holy angels were sent to drive out the disobedient pair from the garden, while other angels guarded the way to the tree of life. Each one of these mighty angels had in his right hand a glittering sword.

Adam was driven out from that beautiful garden to till the earth from whence he came. And God guarded the tree of life with flaming swords which turned every way, lest man should eat of it and perpetuate a life of sin.

[46]

In humility and inexpressible sadness Adam and Eve left the lovely garden wherein they had been so happy until they disobeyed the command of God. The atmosphere was changed, and it was no longer unvarying as before the transgression. God clothed them with coats of skins to protect them from the sense of chilliness and then of heat to which they are exposed.

All Heaven mourned on account of the disobedience and fall of Adam and Eve, which brought the wrath of God upon the whole human race. They were cut off from communing with God, and were plunged in hopeless misery. The law of God could not be changed to meet man's necessity, for in God's arrangement it was never to lose its force, or give up the smallest part of its claims.

[47] The Son of God pities fallen man. He knows that the law of his Father is as unchanging as himself. He can only see one way of escape for the transgressor. He offers himself to his Father as a sacrifice for man, to take their guilt and punishment upon himself, and redeem them from death by dying in their place, and thus pay the ransom. The Father consents to give his dearly beloved Son to save the fallen race; and through his merits and intercession promises to receive man again into his favor, and to restore holiness to as many as should be willing to accept the atonement thus mercifully offered, and obey his law. For the sake of his dear Son the Father forbears a while the execution of death, and to Christ he commits the fallen race.

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Chapter 3—Cain and Abel

Cain and Abel, the sons of Adam, were very unlike in character. Abel feared God. Cain cherished rebellious feelings, and murmured against God because of the curse pronounced upon Adam, and because the ground was cursed for his sin. These brothers had been instructed in regard to the provision made for the salvation of the human race. They were required to carry out a system of humble obedience, showing their reverence for God, and their faith and dependence upon the promised Redeemer, by slaying the firstlings of the flock, and solemnly presenting it with the blood, as a burnt-offering to God. This sacrifice would lead them to continually keep in mind their sin, and the Redeemer to come, who was to be the great sacrifice to man.

Cain brought his offering unto the Lord with murmuring and infidelity in his heart in regard to the promised Sacrifice. He was unwilling to strictly follow the plan of obedience, and procure a lamb and offer it with the fruit of the ground. He merely took of the fruit of the ground and disregarded the requirement of God. God had made known to Adam that without shedding of blood there could be no remission for sin. Cain was not particular to bring even the best of the fruits. Abel advised his brother not to come before the Lord without the blood of a sacrifice. Cain being the eldest, would not listen to his brother. He despised his counsel, and with doubt and murmuring in regard to the necessity of the ceremonial offerings, he presented his offering. But God did not accept it. [48]

Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat as God had commanded; and in full faith of the Messiah to come, and with humble reverence, he presented the offering. God had respect unto his offering. A light flashes from Heaven and consumes the offering of Abel. Cain sees no manifestation that his is accepted. He is angry with the Lord, and with his brother. God condescends to send an angel to Cain to converse with him.

The angel inquires of him the reason of his anger, and informs him that if he does well, and follows the directions God has given, he will accept him and respect his offering. But if he will not humbly submit to God's arrangements, and believe and obey him, he cannot accept his offering. The angel tells Cain that it was no injustice on the part of God, or partiality shown to Abel; but that it was on [49] account of his own sin, and disobedience of God's express command, why he could not respect his offering—and if he would do well he would be accepted of God, and his brother should listen to him, and he should take the lead, because he was the eldest. But even after being thus faithfully instructed, Cain did not repent. Instead of censuring and abhorring himself to his unbelief, he still complains of the injustice and partiality of God. And in his jealousy and hatred he contends with Abel and reproaches him. Abel meekly points out his brother's error, and shows him that the wrong is in himself. But Cain hates his brother from the moment that God manifests to him the tokens of his acceptance. His brother Abel seeks to appease his wrath by contending for the compassion of God in saving the lives of their parents, when he might have brought upon them immediate death. He tells Cain that God loved them, or he would not have given his Son, innocent and holy, to suffer the wrath which man by his disobedience deserved to suffer. While Abel justifies the plan of God, Cain becomes enraged and his anger increases and burns against Abel, until in his rage he slays him. God inquires of Cain for his brother, and Cain utters a guilty falsehood, "I know not; am I my brother's keeper?" God informs Cain that he knew in regard to his sin—that he was acquainted with his every act, and even the [50] thoughts of his heart, and says to him, "Thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. And now art thou cursed from the earth which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand. When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength. A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth."

The curse upon the ground at first had been felt but lightly; but now a double curse rested upon it. Cain and Abel represent the two classes, the righteous and the wicked, the believers and unbelievers, which should exist from the fall of man to the second coming of Christ. Cain slaying his brother Abel represents the wicked who

will be envious of the righteous, and will hate them because they are better than themselves. They will be jealous of the righteous, and will persecute and put them to death because their right doing condemns their sinful course.

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Chapter 4—Adam’s Life

[51] Adam’s life was one of sorrow, humility, and continual repentance. As he taught his children and grand-children the fear of the Lord, he was often bitterly reproached for his sin which resulted in so much misery upon his posterity. When he left the beautiful Eden, the thought that he must die thrilled him with horror. He looked upon death as a dreadful calamity. He was first made acquainted with the dreadful reality of death in the human family by his own son Cain slaying his brother Abel. Filled with the bitterest remorse for his own transgression, and deprived of his son Abel, and looking upon Cain as his murderer, and knowing the curse God pronounced upon him, bowed down Adam’s heart with grief. Most bitterly did he reproach himself for his first great transgression. He entreated pardon from God through the promised Sacrifice. Deeply had he felt the wrath of God for his crime committed in Paradise. He witnessed the general corruption which afterward finally provoked God to destroy the inhabitants of the earth by a flood. The sentence of death pronounced upon him by his Maker, which at first appeared so terrible to him, after he had lived some hundreds of years, looked just and merciful in God, to bring to an end a miserable life.

[52] To his children, and to their children, to the ninth generation, he delineated the perfections of his Eden home; and also his fall and its dreadful results, and the load of grief brought upon him on account of the rupture in his family, which ended in the death of Abel. He related to them the sufferings God had brought him through, to teach him the necessity of strictly adhering to his law. He declared to them that sin would be punished in whatever form it existed. He entreated them to obey God, who would deal mercifully with them if they should love, and fear him.

Angels held communication with Adam after his fall, and informed him of the plan of salvation, and that the human race was not beyond redemption. Although a fearful separation had taken place between God and man, yet provision had been made through the

offering of his beloved Son by which man might be saved. But their only hope was through a life of humble repentance, and faith in the provision made. All those who could thus accept Christ as their only Saviour, should be again brought into favor with God through the merits of his Son.

Adam was commanded to learn his descendants the fear of the Lord, and by his example and humble obedience teach them to highly regard the offerings which typified a Saviour to come. Adam carefully treasured what God had revealed to him, and handed it down by word of mouth to his children and children's children. By this means the knowledge of God was preserved. There were some righteous upon the earth who knew and feared God even in Adam's day. The Sabbath was observed before the fall. Because Adam and Eve disobeyed God's command, and ate of the forbidden fruit, they were expelled from Eden; but they observed the Sabbath after their fall. They had experienced the bitter fruits of disobedience, and learned that every transgressor of God's commands will sooner or later learn that God means just what he says, and that he will surely [53] punish the transgressor.

Those who venture to lightly esteem the day upon which Jehovah rested, the day which he sanctified and blessed, the day which he has commanded to be kept holy, will yet know that death is the reward of the transgressor. On account of the special honors God conferred upon the seventh day, he required his people to number by sevens lest they should forget their Creator who made the heavens and the earth in six days and rested on the seventh.

The descendants of Cain were not careful to respect the day upon which God rested. They chose their own time for labor and for rest, regardless of Jehovah's special command. There were two distinct classes upon the earth. One class were in open rebellion against God's law; while the other class obeyed his commandments, and revered his Sabbath.

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Chapter 5—Seth and Enoch

Seth was a worthy character, and was to take the place of Abel in right doing. Yet he was a son of Adam like sinful Cain, and inherited from the nature of Adam no more natural goodness than did Cain. [54] He was born in sin, but by the grace of God, in receiving the faithful instructions of his father Adam, he honored God in doing his will. He separated himself from the corrupt descendants of Cain, and labored, as Abel would have done had he lived, to turn the minds of sinful men to revere and obey God.

Enoch was a holy man. He served God with singleness of heart. He realized the corruptions of the human family, and separated himself from the descendants of Cain, and reproved them for their great wickedness. There were those upon the earth who acknowledged God, who feared and worshiped him. Yet righteous Enoch was so distressed with the increasing wickedness of the ungodly, that he would not daily associate with them, fearing that he should be affected by their infidelity, and that his thoughts might not ever regard God with that holy reverence which was due his exalted character. His soul was vexed as he daily witnessed their trampling upon the authority of God. He chose to be separate from them, and spent much of his time in solitude, which he devoted to reflection and prayer. He waited before God, and prayed to know his will more perfectly, that he might perform it. God communed with Enoch through his angels, and gave him divine instruction. He made known to him that he would not always bear with man in his rebellion—that his purpose was to destroy the sinful race by bringing a flood of waters upon the earth.

[55] The pure and lovely garden of Eden, from which our first parents were driven, remained until God purposed to destroy the earth by a flood. God had planted that garden, and especially blessed it, and in his wonderful providence withdrew it from the earth, and will return it to the earth again, more gloriously adorned than before it was removed from the earth. God purposed to preserve a specimen

of his perfect work of creation free from the curse wherewith he had cursed the earth.

The Lord opened more fully to Enoch the plan of salvation, and by the spirit of prophecy carried him down through the generations which should live after the flood, and showed him the great events connected with the second coming of Christ and the end of the world.

Enoch was troubled in regard to the dead. It seemed to him that the righteous and the wicked would go to the dust together, and that would be their end. He could not clearly see the life of the just beyond the grave. In prophetic vision he was instructed in regard to the Son of God, who was to die man's sacrifice, and was shown the coming of Christ in the clouds of Heaven, attended by the angelic host, to give life to the righteous dead, and ransom them from their graves. He also saw the corrupt state of the world at the time when Christ should appear the second time—that there would be a boastful, presumptuous, self-willed generation arrayed in rebellion against the law of God, and denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ, and trampling upon his blood, and despising his atonement. He saw the righteous crowned with glory and honor, while the wicked were separated from the presence of the Lord, and consumed with fire. [56]

Enoch faithfully rehearsed to the people all that God had revealed to him by the spirit of prophecy. Some believed his words, and turned from their wickedness to fear and worship God. Such often sought Enoch in his places of retirement, and he instructed them and prayed for them, that God would give them a knowledge of his will. At length he chose certain periods for retirement, and would not suffer the people to find him, for they interrupted his holy meditation and communion with God. He did not exclude himself at all times from the society of those who loved him and listened to his words of wisdom; neither did he separate himself wholly from the corrupt. He met with the good and bad at stated times, and labored to turn the ungodly from their evil course, and instruct them in the knowledge and fear of God. He taught those who had the knowledge of God to serve him more perfectly. He would remain with them as long as he could benefit them by his godly conversation and holy example, and then would withdraw himself from all society—from the just, the scoffing and idolatrous, to remain in solitude hungering and thirsting

[57] for communion with God, and that divine knowledge which he alone could give him.

Enoch continued to grow more heavenly while communing with God. His face was radiant with a holy light which would remain upon his countenance while instructing those who would hear his words of wisdom. His heavenly and dignified appearance struck the people with awe. The Lord loved Enoch because he steadfastly followed him, and abhorred iniquity, and earnestly sought heavenly knowledge that he might do his will perfectly. He yearned to unite himself still more closely to God, whom he feared, revered, and adored. God would not permit Enoch to die as other men, but sent his angels to take him to Heaven without seeing death. In the presence of the righteous and the wicked, Enoch was removed from them. Those who loved him thought that God might have left him in some of his places of retirement; but after seeking him diligently, and being unable to find him, reported that he was not, for God took him.

The Lord here teaches a lesson of the greatest importance by the translation of Enoch, a descendant of fallen Adam, that all would be rewarded, who by faith would rely upon the promised Sacrifice, and faithfully obey his commandments. Two classes are here again represented which were to exist till the second coming of Christ—
[58] the righteous and the wicked, the rebellious and the loyal. God will remember the righteous, who fear him. On account of his dear Son he will respect and honor them, and give them everlasting life. But the wicked, who trample upon his authority, he will cut off and destroy from the earth, and they will be as though they had not been.

After Adam's fall from a state of perfect happiness to a state of misery and sin, there was danger of man's becoming discouraged, and inquiring, "What profit is it that we have kept his ordinances, and walked mournfully before the Lord," since a heavy curse is resting upon the human race, and death is the portion of us all? But the instructions which God gave to Adam, and which were repeated by Seth, and fully exemplified by Enoch, cleared away the darkness and gloom, and gave hope to man, that as through Adam came death, through Jesus, the promised Redeemer, would come life and immortality.

In the case of Enoch the desponding faithful were taught that although living among a corrupt and sinful people, who were in open

and daring rebellion against God, their Creator, yet if they would obey him, and have faith in the promised Redeemer, they could work righteousness like the faithful Enoch, be accepted of God, and finally exalted to his heavenly throne.

Enoch, separating himself from the world, and spending much of his time in prayer and in communion with God, represents God's loyal people in the last days who will be separate from the world. [59] Unrighteousness will prevail to a dreadful extent upon the earth. Men will give themselves up to follow every imagination of their corrupt hearts, and carry out their deceptive philosophy, and rebel against the authority of high Heaven.

God's people will separate themselves from the unrighteous practices of those around them, and will seek for purity of thought, and holy conformity to his will, until his divine image will be reflected in them. Like Enoch they will be fitting for translation to Heaven. While they endeavor to instruct and warn the world, they will not conform to the spirit and customs of unbelievers, but will condemn them by their holy conversation and godly example. Enoch's translation to Heaven just before the destruction of the world by a flood, represents the translation of all the living righteous from the earth previous to its destruction by fire. The saints will be glorified in the presence of those who have hated them for their loyal obedience to God's righteous commandments.

Enoch instructed his family in regard to the flood. Methuselah, the son of Enoch, listened to the preaching of his grandson, Noah, who faithfully warned the inhabitants of the old world that a flood of waters was coming upon the earth. Methuselah and his sons, and grandsons, lived in the time of the building of the ark. They, with some others, received instruction from Noah, and assisted him in [60] building the ark.

Seth was of more noble stature than Cain or Abel, and resembled Adam more than any of his other sons. The descendants of Seth had separated themselves from the wicked descendants of Cain. They cherished the knowledge of God's will, while the ungodly race of Cain had no respect for God and his sacred commandments. But when men multiplied upon the earth, the descendants of Seth saw that the daughters of the descendants of Cain were very beautiful,

and they departed from God and displeased him by taking wives as they chose of the idolatrous race of Cain.

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Chapter 6—Crime before the Flood

Those who honored and feared to offend God, at first felt the curse but lightly; while those who turned from God and trampled upon his authority, felt the effects of the curse more heavily, especially in stature and nobleness of form. The descendants of Seth were called the sons of God—the descendants of Cain, the sons of men. As the sons of God mingled with the sons of men, they became corrupt, and by intermarriage with them, lost, through the influence of their wives, their peculiar, holy character, and united with the sons of Cain in their idolatry. Many cast aside the fear of God, and trampled upon his commandments. But there were a few who did righteousness, who feared and honored their Creator. Noah and his family were among the righteous few. [61]

The wickedness of man was so great, and increased to such a fearful extent, that God repented that he had made man upon the earth; for he saw that the wickedness of man was great, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

The curse did not change at once the appearance of the earth. It was still rich in the bounty God had provided for it. There was gold and silver in abundance. The race of men then living were of very great stature, and possessed wonderful strength. The trees were vastly larger, and far surpassing in beauty and perfect proportions anything mortals can now look upon. The wood of these trees was of fine grain and hard substance—in this respect more like stone. It required much more time and labor, even of that powerful race, to prepare the timber for building, than it requires in this degenerate age to prepare trees that are now growing upon the earth, even with the present weaker strength men now possess. These trees were of great durability, and would know nothing of decay for very many years.

A heavy, double curse, first in consequence of Adam's transgression, and second, because of the murder committed by Cain, was resting upon the earth; yet the mountains and hills were still [62]

lovely. Upon the highest elevations grew majestic trees, rising to a lofty height, their branches spreading to a great distance on every side, while the plains were covered with verdure, and appeared like a vast garden of flowers. Some of the hills were covered with trees of beauty, and vines climbing the stately trees were loaded with grapes, while beautiful flowers filled the air with their fragrance. But notwithstanding the richness and beauty of the earth, yet when compared with its state before the curse was pronounced upon it, there was apparent evidence of sure and certain decay.

The people used the gold, silver, precious stones, and choice wood, in building houses for themselves, each striving to excel the other. They beautified and adorned their houses and lands with the most ingenious works, and provoked God by their wicked deeds. They formed images to worship, and taught their children to regard these pieces of workmanship made with their own hands, as gods, and to worship them. They did not choose to think of God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and rendered no grateful thanks to him who had provided them all the things which they possessed. They even denied the existence of the God of Heaven, and gloried in, and worshiped, the works of their own hands. They corrupted themselves with those things which God had placed upon the earth for man's benefit. They prepared for themselves beautiful walks overhung with fruit-trees of every description. Under these majestic and lovely trees with their wide-spread branches, which were green from the commencement of the year to its close, they placed their idols of worship. Whole groves, because of the shelter of their branches, were dedicated to their idol gods, and made attractive for the people to resort to for their idolatrous worship. They corrupted themselves with those things which God had placed upon the earth for man's benefit.

Instead of doing justice to their neighbors, they carried out their own unlawful wishes. They had a plurality of wives, which was contrary to God's wise arrangement. In the beginning God gave to Adam one wife—showing to all who should live upon the earth, his order and law in that respect. The transgression and fall of Adam and Eve brought sin and wretchedness upon the human race, and man followed his own carnal desires, and changed God's order. The more men multiplied wives to themselves, the more they increased

in wickedness and unhappiness. If one chose to take the wives, or cattle, or anything belonging to his neighbor, he did not regard justice or right, but if he could prevail over his neighbor by reason of strength, or by putting him to death, he did so, and exulted in his deeds of violence. They loved to destroy the lives of animals. They used them for food, and this increased their ferocity and violence, and caused them to look upon the blood of human beings with astonishing indifference. [64]

But if there was one sin above another which called for the destruction of the race by the flood, it was the base crime of amalgamation of man and beast which defaced the image of God, and caused confusion everywhere. God purposed to destroy by a flood that powerful, long-lived race that had corrupted their ways before him. He would not suffer them to live out the days of their natural life, which would be hundreds of years. It was only a few generations back when Adam had access to that tree which was to prolong life. After his disobedience he was not suffered to eat of the tree of life and perpetuate a life of sin. In order for man to possess an endless life he must continue to eat of the fruit of the tree of life. Deprived of that tree, his life would gradually wear out.

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Chapter 7—The Flood

[65] More than one hundred years before the flood the Lord sent an angel to faithful Noah to make known to him that he would no longer have mercy upon the corrupt race. But he would not have them ignorant of his design. He would instruct Noah and make him a faithful preacher to warn the world of its coming destruction, that the inhabitants of the earth might be left without excuse. Noah was to preach to the people, and also to prepare an ark as God should direct him for the saving of himself and family. He was not only to preach, but his example in building the ark was to convince all that he believed what he preached.

Noah and his family were not alone in fearing and obeying God. But Noah was the most pious and holy of any upon the earth, and was the one whose life God preserved to carry out his will in building the ark and warning the world of their coming doom. Methuselah, the grandfather of Noah, lived until the very year of the flood, and there were others who believed the preaching of Noah, and aided him in building the ark, who died before the flood of waters came upon the earth. Noah, by his preaching and example in building the ark, condemned the world. God gave all an opportunity who chose to repent and turn to him. But they believed not the preaching of Noah. They mocked at his warnings, and ridiculed the building of that immense boat on dry land. Noah's efforts to reform his fellow men did not succeed. But for more than one hundred years he persevered in his efforts to turn men to repentance and to God. Every blow struck upon the ark was preaching to the people. Noah directed, he [66] preached, he worked, while the people looked on in amazement, and regarded him as a fanatic.

God gave Noah the exact dimensions of the ark, and explicit directions in regard to the construction of it in every particular. In many respects it was not made like a vessel, but prepared like a house, the foundation like a boat which would float upon water. There were no windows in the sides of the ark. It was three stories

high, and the light they received was from a window in the top. The door was in the side. The different apartments prepared for the reception of different animals were so made that the window in the top gave light to all. The ark was made of the cypress or gopher wood, which would know nothing of decay for hundreds of years. It was a building of great durability which no wisdom of man could invent. God was the designer, and Noah his master-builder.

After Noah had done all in his power to make every part of the work correct, it was impossible that it could of itself withstand the violence of the storm which God in his fierce anger was to bring upon the earth. The work of completing the building was a slow process. Every piece of timber was closely fitted, and every seam covered with pitch. All that men could do was done to make the work perfect; yet after all, God alone could preserve the building upon the angry, heaving billows, by his miraculous power.

A multitude at first apparently received the warning of Noah, yet did not fully turn to God with true repentance. There was some time given them before the flood was to come, in which they were to be placed upon probation—to be proved and tried. They failed to endure the trial. The prevailing degeneracy overcame them, and they finally joined others who were corrupt, in deriding and scoffing at faithful Noah. They would not leave off their sins, but continued in polygamy, and in the indulgence of their corrupt passions. [67]

The period of their probation was drawing near its close. The unbelieving, scoffing inhabitants of the world were to have a special sign of God's divine power. Noah had faithfully followed the instructions God had given to him. The ark was finished exactly as God had directed. He had laid in store immense quantities of food for man and beast. And after this was accomplished, God commanded the faithful Noah, "Come thou, and all thy house, into the ark, for thee have I seen righteous before me." Angels were sent to collect from the forest and field the beasts which God had created. Angels went before these animals and they followed, two and two, male and female, and clean beasts by sevens. These beasts, from the most ferocious, down to the most gentle and harmless, peacefully and solemnly marched into the ark. The sky seemed clouded with birds of every description. They came flying to the ark, two and two, male and female, and the clean birds by sevens. The world [68]

looked on with wonder—some with fear, but they had become so hardened by rebellion that this most signal manifestation of God’s power had but a momentary influence upon them. For seven days these animals were coming into the ark, and Noah was arranging them in the places prepared for them.

And as the doomed race beheld the sun shining in its glory, and the earth clad in almost its Eden beauty, they drove away their rising fears by boisterous merriment; and by their deeds of violence seemed to be encouraging upon themselves the visitation of the already awakened wrath of God.

Everything was now ready for the closing of the ark, which could not have been done by Noah from within. An angel is seen by the scoffing multitude descending from Heaven, clothed with brightness like the lightning. He closes that massive outer door, and then takes his course upward to Heaven again. Seven days were the family of Noah in the ark before the rain began to descend upon the earth. In this time they were arranging for their long stay while the waters should be upon the earth. And these were days of blasphemous merriment by the unbelieving multitude. They thought because the prophecy of Noah was not fulfilled immediately after he entered the ark, that he was deceived, and that it was impossible that the world could be destroyed by a flood. Previous to this there had been no rain upon the earth, A mist had risen from the waters, which God caused to descend at night like dew, reviving vegetation and causing it to flourish.

Notwithstanding the solemn exhibition they had witnessed of God’s power—of the unnatural occurrence of the beasts’ leaving the forests and fields, and going into the ark, and the angel of God clothed with brightness, and terrible in majesty, descending from Heaven and closing the door; yet they hardened their hearts, and continued to revel and sport over the signal manifestations of divine power. But upon the eighth day the heavens gathered blackness. The muttering thunders, and vivid lightning flashes, began to terrify man and beast. The rain descended from the clouds above them. This was something they had never witnessed, and their hearts began to faint with fear. The beasts were roving about in the wildest terror, and their varied voices seemed to mourn out their own destiny and the fate of man. The storm increased in violence until water seemed

to come from heaven like mighty cataracts. The boundaries of rivers broke away, and the waters rushed to the valleys. The foundations of the great deep also were broken up. Jets of water would burst up from the earth with indescribable force, throwing massive rocks hundreds of feet into the air, and then they would bury themselves deep in the earth.

The people beheld the destruction, first of the works of their hands. Their splendid buildings, their beautifully arranged gardens and groves, where they had placed their idols, were destroyed by lightning from heaven. Their ruins were scattered everywhere. They had erected altars in groves, and consecrated them to their idols, whereon they offered human sacrifices. These which God detested were torn down in his wrath before them, and they were made to tremble before the power of the living God, the Maker of the heavens and the earth, and they were made to know that it was their abominations and horrible, idolatrous sacrifices, which had called for their destruction. [70]

The violence of the storm increased, and there were mingled with the warring of the elements, the wailings of the people who had despised the authority of God. Trees, buildings, rocks, and earth, were hurled in every direction. The terror of man and beast was beyond description. And even Satan himself, who was compelled to be amid the warring elements, feared for his own existence. He had delighted to control so powerful a race, and wished them to live to practice their abominations, and increase their rebellion against the God of Heaven. He uttered imprecations against God, charging him with injustice and cruelty. Many of the people, like Satan, blasphemed God, and if they could have carried out their rebellion, would have torn him from the throne of justice. While many were blaspheming and cursing their Creator, others were frantic with fear, stretching their hands toward the ark, pleading for admittance. But this was impossible. God had closed the door, the only entrance, and shut Noah in and the ungodly out. He alone could open the door. Their fear and repentance came too late. They were compelled to know that there was a living God who was mightier than man, whom they had defied and blasphemed. They called upon him earnestly, but his ear was not open to their cry. Some in their desperation sought to break into the ark, but that firm made boat resisted all their efforts. [71]

Some clung to the ark until borne away with the furious surging of the waters, or their hold was broken off by rocks and trees that were hurled in every direction. Those who had slighted the warning of Noah, and ridiculed that faithful preacher of righteousness, repented too late of their unbelief. The ark was severely rocked and tossed about. The beasts within expressed by their varied noises the wildest terror, yet amid all the warring of the elements, the surging of the waters, and the hurling about of trees and rocks, the ark rode safely. Angels that excel in strength guided the ark and preserved it from harm. Every moment during that frightful storm of forty days and forty nights the preservation of the ark was a miracle of almighty power.

[72] The animals exposed to the tempest rushed toward man, choosing the society of human beings, as though expecting help of them. Some of the people would bind their children and themselves upon powerful beasts knowing that they would be tenacious for life; and would climb the highest points to escape the rising water. The storm does not abate its fury—the waters increase faster than at first. Some fasten themselves to lofty trees upon the highest points of land, but these trees are torn up by the roots, and carried with violence through the air, and appear as though angrily hurled, with stones and earth, into the swelling, boiling billows. Upon the loftiest heights human beings and beasts would strive to hold their position until all were hurled together into the foaming waters which nearly reached the highest points of land. The loftiest highs are at length reached, and man and beast alike perish by the waters of the flood.

[73] Anxiously did Noah and his family watch the decrease of the waters. He desired to go forth upon the earth again. He sent out a raven which flew back and forth to and from the ark. He did not receive the information he desired, and he sent forth a dove which finding no rest returned to the ark again. After seven days the dove was sent forth again, and when the olive leaf was seen in its mouth there was great rejoicing by this family of eight which had so long been shut up in the ark. Again an angel descends and opens the door of the ark. Noah could remove the top, but he could not open the door which God had shut. God spoke to Noah through the angel who opened the door and bade the family of Noah to go forth out of the ark, and to bring forth with them every living thing.

Noah did not forget God who had so graciously preserved them, but immediately erected an altar and took of every clean beast and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar, showing his faith in Christ the great sacrifice, and manifesting his gratitude to God for their wonderful preservation. The offering of Noah came up before God like a sweet savor. He accepted the offering, and blessed Noah and his family. Here a lesson is taught all who should live upon the earth, that for every manifestation of God's mercy and love toward them, the first act of all others should be to render to him grateful thanks and humble worship.

And lest man should be terrified with gathering clouds, and falling rains, and should be in continual dread fearing another flood, God graciously encourages the family of Noah by a promise. "And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. And God said, this is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations. I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth."

[74]

What a condescension on the part of God. What compassion for erring man, to place the beautiful, variegated rainbow in the clouds, a token of the covenant of the great God with man! This rainbow was to evidence the fact to all generations that God destroyed the inhabitants of the earth by a flood, because of their great wickedness. It was his design that as the children of after generations should see the bow in the cloud, and should inquire the reason of this glorious circle that compasseth the earth, that their parents could explain to them the destruction of the old world by a flood, because the people gave themselves up to all manner of wickedness, and that the hands of the Most High had bended the bow, and placed it in the clouds, as a token that he would never bring again a flood of waters on the earth. This symbol in the clouds was to confirm the belief of all, and establish their confidence in God, for it was a token of divine

[75] mercy and goodness to man. That although God had been provoked to destroy the earth by the flood, yet his mercy still encompasseth the earth. God says, when he looketh upon the bow in the cloud he will remember. He would not have us understand that he would ever forget; but he speaks to man in his own language, that man may better understand him.

A rainbow is represented in Heaven round about the throne, also above the head of Christ, as a symbol of God's mercy encompassing the earth. When man by his great wickedness provokes the wrath of God, Christ, man's intercessor, pleads for him, and points to the rainbow in the cloud, as evidence of God's great mercy and compassion for erring man; also the rainbow above the throne and upon his head emblematical of the glory and mercy from God resting there for the benefit of repentant man.

Every species of animal which God had created were preserved in the ark. The confused species which God did not create, which were the result of amalgamation, were destroyed by the flood. Since the flood there has been amalgamation of man and beast, as may be seen in the almost endless varieties of species of animals, and in certain races of men.

[76] After Noah had come forth from the ark, he looked around upon the powerful and ferocious beasts which he brought out of the ark, and then upon his family numbering eight, and was greatly afraid that they would be destroyed by the beasts. But the Lord sent his angel to say to Noah, "The fear of you, and the dread of you, shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hands are they delivered. Every moving thing that liveth shall be [meat] for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things."

Previous to this time God had given man no permission to eat animal food. Every living substance upon the face of the earth upon which man could subsist had been destroyed, therefore God gave Noah permission to eat of the clean beasts which he had taken with him into the ark. God said to Noah, "Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you, even as the green herb have I given you all things." As God had formerly given them the herb of the ground and fruit of the field, now, in the peculiar circumstances in which they

are placed he permits them to eat animal food. Yet I saw that the flesh of animals was not the most healthy article of food for man.

* * * * *

Chapter 8—After the Flood

[77] The whole surface of the earth was changed at the flood. A third dreadful curse now rested upon it in consequence of man's transgression. The beautiful trees and shrubbery bearing flowers were destroyed, yet Noah preserved seed and took it with him in the ark, and God by his miraculous power preserved a few of the different kinds of trees and shrubs alive for future generations. Soon after the flood trees and plants seemed to spring out of the very rocks. In God's providence seeds were scattered and driven into the crevices of the rocks and there securely hid for the future use of man.

The waters had been fifteen cubits above the highest mountains. The Lord remembered Noah, and as the waters decreased, he caused the ark to rest upon the top of a cluster of mountains, which God in his power had preserved and made them to stand fast all through that violent storm. These mountains were but a little distance apart, and the ark moved about and rested upon one, then another of these mountains, and was no more driven upon the boundless ocean. This gave great relief to Noah and all within the ark. As the mountains and hills appeared they were in a broken, rough condition, and all around them appeared like a sea of roiled water or soft mud.

[78] In the time of the flood the people and beasts also, gathered to the highest points of land, and as the waters returned from off the earth, dead bodies were left upon high mountains, and upon the hills as well as upon the plains. Upon the surface of the earth were the bodies of men and beasts. But God would not have these to remain upon the face of the earth to decompose and pollute the atmosphere, therefore he made of the earth a vast burying ground. He caused a powerful wind to pass over the earth for the purpose of drying up the waters, which moved them with great force—in some instances carrying away the tops of mountains like mighty avalanches, forming huge hills and high mountains where there were none to be seen before, and burying the dead bodies with trees, stones, and earth. These

mountains and hills increased in size and became more irregular in shape by collection of stones, ledges, trees, and earth which were driven upon and around them. The precious wood, stone, silver and gold that had made rich, and adorned the world before the flood, which the inhabitants had idolized, was sunk beneath the surface of the earth. The waters which had broken forth with such great power, had moved earth and rocks, and heaped them upon earth's treasures, and in many instances formed mountains above them to hide them from the sight and search of men.

God saw the more he enriched and prospered sinful man, the more he corrupted his way before him. These treasures, which should have led man to glorify the bountiful giver, had been worshiped instead of God, while the giver had been rejected.

The beautiful, regular shaped mountains had disappeared. Stones, ledges, and ragged rocks appeared upon some parts of the earth which were before out of sight. Where had been hills and mountains, no traces of them were visible. Where had been beautiful plains covered with verdure and lovely plants, hills and mountains were formed of stones, trees, and earth, above the bodies of men and beasts. The whole surface of the earth presented an appearance of disorder. Some parts of the earth were more disfigured than the others. Where once had been earth's richest treasures of gold, silver and precious stones, was seen the heaviest marks of the curse. And countries which were not inhabited, and those portions of the earth where there had been the least crime, the curse rested more lightly.

[79]

Before the flood there were immense forests. The trees were many times larger than any trees which we now see. They were of great durability. They would know nothing of decay for hundreds of years. At the time of the flood these forests were torn up or broken down and buried in the earth. In some places large quantities of these immense trees were thrown together and covered with stones and earth by the commotions of the flood. They have since petrified and become coal, which accounts for the large coal beds which are now found. This coal has produced oil. God causes large quantities of coal and oil to ignite and burn. Rocks are intensely heated, limestone is burned, and iron ore melted. Water and fire under the surface of the earth meet. The action of water upon the limestone adds fury to the intense heat, and causes earthquakes, volcanoes and fiery

[80] issues. The action of fire and water upon the ledges of rocks and ore, causes loud explosions which sound like muffled thunder. These wonderful exhibitions will be more numerous and terrible just before the coming of Christ and the end of the world, as signs of its speedy destruction.

Coal and oil are generally to be found where there are no burning mountains or fiery issues. When fire and water under the surface of the earth meet, the fiery issues cannot give sufficient vent to the heated elements beneath. The earth is convulsed—the ground trembles, heaves, and rises into swells or waves, and there are heavy sounds like thunder underground. The air is heated and suffocating. The earth quickly opens, and I saw villages, cities and burning mountains carried down together into the earth.

God controls all these elements; they are his instruments to do his will; he calls them into action to serve his purpose. These fiery issues have been, and will be his agents to blot out from the earth very wicked cities. Like Korah, Dathan and Abiram they go down alive into the pit. These are evidences of God's power. Those who have beheld these burning mountains have been struck with terror at the grandeur of the scene—pouring forth fire, and flame, and a vast amount of melted ore, drying up rivers and causing them to disappear. They have been filled with awe as though they were beholding the infinite power of God.

[81] These manifestations bear the special marks of God's power, and are designed to cause the people of the earth to tremble before him, and to silence those, who like Pharaoh would proudly say, "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?" Isaiah refers to these exhibitions of God's power where he exclaims, "Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence as when the melting fire burneth. The fire causeth the waters to boil, to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence. When thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence.

"The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked. The Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry and drieth up all the rivers. Bashan

languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth. The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him.

“Bow thy heavens, O, Lord, and come down. Touch the mountains, and they shall smoke. Cast forth lightning, and scatter them. Shoot out thine arrows, and destroy them.”

[82]

Greater wonders than have yet been seen will be witnessed by those upon the earth a short period previous to the coming of Christ. “And I will show wonders in the heavens above, and signs in the earth beneath, blood and fire and vapour of smoke.” “And there were voices and thunders and lightnings, and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake and so great. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, for the plague thereof was exceeding great.”

The bowels of the earth were the Lord’s arsenal, from which he drew forth the weapons he employed in the destruction of the old world. Waters in the bowels of the earth gushed forth, and united with the waters from Heaven, to accomplish the work of destruction. Since the flood, God has used both water and fire in the earth as his agents to destroy wicked cities.

In the day of the Lord, just before the coming of Christ, God will send lightnings from Heaven in his wrath, which will unite with fire in the earth. The mountains will burn like a furnace, and will pour forth terrible streams of lava, destroying gardens and fields, villages and cities; and as they pour their melted ore, rocks and heated mud into the rivers, will cause them to boil like a pot, and send forth massive rocks and scatter their broken fragments upon the land with indescribable violence. Whole rivers will be dried up. The earth will be convulsed, and there will be dreadful eruptions and earthquakes everywhere. God will plague the wicked inhabitants of the earth until they are destroyed from off it.

[83]

The saints are preserved in the earth in the midst of these dreadful commotions, as Noah was preserved in the ark at the time of the flood. Christ appears in his glory, and calls forth the righteous dead. The living saints are changed, and, with the resurrected dead, are borne away from the earth by angels to meet their Lord in the air. The earth is left like a desolate wilderness.

[84] At the end of one thousand years, Jesus, the king of glory, descends from the holy city, clothed with brightness like the lightning, upon the mount of olives—the same mount from whence he ascended after his resurrection. As his feet touch the mountain, it parts asunder, and becomes a very great plain, and is prepared for the reception of the holy city in which is the paradise of God, the garden of Eden, which was taken up after man's transgression. Now it descends with the city, more beautiful, and gloriously adorned than when removed from the earth. The city of God comes down and settles upon the mighty plain prepared for it. Then Jesus leaves the city surrounded by the redeemed host, and is escorted on his way by the angelic throng. In fearful majesty he calls forth the wicked dead. They are wakened from their long sleep. What a dreadful waking! They behold the Son of God in his stern majesty and resplendent glory. All, as soon as they behold him, know that he is the crucified one who died to save them, whom they had despised and rejected. They are in number like the sand upon the sea-shore. At the first resurrection all come forth in immortal bloom, but at the second, the marks of the curse are visible upon all. All come up as they went down into their graves. Those who lived before the flood, come forth with their giant-like stature, more than twice as tall as men now living upon the earth, and well proportioned. The generations after the flood were less in stature. There was a continual decrease through successive generations, down to the last that lived upon the earth. The contrast between the first wicked men who lived upon the earth, and those of the last generation, was very great. The first were of lofty height and well proportioned—the last came up as they went down, a dwarfed, feeble, deformed race. A mighty host of kings, warriors, statesmen and nobles, down to the most degraded, [85] came up together upon the desolate earth. When they behold Jesus in his glory they are affrighted, and seek to hide from his terrible presence. They are overwhelmed with his exceeding glory, and with

one accord are compelled to exclaim in anguish, "Blessed is he who cometh in the name of the Lord."

Jesus and the saints return to the city. Satan goes forth among the vast multitude of resurrected wicked, and makes the feeble strong. He then points them to the countless millions who have been raised, and makes them believe that he, by his power, had brought them up from [their] graves. He points to the powerful race who lived before the flood, and to kings and warriors who were well skilled in battle, and flatters his subjects that their numbers are much greater than those in the city, that they can make war with them, and dethrone God and his Son Jesus Christ, and take the throne and occupy the city, and enjoy its richness and glory. As the wicked come forth from their graves, they resume the current of their thoughts where it ceased in death. The antediluvian race perished blaspheming God. Many perished in battle; they fell while thirsting to conquer; they rise with the same spirit of war that they possessed when they fell. They accept Satan as their general, and his angels as their officers. Satan and his angels were once inhabitants of the city; and they profess to understand just how to attack the city and take possession of it. With Satan at their head, they go up on the breadth of the earth, and compass the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city; and fire comes down from God out of Heaven and devours them. [86]

Jesus and his loyal subjects ascend to the top of the city. The wicked host behold the splendor of the city, and the happy redeemed company upon its walls, and are amazed at the scene. They behold Jesus in his kingly majesty, his countenance surpassing the brightness of the sun, surrounded by the angelic throng. As the wicked look upon the redeemed, and see their faces radiant with glory, and glittering crowns upon their heads, their courage fails, and they wail in anguish as they realize that they chose a life of rebellion against God, and Jesus Christ their Saviour, and for their disloyalty have lost eternal life, and an imperishable treasure. Then many who had professed to be Christ's followers, but who had not honored God in their lives, enumerate their good deeds performed when they lived upon the earth, and entreat to be admitted into the city. They plead that their names were upon the church books, and they had prophesied in the name of Christ, and in his name cast out devils, and done many wonderful works. Christ answers, Your cases have been

[87] decided. Your names are not found enrolled in the book of life. You professed to believe in my name, but you trampled upon the law of God. I know you not, depart from me ye workers of iniquity. Satan and his angels try to encourage the wicked multitude to action; but fire descends from Heaven, and unites with the fire in the earth, and aids in the general conflagration.

Those majestic trees which God had caused to grow upon the earth, for the benefit of the inhabitants of the old world, and which they had used to form into idols, and to corrupt themselves with, God has reserved in the earth, in the shape of coal and oil to use as agencies in their final destruction. As he called forth the waters in the earth at the time of the flood, as weapons from his arsenal to accomplish the destruction of the antediluvian race, so at the end of the one thousand years he will call forth the fires in the earth as his weapons which he has reserved for the final destruction, not only of successive generations since the flood, but the antediluvian race who perished by the flood.

[88] When the flood of waters was at its height upon the earth, it had the appearance of a boundless lake of water. When God finally purifies the earth, it will appear like a boundless lake of fire. As God preserved the ark amid the commotions of the flood, because it contained eight righteous persons, he will preserve the New Jerusalem, containing the faithful of all ages, from righteous Abel down to the last saint which lived. Although the whole earth, with the exception of that portion where the city rests, will be wrapped in a sea of liquid fire, yet the city is preserved as was the ark, by a miracle of Almighty power. It stands unharmed amid the devouring elements. "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

By transgressing God's commandments a curse fell upon Adam and Eve, and they were deprived of all right to the tree of life. Christ died to save man, and yet preserve the honor of God's law. He says "Blessed are they that do his commandments that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the City." The Son of God here presents the doing of the commandments of God as the condition of a right to the tree of life. The transgression

of God's commandments deprived man of all right to the tree of life. Christ died, that by virtue of his blood, obedience to God's law might make man worthy of the heavenly benediction, and grant him a right again to the tree of life.

When the faithful dead shall be resurrected, and the king of glory shall open before them the gates of the city of God, and the nations who have kept the truth enter in, what beauty and glory will meet the astonished sight of those who have seen no greater beauties in the earth than that which they beheld in decaying nature after the threefold curse was upon the earth.

[89]

It is impossible to describe Adam's transports of joy as he again beholds Paradise, the garden of Eden, his once happy home, from which, because of his transgression, he had been so long separated. He beholds the lovely flowers and trees, of every description for fruit and beauty, every one of which to designate them he had named while in his innocence. He sees the luxuriant vines, which had once been his delight to train upon bowers and trees. But when he again beholds the wide spread tree of life with its extended branches and glowing fruit, and to him again is granted access to its fruit and leaves, his gratitude is boundless. He first in adoration bows at the feet of the King of glory, and then with the redeemed host swells the song, Worthy, worthy is the Lamb that was slain. Adam had lost Eden by disobeying the commandments of God. He has now regained that lovely garden by repentance and faithful obedience. The curse rested upon him for disobedience, the blessing now for his obedience.

Chapter 9—Disguised Infidelity

I was then carried back to the creation and was shown that the first week, in which God performed the work of creation in six days and rested on the seventh day, was just like every other week. The great God in his days of creation and day of rest, measured off the first cycle as a sample for successive weeks till the close of time. “These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created.” God gives us the productions of his work at the close of each literal day. Each day was accounted of him a generation, because every day he generated or produced some new portion of his work. On the seventh day of the first week God rested from his work, and then blessed the day of his rest, and set it apart for the use of man. The weekly cycle of seven literal days, six for labor, and the seventh for rest, which has been preserved and brought down through Bible history, originated in the great facts of the first seven days.

When God spake his law with an audible voice from Sinai, he introduced the Sabbath by saying, “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.” He then declares definitely what shall be done on the six days, and what shall not be done on the seventh. He then, in giving the reason for thus observing the week, points them back to his example on the first seven days of time. “For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day, wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.” This reason appears beautiful and forcible when we understand the record of creation to mean literal days. The first six days of each week are given to man in which to labor, because God employed the same period of the first week in the work of creation. The seventh day God has reserved as a day of rest, in commemoration of his rest during the same period of time after he had performed the work of creation in six days.

But the infidel supposition, that the events of the first week required seven vast, indefinite periods for their accomplishment,

strikes directly at the foundation of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment. It makes indefinite and obscure that which God has made very plain. It is the worst kind of infidelity; for with many who profess to believe the record of creation, it is infidelity in disguise. It charges God with commanding men to observe the week of seven literal days in commemoration of seven indefinite periods, which is unlike his dealings with mortals, and is an impeachment of his wisdom.

Infidel geologists claim that the world is very much older than the Bible record makes it. They reject the Bible record, because of those things which are to them evidences from the earth itself, that the world has existed tens of thousands of years. And many who profess to believe the Bible record are at a loss to account for wonderful things which are found in the earth, with the view that creation week was only seven literal days, and that the world is now only about six thousand years old. These, to free themselves of difficulties thrown in their way by infidel geologists, adopt the view that the six days of creation were six vast, indefinite periods, and the day of God's rest was another indefinite period; making senseless the fourth commandment of God's holy law. Some eagerly receive this position, for it destroys the force of the fourth commandment, and they feel a freedom from its claims upon them. They have limited ideas of the size of men, animals and trees before the flood, and of the great changes which then took place in the earth. [92]

Bones of men and animals are found in the earth, in mountains and in valleys, showing that much larger men and beasts once lived upon the earth. I was shown that very large, powerful animals existed before the flood which do not now exist. Instruments of warfare are sometimes found; also petrified wood. Because the bones of human beings and of animals found in the earth, are much larger than those of men and animals now living, or that have existed for many generations past, some conclude that the world is older than we have any scriptural record of, and was populated long before the record of creation, by a race of beings vastly superior in size to men now upon the earth. [93]

I have been shown that without Bible history, geology can prove nothing. Relics found in the earth do give evidence of a state of things differing in many respects from the present. But the time

of their existence, and how long a period these things have been in the earth, are only to be understood by Bible history. It may be innocent to conjecture beyond Bible history, if our suppositions do not contradict the facts found in the sacred Scriptures. But when men leave the word of God in regard to the history of creation, and seek to account for God's creative works upon natural principles, they are upon a boundless ocean of uncertainty. Just how God accomplished the work of creation in six literal days he has never revealed to mortals. His creative works are just as incomprehensible as his existence.

“Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable.”

“Which doeth great things, past finding out; yea, and wonders without number.”

“Which doeth great things, and unsearchable; marvelous things without number.”

God thundereth marvelously with his voice. Great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend.”

[94] “O, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counselor?”

The word of God is given as a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path. Those who cast his word behind them, and seek by their own blind philosophy to trace out the wonderful mysteries of Jehovah will stumble in darkness. A guide has been given to mortals whereby they may trace Jehovah and his works as far as will be for their good. Inspiration, in giving us the history of the flood has explained wonderful mysteries, that geology, independent of inspiration, never could.

It has been the special work of Satan to lead fallen man to rebel against God's government, and he has succeeded too well in his efforts. He has tried to obscure the law of God, which in itself is very plain. He has manifested a special hate against the fourth precept of the decalogue, because it defines the living God, the Maker of the heavens and the earth. The plainest precepts of Jehovah are turned from, to receive infidel fables.

Man will be left without excuse. God has given sufficient evidence upon which to base faith if he wish to believe. In the last days the earth will be almost destitute of true faith. Upon the merest pretense, the word of God will be considered unreliable, while human reasoning will be received, though it be in opposition to plain Scripture facts. Men will endeavor to explain from natural causes the work of creation, which God has never revealed. But human science can not search out the secrets of the God of Heaven, and explain the stupendous works of creation, which were a miracle of Almighty power, any sooner than it can show how God came into existence. [95]

“The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever.” Men professing to be ministers of God, raise their voices against the investigation of prophecy, and tell the people that the prophecies, especially of Daniel and John, are obscure, and that we cannot understand them. But some of the very men who oppose the investigation of prophecy because it is obscure, eagerly receive the suppositions of geologists, which dispute the Mosaic record. But if God’s revealed will is so difficult to be understood, certainly men should not rest their faith upon mere suppositions in regard to that which he has not revealed. God’s ways are not as our ways, neither are his thoughts as our thoughts. Human science can never account for his wondrous works. God so ordered that men, beasts, and trees, many times larger than those now upon the earth, and other things, should be buried in the earth at the time of the flood, and there be preserved to evidence to man that the inhabitants of the old world perished by a flood. God designed that the discovery of these things in the earth, should establish the faith of men in inspired history. But men, with their vain reasoning, make a wrong use of these things which God designed should lead them to exalt him. They fall into the same error as did the people before the flood—those things which God gave them as a benefit, they turned into a curse, by making a wrong use of them. [96]

Chapter 10—Tower of Babel

Some of the descendants of Noah soon began to apostatize. A portion followed the example of Noah, and obeyed God's commandments; others were unbelieving and rebellious, and even these did not believe alike in regard to the flood. Some disbelieved in the existence of God, and in their own minds accounted for the flood from natural causes. Others believed that God existed, and that he destroyed the antediluvian race by a flood; and their feelings, like Cain, rose in rebellion against God, because he destroyed the people from the earth and cursed the earth the third time by a flood.

[97] Those who were enemies of God felt daily reproved by the righteous conversation and godly lives of those who loved, obeyed, and exalted God. The unbelieving consulted among themselves, and agreed to separate from the faithful, whose righteous lives were a continual restraint upon their wicked course. They journeyed a distance from them, and selected a large plain wherein to dwell. They built them a city, and then conceived the idea of building a large tower to reach unto the clouds, that they might dwell together in the city and tower, and be no more scattered. They reasoned that they would secure themselves in case of another flood, for they would build their tower to a much greater height than the waters prevailed in the time of the flood, and all the world would honor them, and they would be as gods, and rule over the people. This tower was calculated to exalt its builders, and was designed to turn the attention of others who should live upon the earth from God to join with them in their idolatry. Before the work of building was accomplished, people dwelt in the tower. Rooms were splendidly furnished, decorated and devoted to their idols. Those who did not believe in God, imagined if their tower could reach unto the clouds they would be able to discover reasons for the flood.

They exalted themselves against God. But he would not permit them to complete their work. They had built their tower to a lofty height, when the Lord sent two angels to confound them in their

work. Men had been appointed for the purpose of receiving word from the workmen at the top of the tower, calling for material for their work, which the first would communicate to the second, and he to the third, until the word reached those upon the ground. As the word was passing from one to another in its descent, the angels confounded their language, and when the word reached the workmen upon the ground, material was called for which had not been required. And after the laborious process of getting the material to the workmen at the top of the tower, it was not that which they wished for. Disappointed and enraged they reproached those whom they supposed were at fault. After this there was no harmony in their work. Angry with one another, and unable to account for the misunderstanding, and strange words among them, they left the work and separated from each other, and scattered abroad in the earth. Up to this time men had spoken but one language. Lightning from heaven as a token of God's wrath broke off the top of their tower, casting it to the ground. Thus God would show to rebellious man that he is supreme.

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Chapter 11—Abraham

[99] The Lord selected Abraham to carry out his will. He was directed to leave his idolatrous nation, and separate from his kindred. The Lord had revealed himself to Abraham in his youth, and gave him understanding, and preserved him from idolatry. He designed to make him an example of faith, and true devotion, for his people who should afterward live upon the earth. His character was marked for integrity, generosity and hospitality. He commanded respect as a mighty prince among the people. His reverence and love for God, and his strict obedience in performing his will, gained for him the respect of his servants and neighbors. His godly example, and righteous course, united with his faithful instructions to his servants, and all his household, led them to fear, love, and reverence the God of Abraham. The Lord appeared to Abraham and promised him that his seed should be like the stars of heaven for number. He also made known to him, through the figure of the horror of great darkness which came upon him, the long servile bondage of his descendants in Egypt.

[100] In the beginning, God gave to Adam one wife, thus showing his order. He never designed that man should have a plurality of wives. Lamech was the first who departed in this respect from God's wise arrangement. He had two wives, which created discord in his family. The envy and jealousy of both made Lamech unhappy. When men began to multiply upon the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, they took them wives of all which they chose. This was one of the great sins of the inhabitants of the old world, which brought the wrath of God upon them. This custom was practiced after the flood, and became so common that even righteous men fell into the practice, and had a plurality of wives. Yet it was no less sin because they became corrupted, and departed in this thing from God's order.

The Lord said of Noah and his family who were saved in the ark, "For thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation." Noah

had but one wife, and their united family discipline was blessed of God. Because Noah's sons were righteous, they were preserved in the ark with their righteous father. God has not sanctioned polygamy in a single instance. It was contrary to his will. He knew that the happiness of man would be destroyed by it.

Abraham's peace was greatly marred by his unhappy marriage with Hagar. "And the Lord said unto Abram, lift up now thine eyes and look from the place where thou art, northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward, for all which thou seest to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth, so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered." "The word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. And Abram said, Behold, to me thou has given no seed, and lo, one born in my house is mine heir."

As Abram had no son, he at first thought that his trusty servant, Eliezer, should become his son by adoption, and his heir. But God informs Abram that his servant shall not be his son and heir, but that he should really have a son. "And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell me the stars, if thou be able to number them; and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be."

[101]

If Abraham and Sarah had waited in confiding faith for the fulfillment of the promise, that they should have a son, much unhappiness would have been avoided. They believed that it would be just as God had promised, but could not believe that Sarah, in her old age, would have a son. Sarah suggested a plan whereby she thought the promise of God could be fulfilled. She entreated Abraham to take Hagar as his wife. In this they both lacked faith, and a perfect trust in the power of God. By hearkening to the voice of Sarah, and taking Hagar as his wife, Abraham failed to endure the test of his faith in God's unlimited power, and brought upon himself, and upon Sarah, much unhappiness. The Lord intended to prove the firm faith and reliance of Abram upon the promises he had made him.

Hagar was proud and boastful, and carried herself haughtily before Sarah. She flattered herself that she was to be the mother of the great nation God had promised to make of Abraham. And Abraham was compelled to listen to complaints from Sarah in regard to the conduct of Hagar, charging Abraham with wrong in the matter.

[102]

Abraham is grieved, and tells Sarah that Hagar is her servant, and that she can have the control of her, but refuses to send her away, for she is to be the mother of his child through whom he thinks the promise is to be fulfilled. He informs Sarah that he should not have taken Hagar for his wife if it had not been her special request. Abraham was also compelled to listen to Hagar's complaints of abuse from Sarah. Abraham is in perplexity. If he seeks to redress the wrongs of Hagar, he increases the jealousy and unhappiness of Sarah, his first, and much loved wife. Hagar fled from the face of Sarah. An angel of God meets her, and comforts her, and also reproves her for her haughty conduct in bidding her return to her mistress, and submit herself under her hands.

After the birth of Ishmael, the Lord manifested himself again to Abraham, and said unto him, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant." Again the Lord repeated by his angel his promise to give Sarah a son, and that she should be a mother of many nations. Abraham did not yet understand the promise of God. His mind immediately rests upon Ishmael, as though through him would come the many nations promised, and he exclaims, in his affection for his son, "Oh, that Ishmael might live before thee."

Again the promise is more definitely repeated to Abraham. "Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed, and thou shalt call his name Isaac, and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him." Angels are sent the second time to Abraham on their way to destroy Sodom, and they repeat the promise more distinctly that Sarah shall have a son.

After the birth of Isaac, the great joy manifested by Abraham and Sarah, caused Hagar to be very jealous. Ishmael had been instructed by his mother that he was to be especially blessed of God, as the son of Abraham, and to be heir to that which was promised to him. Ishmael partook of his mother's feelings, and was angry because of the joy manifested at the birth of Isaac. He despised Isaac because he thought that he was preferred before him. Sarah saw the disposition manifested by Ishmael against her son Isaac, and she was greatly moved. She related to Abraham the disrespectful conduct of Ishmael to her, and to her son Isaac, and said to him, "Cast out this

bondwoman, and her son, for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac.”

Abraham was greatly distressed. Ishmael was his son, beloved by him. How can he send him away. He prays to God in his perplexity, for he knows not what course to take. The Lord informs Abraham, through his angels, to listen to the voice of Sarah his wife, and that he should not let his affections for his son, or for Hagar, prevent his compliance with her wishes. For this was the only course he could pursue to restore harmony and happiness again to his family. Abraham has the consoling promise from the angel, that Ishmael, although separated from his father’s house, should not die, nor be forsaken of God; that he should be preserved because he was the son of Abraham. God also promises to make of Ishmael a great nation. [104]

Abraham was of a noble, benevolent disposition, which was manifested in his pleading so earnestly for the people of Sodom. His strong spirit suffered much. He was bowed with grief, and his paternal feelings were deeply moved as he sends away Hagar and his son Ishmael to wander as strangers in a strange land.

If God had sanctioned polygamy he would not have thus directed Abraham to send away Hagar and her son. He would teach all a lesson in this, that the rights and happiness of the marriage relation are to be ever respected, and guarded, even at a great sacrifice. Sarah was the first and only true wife of Abraham. She was entitled to rights, as a wife and mother, which no other could have in the family. She revered her husband, calling him lord; but she was jealous lest his affections should be divided with Hagar. God did not rebuke Sarah for the course she pursued. Abraham was reproved by the angels for distrusting God’s power, which had led him to take Hagar as his wife, and to think that through her the promise would be fulfilled. [105]

Again the Lord saw fit to test the faith of Abraham by a most fearful trial. If he had endured the first test, and had patiently waited for the promise to be fulfilled in Sarah, and had not taken Hagar as his wife, he would not have been subjected to the closest test that was ever required of man. The Lord bid Abraham, “Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee unto the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.”

Abraham did not disbelieve God, and hesitate, but early in the morning he took two of his servants, and Isaac his son, and the wood for the burnt-offering, and went unto the place of which God had told him. He did not reveal the true nature of his journey to Sarah, knowing that her affection for Isaac would lead her to distrust God, and withhold her son. Abraham did not suffer paternal feelings to control him, and lead him to rebel against God. The command of God was calculated to stir the depths of his soul. "Take now thy son." Then as though to probe the heart a little deeper, he adds, "thine only son whom thou lovest." That is, the only son of promise, "and offer him as a burnt-offering."

Three days this father traveled with his son, having sufficient time to reason, and doubt God if he was disposed to doubt. But he did not distrust God. He did not now reason that the promise would be fulfilled through Ishmael; for God plainly told him that through Isaac should the promise be fulfilled.

Abraham believed that Isaac was the son of promise. He also believed that God meant just what he said when he bid him to go offer him as a burnt-offering. He staggered not at the promise of God; but believed that God, who had in his providence given Sarah a son in her old age, and who had required him to take that son's life, could also give life again, and bring up Isaac from the dead.

Abraham left the servants by the way, and proposed to go alone with his son to worship some distance from them. He would not permit his servants to accompany them, lest their love for Isaac might lead them to prevent him from carrying out what God had commanded him to do. He took the wood from the hands of his servants and laid it upon the shoulders of his son. He also took the fire and the knife. He was prepared to execute the dreadful mission given him of God. Father and son walked on together.

"And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father, and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering, so they went both of them together." Firmly walked on that stern, loving, suffering father by the side of his son. As they came to the place which God had pointed out to Abraham, he builds there an altar, and lays the wood in order, ready for the sacrifice, and

then informs Isaac of the command of God to offer him as a burnt-offering. He repeats to him the promise that God several times made to him that through Isaac he should become a great nation, and that in performing the command of God in slaying him, God would fulfill his promise; for he was able to raise him from the dead.

Isaac believed in God. He had been taught implicit obedience to his father, and he loved and revered the God of his father. He could have resisted his father if he had chosen to do so. But after affectionately embracing his father, he submitted to be bound and laid upon the wood. And as his father's hand is raised to slay his son, an angel of God who had marked all the faithfulness of Abraham on the way to Moriah, calls to him out of heaven, and says, "Abraham! Abraham! And he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me.

"And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt-offering in the stead of his son." [108]

Abraham has now fully and nobly borne the test, and by his faithfulness redeemed his lack of perfect trust in God, which lack led him to take Hagar as his wife. After the exhibition of Abraham's faith and confidence, God renews his promise to him. "And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou has done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies. And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice."

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Chapter 12—Isaac

[109] The Canaanites were idolaters, and the Lord had commanded that his people should not intermarry with them, lest they should be led into idolatry. Abraham was old, and he expected soon to die. Isaac was yet unmarried. Abraham was afraid of the corrupting influence surrounding Isaac, and was anxious to have a wife selected for him who would not lead him from God. He committed this matter to his faithful, experienced servant who ruled over all that he had. Abraham required his servant to make a solemn oath to him before the Lord, that he would not take a wife for Isaac of the Canaanites, but that he would go unto Abraham's kindred, who believed in the true God, and select a wife for Isaac. He charged him to beware, and not take Isaac to the country from whence he came, for they were nearly all affected with idolatry. If he could not find a wife for Isaac who would leave her kindred, and come where he was, then he should be clear of the oath which he had made.

[110] This important matter was not left with Isaac, for him to select for himself, independent of his father. Abraham tells his servant that God will send his angel before him to direct him in his choice. The servant, to whom this mission was entrusted, started on his long journey. As he entered the city, where Abraham's kindred dwelt, he prayed earnestly to God to direct him in his choice of a wife for Isaac. He asked that certain evidence might be given him, that he should not err in the matter. He rested by a well which was a place of the greatest gathering. Here he particularly noticed the engaging manners, and courteous conduct of Rebekah, and all the evidence he has asked of God he receives that Rebekah is the one whom God has been pleased to select to become Isaac's wife. She invites the servant to her father's house. He then relates to Rebekah's father, and her brother, the evidences he has received from the Lord, that Rebekah should become the wife of his master's son, Isaac. Abraham's servant then said to them, "And now if ye will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me; and if not, tell me;

that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left.” The father and son answered, “The thing proceedeth from the Lord. We cannot speak unto thee bad or good. Behold, Rebekah is before thee, take her, and go, and let her be thy master’s son’s wife, as the Lord hath spoken. And it came to pass, that when Abraham’s servant heard their words, he worshiped the Lord, bowing himself to the earth.”

After all had been arranged, the consent of the father and brother had been obtained, then Rebekah was consulted whether she would go with the servant of Abraham a great distance from her father’s family, to become the wife of Isaac. She believed from the circumstances that had taken place, that God’s hand had selected her to be Isaac’s wife, “and she said, I will go.”

Marriage contracts were then generally made by the parents, yet no compulsion was used to make them marry those they could not love. But the children had confidence in the judgment of their parents, and followed their counsel, and bestowed their affections upon those whom their God-fearing, experienced parents chose for them. It was considered a crime to follow a course contrary to this. [111]

What a contrast to the course now pursued by many children! Instead of showing reverence, and due honor for their parents, by consulting them, and having the advantages of their experienced judgment in choosing for them, they move hastily in the matter, and are controlled by impulse rather than by the judgment of their parents, and the fear of God. It is often the case that they contract marriage without even the knowledge of their parents. And in many instances their lives are embittered by hasty marriages, because the son-in-law, or the daughter-in-law, feel under no obligation to make their parents happy.

Young men and women sometimes manifest great independence upon the subject of marriage, as though the Lord had nothing to do with them, or they with the Lord, in that matter, and that it was purely a matter of their own, which neither God, nor their parents should in any wise control. They seem to think that the bestowal of their affections is a matter in which self alone should be consulted. Such make a serious mistake, and a few years of marriage experience generally teaches them that it is a miserable mistake. This is the great reason of so many unhappy marriages, in which there is so little true, generous love toward each other, and so little exercise of noble [112]

forbearance toward each other. These often behave in their own homes more like pettish children, than the dignified, affectionate husband and wife.

Isaac had been trained in the fear of God to a life of obedience. And when he was forty years old, he submitted to have his God-fearing, experienced father's servant choose for him. He believed that God would direct in regard to his obtaining a wife.

Children now from fifteen to twenty, generally consider themselves competent to make their own choice, without the consent of their parents. And they would look with astonishment, if it should be proposed to them to move in the fear of God and make the matter a subject of prayer! Isaac's case is left on record, as an example for children to imitate in after generations, especially those who profess to fear God.

[113] The course which Abraham pursued in the education of Isaac, which caused him to love a life of noble obedience, is recorded for the benefit of parents, and should lead them to command their households after them. They should instruct their children to yield to, and respect their authority. And they should feel that a responsibility rests upon them to guide the affections of their children, that they may be placed upon persons whom their judgment would teach them would be suitable companions for their sons and their daughters. It is a sad fact that Satan controls the affections of the young to a great extent. And some parents feel that the affections should not be guided or restrained. The course pursued by Abraham, is a rebuke to all such.

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Chapter 13—Jacob and Esau

God knows the end from the beginning. He knew before the birth of Jacob and Esau, just what characters they would both develop. He knew that Esau would not have a heart to obey him. He answered the troubled prayer of Rebekah, and informed her that she would have two children, and the elder should serve the younger. He presented the future history of her two sons before her, that they would be two nations, the one greater than the other, and the elder should serve the younger. The first-born was entitled to peculiar advantages, and special privileges, which belonged to no other members of the family.

Isaac loved Esau better than Jacob, because Esau provided him venison. He was pleased with his bold, courageous spirit manifested in hunting wild beasts. Jacob was the favorite son of his mother, because his disposition was mild, and better calculated to make his mother happy. Jacob had learned from his mother what God had taught her, that “the elder should serve the younger,” and his youthful reasoning led him to conclude that this promise could not be fulfilled, while Esau had the privileges which were conferred on the first-born. And when Esau came in from the field, faint with hunger, Jacob improved the opportunity to turn Esau’s necessity to his own advantage, and proposed to feed him with pottage, if he would renounce all claim to his birthright, and Esau sold his birthright to Jacob.

[114]

Esau took two idolatrous wives, which was a great grief to Isaac and Rebekah. Notwithstanding this, Isaac loved Esau better than Jacob. And when he thought that he was about to die, he requested Esau to prepare him meat that he might bless him before he died. Esau did not tell his father that he had sold his birthright to Jacob, and confirmed it with an oath. Rebekah heard the words of Isaac, and she remembered the words of the Lord, “The elder shall serve the younger,” and she knew that Esau had lightly regarded his birthright and sold it to Jacob. She persuaded Jacob to deceive his father, and

by fraud receive the blessing of his father, which she thought could not be obtained in any other way. Jacob was at first unwilling to practice this deception, but finally consented to his mother's plans.

[115] Rebekah was acquainted with Isaac's partiality for Esau, and was satisfied that reasoning would not change his purpose. Instead of trusting in God, the disposer of events, she manifested her lack of faith by persuading Jacob to deceive his father. Jacob's course in this was not approbated by God. Rebekah and Jacob should have waited for God to bring about his own purposes, in his own way, and in his own time, instead of trying to bring about the foretold events by the aid of deception. If Esau had received the blessing of his father, which was bestowed upon the first-born, his prosperity could have come from God alone; and he would have blessed him with prosperity; or brought upon him adversity, according to his course of action. If he should love and reverence God, like righteous Abel, he would be accepted, and blessed of God. If like the wicked Cain he had no respect for God, nor for his commandments, but followed his own corrupt course, he would not receive a blessing from God, but would be rejected of God as was Cain. If Jacob's course should be righteous; if he should love and fear God, he would be blessed of God, and the prospering hand of God would be with him, even if he did not obtain the blessings and privileges generally bestowed upon the first born.

[116] Rebekah repented in bitterness for the wrong counsel which she gave to Jacob, for it was the means of separating him from her forever. He was compelled to flee for his life from the wrath of Esau, and his mother never saw his face again. Isaac lived many years after he gave Jacob the blessing, and was convinced, by the course of Esau and Jacob, that the blessing rightly belonged to Jacob.

The circumstances of Esau's selling his birthright represents the unrighteous, who consider that the redemption purchased for them by Christ of little value, and sacrifice their heirship to Heaven for perishable treasures. Many are controlled by their appetite, and rather than to deny an unhealthy appetite, will sacrifice high and valuable considerations. If one must be yielded, the gratification of a depraved appetite, or the high and heavenly blessings which God promises only to the self-denying and God-fearing, the clamors of appetite, as in the case of Esau, will generally prevail, and for

self-gratification, God and Heaven will be virtually despised. Even professed Christians will use tea, coffee, snuff, tobacco and spirits, all of which benumb the finer sensibilities of the soul. If you tell them they cannot have Heaven, and these hurtful indulgences, and that they should deny their appetites, and cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh, and the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord, they are offended, look sorrowful, and conclude that if the way is so strait that they cannot indulge in their gross [117] appetites, they will not walk any longer in it.

Especially will the corrupt passions control the mind of those who value heaven of so little worth. Health will be sacrificed, the mental faculties enfeebled, and heaven will be sold for these pleasures, as Esau sold his birthright. Esau was a reckless person. He made a solemn oath that Jacob should have his birthright. This case is left on record as a warning to others. As Esau learned that Jacob had obtained the blessing which would have belonged to him, had he not rashly sold it, he was greatly distressed. He repented of his rash act, when it was too late to remedy the matter. Thus will it be with sinners in the day of God, who have bartered away their heirship to heaven for selfish gratifications, and hurtful lusts. They will then find no place for repentance, although they may seek it, like Esau, carefully and with tears.

Jacob was not happy in his marriage relation, although his wives were sisters. He formed the marriage contract with Laban for his daughter Rachel whom he loved. After he had served seven years for Rachel, Laban deceived him and gave him Leah. When Jacob realized the deception that had been practiced upon him, and that Leah had acted her part in deceiving him, he could not love Leah. Laban wished to retain the faithful services of Jacob a greater length of time, therefore deceived him by giving him Leah, instead of [118] Rachel. Jacob reprovved Laban for thus trifling with his affections, in giving him Leah, whom he had not loved. Laban entreated Jacob not to put away Leah, for this was considered a great disgrace, not only to the wife, but to the whole family. Jacob was placed in a most trying position, but he decided to still retain Leah, and also marry her sister. Leah was loved in a much less degree than Rachel. Laban was selfish in his dealings with Jacob. He only thought of advantaging himself by the faithful labors of Jacob. He would have left the artful

Laban long before, but he was afraid of encountering Esau. He heard the complaint of Laban's sons, saying, "Jacob hath taken away all that was our father's, and of that which was our father's hath he gotten all this glory. And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban and behold, it was not toward him as before."

Jacob was distressed. He knew not which way to turn. He carries his case to God, and intercedes for direction from him. The Lord mercifully answers his distressed prayer. "And the Lord said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred, and I will be with thee. And Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field unto his flock, and said unto them, I see your father's countenance, that it is not toward me as before; but the God of my father hath been with me. And ye know that with all my power I have [119] served your father. And your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times; but God suffered him not to hurt me." Jacob related to them the dream given him of God to leave Laban and go unto his kindred. Rachel and Leah expressed their dissatisfaction of their father's proceedings. As Jacob rehearsed his wrongs to them, and proposed to leave Laban, Rachel and Leah said to Jacob, "Is there yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house? Are we not counted of him strangers? for he hath sold us and hath quite devoured also our money. For all the riches which God hath taken from our father, that is ours, and our children's; now then whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do."

It was customary anciently for the bridegroom to pay a sum of money according to his circumstances, to the father of his wife. If he had no money, or anything of value, his labor was accepted for a stated length of time before he could obtain the daughter as his wife. This custom was considered a safeguard to the marriage contract. Fathers did not consider it safe to trust the happiness of their daughters to men who had not made sufficient provisions to take care of a family. If they had not ability to manage business, to acquire cattle or lands, they were afraid that their lives would be worthless. But that the truly worthy should not become discouraged, a provision was made to test the worth of those who had nothing of [120] value to pay for a wife. They were permitted to labor for the father whose daughter they loved. Their labors were engaged for a certain length of time, regulated by the value of the dowry required for their

daughter. In doing this, marriages were not hasty, and there was opportunity to test the depth of the affections of the suitor. If he was faithful in his services, and was otherwise considered worthy, the daughter was given him as his wife. And generally all the dowry the father had received was given to his daughter at her marriage.

What a contrast to the course now pursued by parents and children! There are many unhappy marriages because of so much haste. Two unite their interest at the marriage altar, by most solemn vows before God, without previously weighing the matter, and devoting time to sober reflection and earnest prayer. Many move from impulse. They have no thorough acquaintance with the dispositions of each other. They do not realize that the happiness of their whole life is at stake. If they move wrong in this matter, and their marriage life proves unhappy, it cannot be taken back. If they find they are not calculated to make each other happy, they must endure it the best they can. In some instances the husband proves to be too indolent to provide for a family, and his wife and children suffer. If the ability of such had been proved, as was the custom anciently before marriage, much misery would have been saved. In the case of Rachel and Leah, Laban selfishly kept the dowry which should have been given to them. They have reference to this when they say, "He hath sold us, and hath quite devoured also our money."

[121]

In the absence of Laban, Jacob took his family, and all that he had, and left Laban. After he had pursued his journey three days Laban learned that he had left him, and he was very angry. And he pursued after him, determined to bring him back by force. But the Lord had pity upon Jacob, and as Laban was about to overtake him, gave him a dream not to speak good or bad to Jacob. That is, he should not force him to return, or urge him by flattering inducements. When Laban met Jacob, he inquired why he had stolen away unawares, and carried away his daughters as captives taken with the sword. Laban tells him, "It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt, but the God of your fathers spake unto me yesternight, saying, Take thou heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad." Jacob then rehearsed to Laban the ungenerous course he had pursued toward him, that he had only studied his own advantage. He appeals to Laban as to the uprightness of his conduct while with him, and says, "That which was torn of beasts I brought

[122] not unto thee; I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night. Thus I was, in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep departed from mine eyes.”

A shepherd’s life was one of diligence. He was obliged to watch his flocks day and night. Wild beasts were common, and often bold, and would do great injury to flocks of sheep and cattle that were not guarded by a faithful shepherd. Although Jacob had a number of servants to aid him in tending the flocks owned by himself and Laban, yet the responsibility of the whole matter rested upon him. And in some seasons of the year he was obliged to be with the flocks himself, day and night, to protect them in the driest season of the year, that they should not perish with thirst; and in the coldest part of the season, to save them from becoming chilled with the heavy night frosts. Their flocks were also in danger of being stolen by unprincipled shepherds, who wished to enrich themselves by stealing their neighbor’s cattle.

A shepherd’s life was one of constant care. He was not qualified for a shepherd unless he was merciful, and possessed courage and perseverance. Jacob was chief shepherd, and had shepherds under him who were termed servants. The chief shepherd called these servants, to whom he intrusted the care of the flock, to a strict account if they were not found in a flourishing condition. If there were any of the cattle missing, the chief shepherd suffered the loss.

[123] The relation of Christ to his people is compared to a shepherd. He saw, after the fall, his sheep in a pitiable condition, exposed to sure destruction. He left the honors and glory of his Father’s house to become a shepherd, to save the miserable, wandering sheep who were ready to perish. His winning voice was heard calling them to his fold, a safe and sure retreat from the hand of robbers; also a shelter from the scorching heat, and a protection from the chilling blasts. His care was continually exercised for the good of his sheep. He strengthened the weak, nourished the suffering, and gathered the lambs of the flock in his arms, and carried them in his bosom. His sheep love him. He goeth before his sheep, and they hear his voice, and follow him. “And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers.” Christ says, “I am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd giveth his life for the

sheep. But he that is a hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth; and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.”

Christ is the chief Shepherd. He has intrusted the care of his flock to under shepherds. He requires these shepherds to have the same interest for his sheep which he has ever manifested, and to ever feel the responsibility of the charge he has intrusted to them. Ministers, who are called of God to labor in word and doctrine, are Christ’s shepherds. He has appointed them under himself to oversee and tend his flock. He has solemnly commanded these to be faithful shepherds, to feed the flock with diligence, to follow his example, to strengthen the weak, nourish the fainting, and to shield them from devouring beasts. He points them to his example of love for his sheep. To secure their deliverance, he laid down his life for them. If they imitate his self-denying example, the flock will prosper under their care. They will manifest a deeper interest than Jacob, who was a faithful shepherd over the sheep and cattle of Laban. They will be constantly laboring for the welfare of the flock. They will not be merely hirelings, of whom Jesus speaks, who possess no particular interest in the sheep, who in time of danger, or trial, flee and leave the sheep. A shepherd who labors merely for the wages he obtains, cares only for himself, and is continually studying his own interest, and ease, instead of the welfare of his flock.

[124]

Says Paul, “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. 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.”

[125]

All those professing to be shepherds, who feel that to minister in word and doctrine, and bear the burdens, and have the care which every faithful shepherd should have is a disagreeable task, are reproved by faithful Paul, “Not by constraint, but willingly, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.” All such unfaithful shepherds, the

chief Shepherd would willingly release. The church of God is purchased with the blood of Christ, and every shepherd should realize that the sheep under their care cost a priceless sum. They should be diligent in their labor, and persevering in their efforts to keep the flock in a healthy, flourishing condition. They should consider the sheep intrusted to their care of the highest value, and realize that they will be called to render a strict account of their ministry. And if they are found faithful they will receive a rich reward. “And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.”

[126] Jacob says, “Thus have I been twenty years in thy house. I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle, and thou hast changed my wages ten times. Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac had been with me, surely thou hadst sent me away now empty. God hath seen mine affliction, and the labor of my hands, and rebuked thee yesternight.”

Laban then assures Jacob that he has an interest for his daughters and their children, that he could not harm them. He proposes to make a covenant between them. And Laban said, “Now therefore come thou, let us make a covenant, I and thou; and let it be for a witness between me and thee. And Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a pillar. And Jacob said unto his brethren, gather stones; and they took stones, and made an heap, and they did eat there upon the heap.”

[127] Laban understood the wrong of polygamy, although it was alone through his artifice that Jacob had taken two wives. He well knew that it was the jealousy of Leah and Rachel that led them to give their maids to Jacob, which confused the family relation, and increased the unhappiness of his daughters. And now as his daughters are journeying at a great distance from him, and their interest is to be entirely separate from his own, he would guard as far as possible their happiness. Laban would not have Jacob bring still greater unhappiness upon himself and upon Leah and Rachel, by taking other wives. And Laban said “The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another. If thou shalt afflict my daughters, or if thou shalt take other wives besides my daughters; no man is with us; see God is witness betwixt me and thee.”

Jacob made a solemn covenant before the Lord that he would not take other wives. “And Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, and behold this pillar, which I have cast betwixt me and thee; this heap be witness, and this pillar be witness, that I will not pass over this heap to thee, and that thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar unto me, for harm. The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge betwixt us. And Jacob sware by the fear of his father Isaac.”

As Jacob went on his way, the angels of God met him. And when he saw them, he said, “This is God’s host.” He saw the angels of God, in a dream, encamping around about him. Jacob sent a humble conciliatory message to his brother Esau. “And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him. 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.

“And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee. I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.”

[128]

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Chapter 14—Jacob and the Angel

Jacob's wrong, in receiving his brother's blessing by fraud, is again brought forcibly before him, and he is afraid that God will permit Esau to take his life. In his distress he prayed to God all night. An angel was represented to me as standing before Jacob, presenting his wrong before him in its true character. As the angel turns to leave him, Jacob lays hold of him, and will not let him go. He makes supplications with tears. He pleads that he has deeply repented of his sins, and the wrongs against his brother, which have been the means of separating him from his father's house for twenty years. He ventures to plead the promises of God, and the tokens of his favor to him from time to time, in his absence from his father's house. All night Jacob wrestled with the angel, making supplication for a blessing. The angel seemed to be resisting his prayer, by continually calling his sins to his remembrance, at the same time endeavoring to break away from him. Jacob was determined to hold the angel, not only by physical strength, but by the power of living faith. In his distress Jacob referred to the repentance of his soul, the deep humility he had felt for his wrongs. The angel regarded his prayer with seeming indifference, continually making efforts to release himself from the grasp of Jacob. He might have exercised his supernatural power and forced himself from Jacob's grasp, but he did not choose to do this. But when he saw that he prevailed not against Jacob, to convince him of his supernatural power, he touched his thigh, which was immediately out of joint. But Jacob would not give up his earnest efforts for bodily pain. His object was to obtain a blessing, and pain of body was not sufficient to divert his mind from his object. His determination was stronger in the last moments of the conflict than at the beginning. His faith grew more earnest and persevering, until the very last, even till the breaking of the day. He would not let go his hold of the angel until he blessed him. "And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." The angel then inquired, What is thy

name? “And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called [130]
no more Jacob, but Israel, for as a prince hast thou power with God,
and with men, and hast prevailed.”

Jacob’s persevering faith prevailed. He held fast the angel until he obtained the blessing he desired, and the assurance of the pardon of his sins. His name was then changed from Jacob, the supplanter, to Israel, which signified, a prince of God. “And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel; for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.” It was Christ that was with Jacob through that night, with whom he wrestled, and whom he perseveringly held until he blessed him.

The Lord heard the supplications of Jacob, and changed the purposes of Esau’s heart. He did not sanction any wrong course which Jacob pursued. His life was one of doubt, perplexity and remorse, because of his sin, until his earnest wrestling with the angel, and the evidence he there obtained that God had pardoned his sins.

“Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed. He wept, and made supplication unto him. He found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us, even the Lord God of hosts. The Lord is his memorial.”

Esau was marching against Jacob with an army for the purpose [131]
of killing his brother. But while Jacob was wrestling with the angel that night, another angel was sent to move upon the heart of Esau in his sleeping hours. In his dream he saw Jacob an exile from his father’s house for twenty years, because he was afraid of his life. And he marked his sorrow to find his mother dead. He saw in his dream Jacob’s humility, and angels of God around about him. He dreamed that when they met, he had no mind to harm him. When Esau awoke, he related to his four hundred men his dream, and told them that they must not injure Jacob, for the God of his father was with him. And when they should meet Jacob, not one of them should do him harm. “And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked and behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men.” “And he passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near his brother. And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced

him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him, and they wept.” Jacob entreated Esau to accept a peace-offering, which Esau declined, but Jacob urged him. “Take, I pray thee, my blessing that is brought to thee; because God hath dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough. And he urged him, and he took it.”

[132] Jacob and Esau represent two classes; Jacob the righteous, and Esau the wicked. Jacob’s distress when he learned that Esau was marching against him with four hundred men, represents the trouble of the righteous as the decree goes forth to put them to death, just before the coming of the Lord. As the wicked gather about them they will be filled with anguish, for like Jacob they can see no escape for their lives. The angel placed himself before Jacob, and he took hold of the angel and held him, and wrestled with him all night. So also will the righteous, in their time of trouble and anguish, wrestle in prayer with God, as Jacob wrestled with the angel. Jacob in his distress prayed all night for deliverance from the hand of Esau. The righteous in their mental anguish will cry to God day and night for deliverance from the hand of the wicked who surround them.

Jacob confessed his unworthiness. “I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant.” The righteous, in their distress, will have a deep sense of their unworthiness, and with many tears will acknowledge their utter unworthiness, and like Jacob will plead the promises of God through Christ, made to just such dependent, helpless, repenting sinners.

[133] Jacob took firm hold of the angel in his distress, and would not let him go. As he made supplication with tears, the angel reminded him of his past wrongs, and endeavored to escape from Jacob, to test him and prove him. So will the righteous, in the day of their anguish, be tested, proved, and tried, to manifest their strength of faith, their perseverance and unshaken confidence in the power of God to deliver them.

Jacob would not be turned away. He knew that God was merciful, and he appealed to his mercy. He pointed back to his past sorrow and repentance of his wrongs, and urged his petition for deliverance from the hand of Esau. Thus his importuning continued all night. As he reviewed his past wrongs, he was driven almost to despair. But he knew that he must have help from God or perish. He held

fast the angel, and urged his petition with agonizing, earnest cries, until he prevailed. Thus will it be with the righteous. As they review the events of their past life, their hopes will almost sink. But as they realize that it is a case of life or death, they will earnestly cry unto God, and appeal to him in regard to their past sorrow and humble repentance of their many sins, and then will refer to his promise, "Let him take hold of my strength, and make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me." Thus will their earnest petitions be offered to God day and night.

God would not have heard the prayer of Jacob, and mercifully saved his life, if he had not previously repented to his wrongs in obtaining the blessing by fraud.

The righteous, like Jacob, will manifest unyielding faith, and earnest determination, which will take no denial. They will feel their unworthiness, but will have no concealed wrongs to reveal. If they had sins, unconfessed and unrepented of, to appear then before them, while tortured with fear and anguish, with a lively sense of all their unworthiness, they would be overwhelmed. Despair would cut off their earnest faith, and they could not have confidence to plead with God, thus earnestly for deliverance, and their precious moments would be spent in confessing hidden sins, and bewailing their hopeless condition. [134]

Those professed believers who come up to the time of trouble unprepared, will, in their despair, confess their sins before all in words of burning anguish, while the wicked exult over their distress. The case of all such is hopeless. When Christ stands up, and leaves the most holy place, then the time of trouble commences, and the case of every soul is decided, and there will be no atoning blood to cleanse from sin and pollution. As Jesus leaves the most holy, he speaks in tones of decision and kingly authority, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."

Those who have delayed a preparation for the day of God cannot obtain it in the time of trouble, or at any future period. The righteous will not cease their earnest agonizing cries for deliverance. They cannot bring to mind any particular sins, but in their whole life [135]

they can see but little good. Their sins had gone beforehand to judgment, and pardon had been written. Their sins had been borne away into the land of forgetfulness, and they could not bring them to remembrance. Certain destruction threatens them, and like Jacob they will not suffer their faith to grow weak, because their prayers are not immediately answered. Though suffering the pangs of hunger, they will not cease their intercessions. They lay hold of the strength of God as Jacob laid hold of the angel, and the language of their soul is, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." The saints at length prevail like Jacob, and are gloriously delivered by the voice of God.

That season of distress and anguish will require an effort of earnestness and determined faith that can endure delay and hunger, and will not fail under weakness, though severely tried. The period of probation is the time granted to all to prepare for the day of God. If any neglect the preparation, and heed not the faithful warnings given, they will be without excuse. Jacob's earnest, persevering wrestling with the angel should be an example for Christians. Jacob prevailed, because he was persevering and determined. All who [136] desire the blessing of God, as did Jacob, and will lay hold of the promises, as he did, and be as earnest and persevering as he was, will succeed, as he succeeded. Why there is so little exercise of true faith, and so little of the weight of truth resting upon many professed believers is because they are indolent, in spiritual things. They are unwilling to make exertions, to deny self, to agonize before God, to pray long and earnestly for the blessing, and therefore they do not obtain it. That faith which will live through the time of trouble must be in daily exercise now. Those who do not make strong efforts now to exercise persevering faith will be wholly unprepared to exercise that faith which will enable them to stand in the day of trouble.

The sons of Jacob were not all righteous. They were affected in some degree with idolatry. God did not sanction the cruel, revengeful conduct of Jacob's sons to the Shechemites. Jacob was ignorant of their purpose, until their work of cruelty was accomplished. He reproved his sons, and told them that they had troubled him, to make him despised among the inhabitants of the land. And because of this their wrong, the surrounding nations would manifest their indignation by destroying him and his house. In his distress Jacob again calls upon God. "And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to

Beth-el, and dwell there, and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother. Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments, and let us arise, and go up to Beth-el, and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went. And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all their ear-rings which were in their ears, and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem.” And the family of Jacob never found them again. “And they journeyed, and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob.”

[137]

Jacob was humbled, and required his family to humble themselves, and to lay off all their ornaments, for he was to make an atonement for their sins, by offering a sacrifice unto God, that he might be entreated for them, and not leave them to be destroyed by other nations. God accepted the efforts of Jacob to remove the wrong from his family, and appeared unto him, and blessed him, and renewed the promise made to him, because his fear was before him. “And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked with him, even a pillar of stone.”

[138]

Chapter 15—Joseph and his Brethren

Joseph listened to his father's instructions, and feared the Lord. He was more obedient to his father's righteous teachings than any of his brethren. He treasured his instructions, and with integrity of heart, loved to obey God. He was grieved at the wrong conduct of some of his brethren, and meekly entreated them to pursue a righteous course, and leave off their wicked acts. This only embittered them against him. His hatred of sin was such that he could not endure to see his brethren sinning against God. He laid the matter before his father, hoping that his authority might reform them. This exposure of their wrongs enraged his brethren against him. They had observed their father's strong love for Joseph, and were envious at him. Their envy grew into hatred, and finally to murder.

The angel of God instructed Joseph in dreams which he innocently related to his brethren. "For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf. And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words.

[139]

"And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold I have dreamed a dream more; and behold, the sun, and the moon, and the eleven stars made obeisance to me. And he told it to his father, and to his brethren, and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and they brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth? And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying."

Jacob appeared to regard the dreams of his son with indifference. But he had been often instructed by the Lord in dreams himself, and he believed that the Lord was teaching Joseph in the same manner. He reprov'd Joseph that his true feelings might not be discovered by his envious brothers.

Jacob's sons were shepherds, and fed their flocks where they could find the best pastures. In traveling from place to place with their cattle, they often wandered quite a distance from their father's house, so that they did not see their father for several months at a time. In his anxiety for them, he sent Joseph to see if they were all well. With the true interest of a brother, Joseph searched for his brethren, where his father supposed he would find them, but they were not there. A certain man found him wandering in the field in search of his brethren, and directed him to Dothan. This was a long journey for Joseph. But he cheerfully performed it, because he loved his brethren, and also wished to relieve the anxiety of his father. But he was illy repaid for his love to them, and obedience to his father.

[140]

“And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him. And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh. Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him; and we shall see what will become of his dreams. And Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands and said, Let us not kill him. And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him, that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again.”

Joseph, unsuspecting of what was to befall him, approached his brethren with gladness of heart to greet them after his long, wearisome journey. His brothers rudely repulsed him. He told them his errand, but they answered him not. Joseph was alarmed at their angry looks. Fear took the place of joy, and he instinctively shrank with dread from their presence. They then took hold of him violently. They taunted him with the admonitions he had given them in the past, accused him of relating his dreams to exalt himself above them in the mind of their father, that he might love him more than themselves. They accused him of hypocrisy. As they gave utterance to their envious feelings, Satan controlled their minds, and they had no sense of pity, and no feelings of love for their brother. They stripped him of his coat of many colors that he wore, which was a token of his father's love, and which had excited their envious feelings.

[141]

Joseph was weary and hungry, yet they gave him neither rest nor food. “And they took him, and cast him into a pit; and the pit was empty, there was no water in it.” As Judah thought of Joseph dying in the pit, suffering a lingering death by starvation, he was troubled. For a short time, he with others of his brethren, seemed to possess a satanic frenzy. But after they had begun to accomplish their wicked purposes to the helpless, innocent Joseph, some of them were ill at ease. They did not feel that satisfaction they thought they should have to see Joseph perish. Judah was the first one to express his feelings. “He said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh; and his brethren were content. Then there passed by Midianites, merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver, and they brought Joseph into Egypt.”

[142] The thought of being sold as a slave was more dreadful to Joseph than to die. He manifested the deepest anguish, and appealed first to one of his brethren, then to another, for compassion. Some of their hearts were moved with pity, but through fear of derision from the rest, kept silent. They all thought that they had gone too far to repent of their acts, for Joseph might expose them to their father, and he would be exceedingly angry with them for their treatment of his much-loved Joseph. They steeled their hearts against his distress, and would not listen to his entreaties for his father’s sake to let him go, but sold him as a slave.

Reuben went away from his brethren that they might not learn his purpose in regard to Joseph. He advised them to put him in the pit, and designed to return and take him to his father. “And Reuben returned unto the pit, and behold, Joseph was not in the pit, and he rent his clothes. And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child is not; and I, whither shall I go?” His brethren told him that they had sold Joseph.

“And they took Joseph’s coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood, and they sent the coat of many colors, and they brought it to their father, and said, This have we found; know now whether it be thy son’s coat or no.” They caused their father intense anguish, as he pictured to himself the violent death

his son must have suffered by being torn in pieces by wild beasts. [143]
His sons had not imagined that their father's grief would be so deep. All his children tried to comfort him, but he refused to refrain from his grief. He declared to his children that he would go down into his grave mourning.

Joseph's brethren flattered themselves that they were taking a sure course to prevent the fulfillment of Joseph's strange dreams. But the Lord controlled events, and caused the cruel course of Joseph's brethren to bring about the fulfillment of the dreams which they were laboring to frustrate.

Joseph was greatly afflicted to be separated from his father, and his bitterest sorrow was in reflecting upon his father's grief. But God did not leave Joseph to go into Egypt alone. Angels prepared the way for his reception. Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, bought him of the Ishmaelites. And the Lord was with Joseph, and he prospered him, and gave him favor with his master, so that all that he possessed he intrusted to Joseph's care. "And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat." It was considered an abomination for a Hebrew to prepare food for an Egyptian.

When Joseph was tempted to deviate from the path of right, to transgress the law of God, and prove untrue to his master, he firmly resisted, and gave evidence of the elevating power of the fear of God in his answer to his master's wife. After speaking of the great confidence of his master in him, by intrusting all that he had to him, [144]
he exclaims, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God." He would not be persuaded to deviate from the path of righteousness, and trample upon God's law, by any inducements, or threats. And when he was accused, and a base crime was falsely laid to his charge, he did not sink in despair. In the consciousness of innocence and right, he still trusted in God. And God, who had hitherto supported him, did not forsake him. He was bound with fetters, and kept in a gloomy prison. Yet God turned even this misfortune into a blessing. He gave him favor with the keepers of the prison, and to Joseph was soon committed the charge of all the prisoners. Here is an example to all generations who should live upon the earth. Although they may be exposed to temptations, yet they should ever realize that there is a defense at hand, and it will

be their own fault if they are not preserved. God will be a present help, and his Spirit a shield. Although surrounded with the severest temptations, there is a source of strength to which they can apply and resist them. How fierce was the assault upon Joseph's morals. It came from one of influence, the most likely to lead astray. Yet how promptly and firmly was it resisted. He suffered for his virtue and integrity, for she, who would lead him astray, revenged herself upon [145] the virtue she could not subvert, and by her influence caused him to be cast into prison, by charging him with a foul wrong. Here Joseph suffered because he would not yield his integrity. He had placed his reputation and interest in the hands of God. And although he was suffered to be afflicted for a time, to prepare him to fill an important position, yet God safely guarded that reputation that was blackened by a wicked accuser, and afterward, in his own good time, caused it to shine. God made even the prison the way to his elevation. Virtue will in time bring its own reward. The shield which covered Joseph's heart was the fear of God, which caused him to be faithful and just to his master, and true to God. He despised that ingratitude which would lead him to abuse his master's confidence, although his master might never learn the fact. The grace of God he called to his aid, and then fought with the tempter. He nobly says, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God." He came off conqueror.

Amidst the snares to which all are exposed, they need strong and trustworthy defenses on which to rely. Many in this corrupt age have so small a supply of the grace of God, that in many instances their defense is broken down by the first assault, and fierce temptations take them captives. The shield of grace can preserve all unconquered [146] by the temptations of the enemy, though surrounded with the most corrupting influences. By firm principle, and unwavering trust in God, their virtue and nobleness of character can shine, and, although surrounded with evil, no taint need be left upon their virtue and integrity. And if like Joseph they suffer calumny and false accusations, Providence will overrule all the enemy's devices for good, and God will in his own time exalt as much higher, as for a while they were debased by wicked revenge.

The part which Joseph acted in connection with the scenes of the gloomy prison, was that which raised him finally to prosperity and honor. God designed that he should obtain an experience by

temptations, adversity, and hardships, to prepare him to fill an exalted position.

While he was confined in prison, Pharaoh became offended with two of his officers, the chief baker and the chief butler, and they were put in prison where Joseph was bound. "And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them, and they continued a season in ward." Joseph made his life useful even while in prison. His exemplary conduct, humble deportment, and faithfulness, obtained for him the confidence of all in the prison, and those who were connected with it. He did not spend his time in mourning over the injustice of his accusers, which had deprived him of his liberty. One morning as Joseph brought food to the king's officers, he observed that they were looking very sad. He kindly inquired, "Wherefore look ye so sadly today? And they said unto him, We have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it. And Joseph said unto them, Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me them, I pray you" Then the butler related to Joseph his dream, which he interpreted, that the butler would be restored to the king's favor, and deliver Pharaoh's cup into his hand as he had formerly done. The butler was satisfied with the interpretation, and his mind was at once relieved. [147]

Joseph told the chief butler that in three days he would be no more a prisoner. He felt very grateful to Joseph because of the interest he had manifested for him, and the kind treatment he had received at his hands, and, above all, for helping him when in great distress of mind, by interpreting his dream. Then Joseph, in a very touching manner, alluded to his captivity, and entreated him, "But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house; for indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews, and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon. When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good," he took courage and made known his dream. As soon as he related his dream, Joseph looked sad. He understood its terrible meaning. Joseph possessed a kind, sympathizing heart, yet his high sense of duty led him to give the truthful, yet sad, interpretation to the chief baker's dream. He told him that the three baskets upon his head meant three days. And that, as in his dream, the birds ate [148]

the baked meats out of the upper basket, so they would eat his flesh hung upon a tree.

“And it came to pass the third day, which was Pharaoh’s birthday, that he made a feast unto all his servants; and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants. And he restored the chief butler unto his butlership again, and he gave the cup into Pharaoh’s hand; but he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them. Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgat him.” The butler was guilty of the sin of ingratitude. After he had obtained relief from his anxiety, by the cheering interpretation of Joseph, he thought that he should, if brought again into the king’s favor, certainly remember the captive Joseph, and speak in his favor to the king. He had seen the interpretation of the dream exactly fulfilled, yet in his prosperity he forgot Joseph in his affliction and confinement. Ingratitude is regarded by the Lord as among the most aggravating sins. And although abhorred by God and man, yet it is of daily occurrence.

[149] Two years longer Joseph remained in his gloomy prison. The Lord gave Pharaoh remarkable dreams. In the morning the king was troubled because he could not understand them. He called for the magicians of Egypt, and the wise men. The king thought that they would soon help him to understand these dreams, for they had a reputation of solving difficulties. The king related his dream to them, but was greatly disappointed to find that with all their magic and boasted wisdom, they could not explain them. The perplexity and distress of the king increased. As the chief butler saw his distress, all at once Joseph came into his mind, and at the same time a conviction of his forgetfulness and ingratitude, “Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day.” He then related to the king the dreams which he and the chief baker had, which troubled them as the dreams which now troubled the king, and said, “And there was there with us a young man, an Hebrew servant to the captain of the guard, and we told him, and he interpreted to us our dreams, to each man according to his dream he did interpret. And it came to pass, as he interpreted to us, so it was. Me he restored unto mine office, and him he hanged.”

It was humiliating to Pharaoh to turn away from the magicians and wise men of his kingdom to a Hebrew servant. But his learned

and wise men failed him, and he now will condescend to accept the humble services of a slave if his troubled mind can obtain relief.

“Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon; and he shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it; and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it. And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me; God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.” [150]

Joseph’s answer to the king shows his strong faith and humble trust in God. He modestly disclaims all honor of possessing in himself superior wisdom to interpret. He tells the king that his knowledge is not greater than those whom he has consulted. “It is not in me.” God alone can explain these mysteries. “And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, In my dream, behold, I stood upon the bank of the river, and behold, there came up out of the river seven kine, fat-fleshed and well favored; and they fed in a meadow; and, behold, seven other kine came up after them, poor, and very ill-favored and lean-fleshed, such as I never saw in all the land of Egypt for badness. And the lean and the ill-favored kine did eat up the first seven fat kine, and when they had eaten them up, it could not be known that they had eaten them; but they were still ill-favored, as at the beginning. So I awoke.

“And I saw in my dream, and behold, seven ears came up in one stalk, full and good; and behold, seven ears, withered, thin, and blasted with the east wind, sprung up after them; and the thin ears devoured the seven good ears: and I told this unto the magicians; but there was none that could declare it to me.” [151]

“And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one. God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do. The seven good kine are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years; the dream is one. And the seven thin and ill-favored kine that came up after them are seven years; and the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind shall be seven years of famine.”

Joseph told the king that there would be seven years of great plenty. Every thing would grow in great abundance. Fields and gardens would yield more plentifully than formerly. Fruits and grain would yield abundantly. And these seven years of abundance were

to be followed by seven years of famine. The years of plenty would be given that he might prepare for the coming years of famine. “And the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of that famine following, for it shall be very grievous. And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice, it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass. Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt.”

[152] The king believed all that Joseph said. He believed that God was with him, and was impressed with the fact that he was the most suitable man to be placed in authority at the head of affairs. He did not despise him because he was a Hebrew slave. He saw that he possessed an excellent spirit. “And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is? And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art. Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled, only in the throne will I be greater than thou.”

Although Joseph was exalted as a ruler over all the land, yet he did not forget God. He knew that he was a stranger in a strange land, separated from his father and his brethren, which often caused him sadness, but he firmly believed that God’s hand had overruled his course, to place him in an important position. And depending on God continually, he performed all the duties of his office, as ruler over the land of Egypt with faithfulness. “And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls. And he gathered up all the food of the seven years which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities, the food of the field which was round about every city, laid he up in the same. And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering, for it was without number.”

[153] Joseph traveled throughout all the land of Egypt, giving command to build immense store-houses, and using his clear head and excellent judgment to aid in the preparations to secure food, necessary for the long years of famine. At length the seven years of plenteousness in the land of Egypt ended. “And the seven years of dearth began to come, according as Joseph had said, and the dearth was in all lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. And

when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. And Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you do. And the famine was over all the face of the earth, and Joseph opened all the store-houses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt.”

The famine was severe in the land of Canaan. Jacob and his sons were troubled. Their supply of food was nearly exhausted, and they looked forward to the future with perplexity. They talked despondingly to one another in regard to being able to supply their families with food. Want and starvation stared them in the face. At length Jacob heard of the wonderful provisions which the king of Egypt had made; that he was instructed of God in a dream seven years before the famine to lay up large supplies for the seven years of famine which were to follow, and that all the countries journeyed to Egypt to buy corn. He said unto his sons, “Why do ye look one upon another? And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt. Get you down thither, and buy for us from thence, that we may live, and not die. And Joseph’s ten brethren went down to buy corn in Egypt. But Benjamin, Joseph’s brother, Jacob sent not with his brethren, for he said, Lest peradventure mischief befall him.”

[154]

Jacob’s sons came with the crowd of buyers to purchase corn of Joseph, and they “bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth.” And Joseph knew his brethren, but he appeared not to know them, and spake roughly unto them. “And he said unto them, Whence come ye? And they said, From the land of Canaan, to buy food. And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them, and said unto them, Ye are spies. To see the nakedness of the land ye are come.”

They assured Joseph that their only errand into Egypt was to buy food. Joseph again charges them with being spies. He wished to learn if they possessed the same haughty spirit they had when he was with them, and he was anxious to draw from them some information in regard to his father and Benjamin. They feel humbled in their adversity, and manifest grief, rather than anger, at the suspicions of Joseph. They assure him that they are no spies, but the sons of one man; that they are twelve brethren; that the youngest is then with their father, and one is not. His father and Benjamin are the very ones Joseph wishes to learn in regard to. He professes to doubt the

[155]

truthfulness of their story, and tells them he will prove them, and that they shall not go forth from Egypt until their youngest brother come hither. He proposes to keep them in confinement until one shall go and bring their brother, to prove their words, whether there was any truth in them. If they would not consent to this, he would regard them as spies.

The sons of Jacob felt unwilling to consent to this arrangement. It would require some time for one to go to their father, to get Benjamin, and their families would suffer for food. And then again, who among them would undertake the journey alone, leaving their brethren in a prison. How could that one meet his father? They saw his distress at the supposed death of Joseph, and he would feel that he was deprived of all his sons. As they conversed with one another in this manner, Joseph heard them. They said, further, It may be we shall lose our lives, or be made slaves. And if one go back to our father for Benjamin, and bring him here, he may be made a slave also, and our father will surely die. They decided to all remain, and suffer together, rather than to bring greater sorrow upon their father by the loss of his much-loved Benjamin.

[156] The three days of confinement were days of bitter sorrow with Jacob's sons. They reflected upon their past wrong course, especially their cruelty to Joseph. They knew if they were convicted of being spies, and they could not bring evidence to clear themselves, they would all have to die, or become slaves. They doubted whether any effort any one of them might make would cause their father to consent to have Benjamin go from him, after the cruel death, as he thought, Joseph had suffered. They sold Joseph as a slave, and they were fearful that God designed to punish them by suffering them to become slaves. Joseph considers that his father and the families of his brethren, may be suffering for food, and he is convinced that his brethren have repented of their cruel treatment of him, and that they would in no case treat Benjamin as they had treated him.

Joseph makes another proposition to his brethren. And he said unto them the third day, "This do, and live; for I fear God. If ye be true men, let one of your brethren be bound in the house of your prison. Go ye, carry corn for the famine of your houses. But bring your youngest brother unto me; so shall your words be verified, and ye shall not die." They agree to accept this proposition of Joseph; but

express to one another little hope that their father will let Benjamin return with them. They accuse themselves, and one another, in regard to their treatment of Joseph. “And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us. And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore behold also his blood is required. And they knew not that Joseph understood them; for he spake unto them by an interpreter. And he turned himself about from them, and wept, and returned to them again, and communed with them, and took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes.” [157]

Joseph selected Simeon to be bound, because he was the instigator, and principal actor in the cruelty of his brethren toward him. He then directed that his brethren should be liberally supplied with provision, and that every man’s money should be placed in his sack. They pursued their homeward journey in sadness. As one of them opened his sack to feed his beast with provender, he found his money, just as he had brought it to Joseph. He told his brethren, and they considered that a new evil would arise, and they were afraid, and said one to another, What is this that God hath done unto us? Shall we consider this as a token of good from the Lord, or has he suffered it to occur to punish us for our sins, and plunge us still deeper in affliction? They acknowledge that God has seen their sins, and has marked their wrongs, and that he is now visiting them for their transgressions.

When they came to their father Jacob they related to him all that had transpired, and said, “The man who is the Lord of the land, spake roughly to us, and took us for spies of the country. And we said unto him, We are true men; we are no spies. We be twelve brethren, sons of our father; one is not, and the youngest is this day with our father in the land of Canaan.” They told their father that he would not believe their word, and said, If ye are not spies, leave one of your brethren with me, and take food for your households; and when ye come again bring your youngest brother, and then I will release you your brother that is bound, and ye shall be at liberty to trade in the land. [158]

As they emptied their sacks, every man's money was found in his sack, and they were all afraid. Jacob was distressed, and said unto them, "Ye have bereaved of my children; Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away. All these things are against me." Reuben assured his father that if he would intrust Benjamin to his care, he would surely bring him again to his father; if not, he might slay his two sons. This rash speech did not relieve the mind of Jacob. He said, "My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he is left alone. If mischief befall him by the way in the which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave."

[159] Jacob's affections cling to Benjamin with all the strength of a mother's love. He shows how deeply he has felt the loss of Joseph. But want presses upon Jacob and his children, and their households are calling for food. Jacob requests his sons to go again into Egypt and buy food. Judah says to his father that he cannot go down unless Benjamin is with them; for "the man did solemnly protest unto us, saying, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you." Judah assures his father that he will be surety for his brother, that if he would send him with them they would go, and if he did not bring Benjamin back, he would bear the blame of it forever.

He tells his father that while they had been lingering, because of his unwillingness to send Benjamin, they could have journeyed to Egypt and returned again. Jacob feels compelled to permit his son Benjamin to go with his brethren. He also sent a present to the ruler, hoping therewith to obtain his favor. He also directed his sons to take double money, and return the money found in their sacks; for it might have been placed there by mistake. He says to them, "Take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man."

[160] As his sons were about to leave him to go on their doubtful journey, their aged father arose, and, while standing in their midst, raised his hands to heaven, and entreated the Lord to go with them, and pronounced upon them a gracious benediction. "And God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin. If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved."

"And the men took that present, and they took double money in their hand, and Benjamin, and rose up, and went down to Egypt,

and stood before Joseph.” And when Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he could scarcely restrain his brotherly feelings of love. He gave direction to make preparation for his brethren to dine with him. When they were taken into Joseph’s house they were afraid that it was for the purpose of calling them to account, because of the money found in their sacks. And they thought that it might have been intentionally placed there for the purpose of finding occasion against them to make them slaves, and that they were brought into the ruler’s house to better accomplish this object. They sought to make friends with the steward of the house, and made known to him that they had found their money in the mouths of their sacks, fearing the ruler who had treated them so roughly, would accuse them of wrong in regard to the matter. They informed the steward that they had brought back the money found in their sacks, in full weight; also other money to buy food, and added, “We cannot tell who put the money in our sacks.”

“And he said, Peace be to you, fear not; your God, and the God of your father, hath given you treasure in your sacks. I had your money. And he brought Simeon out unto them.” The words of the steward relieved their anxiety, and they thought God was indeed gracious unto them, as their father had entreated he would be.

[161]

When Joseph came home, his brethren gave him the present in the name of their father, “and they bowed themselves to him to the earth.” “And he asked them of their welfare, and said, Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? Is he yet alive? And they answered, Thy servant our father is in good health, he is yet alive. And they bowed down their heads and made obeisance. And he lifted up his eyes, and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother’s son, and said, Is this your younger brother, of whom ye spake unto me? And he said, God be gracious unto thee, my son. And Joseph made haste; for his bowels did yearn upon his brother, and he sought where to weep, and he entered into his chamber, and wept there. And he washed his face, and went out, and refrained himself, and said, Set on bread.”

Joseph did not eat at the same table with his brethren, for the Egyptians considered it an abomination for them to eat bread with the Hebrews. Joseph placed his brethren at the table, as was customary when their ages were known, commencing with the eldest, according

[162] to his birthright, arranging them in order down to the youngest, as though he perfectly knew their ages. His brethren were astonished at this act of Joseph, whom they thought could have no knowledge of their ages.

As he sent a portion of food to each of his brethren, he sent Benjamin five times as much as the others. He did this not only to show his particular regard for his brother Benjamin, but to prove them, and see if they regarded Benjamin with the same envious feelings they had him. They thought that Joseph did not understand their language, and were free to converse with one another in his presence; therefore Joseph had a good opportunity to learn the true state of their feelings without their knowledge. Joseph again commanded to provide his brethren with food, as much as they could carry, and to put every man's money in his sack's mouth, and to place his silver cup in the sack of the youngest. When his brethren were gone out of the city, Joseph sent his steward to overtake them, and inquire why they had rewarded evil for good, by taking the silver cup belonging to the king, whereby, indeed, he divineth.

[163] Kings and rulers had a cup from which they drank, which was considered a sure detective if any poisonous substance was placed in their drink. "And they said unto him, Wherefore saith my Lord these words? God forbid that thy servants should do according to this thing. Behold, the money, which we found in our sacks' mouths, we brought again unto thee out of the land of Canaan. How then should we steal out of thy lord's house silver or gold? With whomsoever of thy servants it be found, both let him die, and we also will be my lord's bondmen. And he said, Now also let it be according unto your words. He with whom it is found shall be my servant, and ye shall be blameless. Then they speedily took down every man his sack to the ground, and, opened every man his sack. And he searched, and began at the eldest, and left at the youngest; and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack."

At this discovery all were greatly surprised, and, to express their great distress, they rent their garments, which was the custom when in great affliction. Benjamin was more amazed and confounded than his brethren. They returned into the city sorrowful and afraid. They thought that the hand of God was against them for their past wickedness. By their own promise, Benjamin was appointed to a

life of slavery. And the fears of their father they thought would be fully realized. Mischief had befallen his much loved Benjamin.

Judah had pledged himself to be surety for Benjamin. “And Judah and his brethren came to Joseph’s house; for he was yet there, and they fell before him on the ground. And Joseph said unto them, What deed is this that ye have done? Wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine?” Joseph asked this question to draw forth from his brethren an acknowledgment of their past wrong course, that their true feelings might be more fully revealed. He did not claim any power of divination, but was willing his brethren should believe that he could read the secret acts of their lives. “And Judah said, What shall we say unto my lord? what shall we speak? or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants. Behold, we are my lord’s servants, both we, and he also with whom the cup is found.” Judah told his brethren that God had found out their iniquity for selling their brother in Egypt, and was now returning upon them their transgressions, by permitting them to become slaves also. [164]

Joseph refused to accept them all, according to the word of Judah, as bondmen. “And he said, God forbid that I should do so; but the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant; and as for you, get you up in peace unto your father.” Judah spoke with Joseph aside from the rest, and related to him the reluctance of his father to let Benjamin come with them to Egypt, and that he pledged himself to become surety for Benjamin, that if he brought him not to his father he would bear the blame forever. He eloquently plead in behalf of his father, relating his great grief at the loss of Joseph, and that Benjamin was all that was left of the mother which his father loved, and that if Benjamin should be separated from his father he would die, for his life was bound up in the lad’s life. Judah then nobly offered to become a slave instead of his brother, for he could not meet his father without Benjamin was with him. Said Judah, “Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brethren.” [165]

Joseph was satisfied. He had proved his brethren, and had seen in them the fruits of true repentance for their sins, and he was so deeply affected that he could not longer conceal his feelings, and requested to be left alone with his brethren. He then gave vent to his

long-suppressed feelings and wept aloud. “And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph. Doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence.”

His brethren could not answer him for astonishment. They could not really believe that the ruler of Egypt was their brother Joseph whom they had envied, and would have murdered, but finally were satisfied to sell as a slave. All their ill treatment of their brother painfully passed before them, and especially his dreams, which they had despised, and had labored to prevent their fulfillment. They had acted their part in fulfilling these dreams. Repeatedly had they made obeisance to Joseph, according to his dream. And now they stood before him condemned and amazed.

[166] As Joseph saw the confusion of his brethren, he said to them, “Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.” He nobly sought to make this occasion as easy for his brethren as possible. He had no desire to increase their embarrassment by censuring them. He felt that they had suffered enough for their cruelty to him, and he endeavored to comfort them. He said to them, “Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither, for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years hath the famine been in the land, and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God; and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and Lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt. Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me Lord of all Egypt. Come down unto me, tarry not. And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou and thy children, and thy children’s children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast. And there will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty. And, behold your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth
[167] that speaketh unto you. And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither. And he fell upon his brother Benjamin’s neck, and

wept, and Benjamin wept upon his neck. Moreover, he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them, and after that his brethren talked with him.”

They humbly confessed their wrongs which they had committed against Joseph, and entreated his forgiveness, and was greatly rejoiced to find that he was alive; for they had suffered remorse, and great distress of mind, since their cruelty toward him. And now as they knew that they were not guilty of his blood, their troubled minds were relieved.

Joseph gladly forgave his brethren, and sent them away abundantly provided with provisions, and carriages, and every thing necessary for the removal of their father’s family and their own to Egypt. Joseph gave his brother Benjamin more valuable presents than to his other brethren. As he sent them away he charged them, “See that ye fall not out by the way.” He was afraid that they might enter into a dispute, and charge upon one another the cause of their guilt in regard to their cruel treatment of himself. With joy they returned to their father, and told him, saying, “Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob’s heart fainted, for he believed them not, And they told him all the words of Joseph. which he had said unto them; and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived. And Israel said, It is enough. Joseph my son is yet alive. I will go and see him before I die.”

[168]

Jacob’s sons then made their humiliating confessions to their father, of their wicked treatment of Joseph, and entreated his forgiveness. Jacob did not suspect his sons were guilty of such cruelty. But he saw that God had overruled it all for good, and he forgave and blessed his erring sons. He commenced his journey with gladness of heart, and when he came to Beersheba he offered grateful sacrifices, and entreated God to bless him, and make known to him if he was pleased with their moving into Egypt. Jacob wanted an evidence from God that he would go with them. “And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I. And he said, I am God, the God of thy fathers. 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 also surely bring thee up again, and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes.”

[169] The meeting of Joseph and his father was very affecting. Joseph left his chariot, and ran to meet his father on foot, and embraced him, and they wept over each other. Jacob then expressed his willingness to die, since he had again seen his son Joseph, for whom he had so long mourned as dead.

Joseph counselled his brethren, that when Pharaoh should ask of their occupation, to tell him frankly that they were shepherds, although such an occupation was regarded by the Egyptians as degrading. Joseph loved righteousness, and feared God. He did not wish his brethren to be exposed to temptation, therefore would not have them in the king's special services, amid the corrupting idolatrous influence at court. If they should tell the king that they were shepherds, he would not seek to employ them in his service, and exalt them to some honorable position for Joseph's sake. When the king learned that they were shepherds, he gave Joseph permission to settle his father and his brethren in the best part of the country of Egypt. Joseph selected Goshen as a suitable place provided with good pastures, well watered. Here also they could worship God without being disturbed with the ceremonies attending the idolatrous worship of the Egyptians. The country round about Goshen was inhabited by the Israelites, until with power and mighty signs and wonders God brought his people out of Egypt.

[170] Joseph brought Jacob before Pharaoh, and introduced his much honored father to the king. Jacob blessed Pharaoh for his kindness to his son Joseph. "And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old art thou? And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, 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, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage."

Jacob told the king his years had been few and evil. That is, he had seen much trouble, and suffered much perplexity, which had cut short his years. The life of Jacob had not been smooth and peaceful. The jealousy of his wives had brought a train of evils. Some of his children had grieved him, and made his life very bitter. But the last years of Jacob's life were more peaceful. His sons had reformed.

As Jacob was about to die, his children gathered about him to receive his blessing, and to listen to his last words of advice to them. He forgave his children for all their unfilial conduct, and for their

wicked treatment of Joseph, which had caused him many years of grief as he had reflected upon his supposed dreadful death. As he spoke with his children for the last time, the Spirit of the Lord rested upon him, and he uttered prophecies concerning them which reached far in the future. While under the spirit of inspiration he laid open before them their past life, and their future history, revealing the purposes of God in regard to them. He showed them that God would by no means sanction cruelty, or wickedness. He commenced with the eldest. Although Reuben had no hand in selling Joseph, yet previous to that transaction he had grievously sinned. His course was corrupt, for he had transgressed the law of God. Jacob uttered his prophecy in regard to him. “Reuben, thou art my first-born, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power, unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.” [171]

He then prophesied in regard to Simeon and Levi, who practiced deception to the Shechemites, and then in a most cruel, revengeful manner destroyed them. They were also the ones who were the most guilty in the case of Joseph. “Simeon and Levi are brethren, instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honor, be not thou united; for in their anger they slew a man, and in their selfwill they digged down a wall. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce, and their wrath, for it was cruel. I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.”

Jacob thus uttered the words of inspiration to his sorrowing sons, presenting before them the light in which God viewed their deeds of violence, and that he would visit them for their sins. His prophetic words in regard to his other sons were not as gloomy.

In regard to Judah, Jacob’s words of inspiration were more joyful. His prophetic eye looked hundreds of years in the future to the birth of Christ, and he said, “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.” [172]

Jacob predicted a cheerful future for most of his sons. Especially of Joseph he uttered words of eloquence of a happy character. “Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall. The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him; but his bow abode in strength, and

the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob. From thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel. The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors, unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills. They shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.”

Jacob was an affectionate father. The words he uttered to his children were not his, spoken because he had retained an unforgiving spirit on account of their wrongs. He had forgiven them. He had loved them to the last. He mourned deeply at the loss of Joseph, and when Simeon was retained in Egypt, he manifested grief, and expressed his anxious wish that his children should return safely from Egypt with their brother Simeon. He had no resentful feeling toward his sorrowing children. But God by the spirit of prophecy elevated the mind of Jacob above his natural feelings. In his last hours angels were all around him, and the power of the grace of God shone upon him. His paternal feelings would have led him to only utter in his dying testimony expressions of love and tenderness. But under the influence of inspiration he uttered truth, although painful.

After the death of Jacob, Joseph’s brethren were filled with gloom and distress. They thought that Joseph had concealed his resentment, out of respect for their father, and now that he was dead, he would be revenged for the ill treatment he had suffered at their hands. “And when Joseph’s brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him. And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, thy father did command before he died, saying, So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin, for they did unto thee evil; and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him. And his brethren also went and fell down before his face, and they said, Behold, we be thy servants. And Joseph said unto them, Fear not, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not, I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.”

Joseph could not bear the thought that his brethren should think

that he harbored a spirit of revenge toward them whom he cordially loved.

Joseph illustrates Christ. Jesus came to his own, but his own received him not. He was rejected and despised, because his acts were righteous, and his consistent, self-denying life was a continual rebuke upon those who professed piety, but whose lives were corrupt. Joseph's integrity and virtue were fiercely assailed, and she who would lead him astray could not prevail, therefore her hatred was strong against the virtue and integrity which she could not corrupt, and she testified falsely against him. The innocent suffered because of his righteousness. He was cast into prison because of his virtue. Joseph was sold to his enemies by his own brethren for a small sum of money. The Son of God was sold to his bitterest enemies by one of his own disciples. Jesus was meek and holy. His was a life of unexampled self-denial, goodness and holiness. He was not guilty of any wrong. Yet false witnesses were hired to testify against him. He was hated because he had been a faithful reprovener of sin and corruption. Joseph's brethren stripped him of his coat of many colors. The executioners of Jesus cast lots for his seamless coat.

Joseph's brethren purposed to kill him, but were finally content to sell him as a slave, to prevent his becoming greater than themselves. They thought they had placed him where they would be no more troubled with his dreams, and where there would not be a possibility of their fulfillment. But the very course which they pursued, God overruled to bring about that which they designed never should take place—that he should have dominion over them. [175]

The chief priests and elders were jealous of Christ, that he would draw the attention of the people away from themselves, to him. They knew that he was doing greater works than they ever had done, or ever could perform; and they knew that if he was suffered to continue his teachings, he would become higher in authority than they, and might become king of the Jews. They agreed together to prevent this by privately taking him, and hiring witnesses to testify falsely against him, that they might condemn him, and put him to death. They would not accept him as their king, but cried out, Crucify him! crucify him! The Jews thought that by taking the life of Christ, they could prevent his becoming king. But by murdering the Son of God, they were bringing about the very thing they sought to prevent.

[176] Joseph by being sold by his brethren into Egypt, became saviour to his father's family. Yet this fact did not lessen the guilt of his brethren. The crucifixion of Christ by his enemies made him the Redeemer of mankind the Saviour of the fallen race, and ruler over the whole world. The crime of his enemies was just as heinous, as though God's providential hand had not controlled events for his own glory and the good of man.

Joseph walked with God. He would not be persuaded to deviate from the path of righteousness, and transgress God's law, by any inducements or threats. And when he was imprisoned, and suffered because of his innocence, he meekly bore it without murmuring. His self-control, and patience in adversity, and his unwavering fidelity are left on record of the benefit of all who should afterward live on the earth. When Joseph's brethren acknowledged their sin before him, he freely forgave them, and showed by his acts of benevolence and love that he harbored no resentful feelings for their former cruel conduct toward him. The life of Jesus, the Saviour of the world, was a pattern of benevolence, goodness and holiness. Yet he was despised and insulted, mocked and derided for no other reason than because of his righteous life, which was a constant rebuke to sin. His enemies would not be satisfied until he was given into their hands, that they might put him to a shameful death. He died for the guilty race, and, while suffering the most cruel torture, meekly forgave his murderers. He rose from the dead, ascended up to his Father, and received all power and authority, and returned to the earth again to impart it to his disciples. He gave gifts unto men. And all who have [177] ever come to him repentant, confessing their sins, he has received into his favor, and freely pardoned them. And if they remain true to him, he will exalt them to his throne, and make them his heirs to the inheritance which he has purchased with his own blood.

The children of Israel were not slaves. They had never sold their cattle, their lands, and themselves to Pharaoh for food, as many of the Egyptians had done. They had been granted a portion of land wherein to dwell, with their flocks and cattle, on account of the service Joseph had been to the kingdom. Pharaoh appreciated his wisdom in the management of all things connected with the kingdom, especially in the preparations for the long years of famine which came upon the land of Egypt. He felt that the whole kingdom

was indebted for their prosperity to the wise management of Joseph; and as a token of his gratitude he said to Joseph, "The land of Egypt is before thee. In the best of the land make thy father and brethren to dwell. In the land of Goshen let them dwell. And if thou knowest any men of activity among them, then make them rulers over my cattle. And Joseph placed his father and his brethren, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded. And Joseph nourished his father, and his brethren, and all his father's household, with bread according to their families."

No tax was required of Joseph's father and brethren by the king of Egypt, and Joseph was allowed the privilege of supplying them liberally with food. The king said to his rulers, Are we not indebted to the God of Joseph, and to him, for this liberal supply of food? Was it not because of his wisdom that we laid in so abundantly? While other lands are perishing, we have enough! His management has greatly enriched the kingdom. [178]

"And Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation. And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty, and the land was filled with them. Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people, Behold the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we. Come on, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land."

This new king of Egypt, learned that the children of Israel were of great service to the kingdom. Many of them were able and understanding workmen, and he was not willing to lose their labor. This new king ranked the children of Israel with that class of slaves who had sold their flocks, their herds, their lands and themselves to the kingdom. "Therefore they did set over them taskmasters, to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasuries, Pithom and Rameses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel. And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigor. And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service [179]

in the field. All their service wherein they made them serve was with rigor.” They compelled their women to work in the fields, as though they were slaves. Yet their numbers did not decrease. As the king and his rulers saw that they continually increased, they consulted together to compel them to accomplish a certain amount every day. They thought to subdue them with hard labor, and were angry because they could not decrease their numbers, and crush out their independent spirit.

[180] And because they failed to accomplish their purpose they hardened their hearts to go still further. The king commanded that the male children should be killed as soon as they were born. Satan was the mover in these matters. He knew that a deliver was to be raised up among the Hebrews to rescue them from oppression. He thought that if he could move the king to destroy the male children, the purpose of God would be defeated. The women feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the male children alive. The women dare not murder the Hebrew children, and because they obeyed not the command of the king, the Lord prospered them. As the king of Egypt was informed that his command had not been obeyed he was very angry. He then made his command more urgent and extensive. He charged all his people to keep a strict watch, saying, “Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive.”

* * * * *

Chapter 16—Moses

When this cruel decree was in full force, Moses was born. His mother hid him as long as she could with any safety, and then prepared a little vessel of bulrushes, making it secure with pitch, that no water might enter the little ark, and placed it at the edge of the water, while his sister should be lingering around the water, with apparent indifference. She was anxiously watching to see what would become of her little brother. Angels were also watching that no harm should come to the helpless infant, which had been placed there by an affectionate mother, and committed to the care of God by her earnest prayers mingled with tears. And these angels directed the footsteps of Pharaoh's daughter to the river, near the very spot where lay the innocent little stranger. Her attention was attracted to the little strange vessel, and she sent one of her waiting-maids to fetch it to her. And when she had removed the cover of this singularly constructed little vessel, she saw a lovely babe, "and, behold, the babe wept, and she had compassion on him." She knew that a tender Hebrew mother had taken this singular means to preserve the life of her much loved babe, and she decided at once that it should be her son. The sister of Moses immediately came forward and inquired, "Shall I go, and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee? And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go."

[181]

Joyfully sped the sister to her mother, and related to her the happy news, and conducted her with all haste to Pharaoh's daughter, where the child was committed to the mother to nurse, and she was liberally paid for the bringing up of her own son. Thankfully did this mother enter upon her now safe and happy task. She believed that God had preserved his life. Faithfully did she improve the precious opportunity of educating her son in reference to a life of usefulness. She was more particular in his instruction than in that of her other children; for she felt confident that he was preserved for some great work. By her faithful teachings she instilled into his young mind the

[182]

fear of God, and love for truthfulness and justice. She did not rest here in her efforts, but earnestly prayed to God for her son that he might be preserved from every corrupting influence. She taught him to bow and pray to God, the living God, for he alone could hear him and help him in any emergency. She sought to impress his mind with the sinfulness of idolatry. She knew that he was to be soon separated from her influence, and given up to his adopted royal mother, to be surrounded with influences calculated to make him disbelieve in the existence of the Maker of the heavens and of the earth.

The instructions he received from his parents were such as to fortify his mind, and shield him from being lifted up and corrupted with sin, and becoming proud amid the splendor and extravagance of court life. He had a clear mind, and an understanding heart, and never lost the pious impressions he received in his youth. His mother kept him as long as she could, but was obliged to separate from him when he was about twelve years old, and he then became the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

[183] Here Satan was defeated. By moving Pharaoh to destroy the male children, he thought to turn aside the purpose of God, and destroy the one whom God would raise up to deliver his people. But that very decree, appointing the Hebrew children to death, was the means God overruled to place Moses in the royal family where he had advantages to become a learned man, and eminently qualified to lead his people from Egypt. Pharaoh expected to exalt his adopted grandson to the throne. He educated him to stand at the head of the armies of Egypt, and lead them to battle. Moses was a great favorite with Pharaoh's host, and was honored because he conducted warfare with superior skill and wisdom. "And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds." The Egyptians regarded Moses as a remarkable character.

Angels instructed Moses that God had chosen him to deliver the children of Israel. The rulers among the children of Israel were also taught by angels that the time for their deliverance was nigh, and that Moses was the man whom God would use to accomplish this work. Moses thought that the children of Israel would be delivered by warfare, and that he would stand at the head of the Hebrew host, to conduct the warfare against the Egyptian armies, and deliver his brethren from the yoke of oppression. Having this in view, Moses

guarded his affections, that they might not be strongly placed upon his adopted mother, or upon Pharaoh, lest it should be more difficult for him to remain free to do the will of God.

The splendor and pride displayed at the Egyptian court, and the flattery he received, could not make him forget his despised brethren in slavery. He would not be induced, even with the promise of wearing the crown of Egypt, to identify himself with the Egyptians, and engage with them in their idolatrous worship. He would not forsake his oppressed brethren, whom he knew were God's chosen people. The king was interested in Moses, and he commanded that he should be instructed in the worship of the Egyptians. This work was committed to the priests, who officiated in the idolatrous feasts observed by the people in honor of their idol gods. But they could not by any threats, or promises of rewards, prevail upon Moses to engage with them in their heathenish ceremonies. He was threatened with the loss of the crown, and that he should be disowned by Pharaoh's daughter, unless he renounced his Hebrew faith. But he would not renounce his faith. He was firm to render homage to no object save God, the maker of the heavens and of the earth, to whom alone reverence and honor was due. He even reasoned with the priests and idolatrous worshipers upon their superstitious ceremonial worship of senseless objects. They could not answer him. His firmness in this respect was tolerated, because he was the king's adopted grandson, and was a universal favorite with the most influential in the kingdom. [184]

The Lord preserved Moses from being injured by the corrupting influences around him. The principles of truth, received in his youth from God-fearing parents, were never forgotten by him. And when he most needed to be shielded from the corrupting influences attending a life at court, then the lessons in his youth bore fruit. The fear of God was before him. And so strong was his love for his brethren, and so great was his respect for the Hebrew faith, that he would not conceal his parentage for the honor of being an heir of the royal family. [185]

When Moses was forty years old "he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens, and he spied an Egyptian smiting a Hebrew, one of his brethren. And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand. And when he went out the second day, behold,

two men of the Hebrews strove together; and he said to him that did the wrong, Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow? And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? Intendest thou to kill me as thou killedst the Egyptian? And Moses feared, and said, Surely this thing is known. Now when Pharaoh heard this thing he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian.”

[186] The matter of Moses killing the Egyptian was made known to the Egyptians by the envious Hebrew whom Moses reprov'd. And when it reached Pharaoh, it was greatly exaggerated. And the Egyptians told Pharaoh that Moses designed to make war with the Egyptians, and to overcome them, and rule himself as king. Pharaoh was exceedingly angry. He thought that this conduct of Moses meant much, and that there was no safety for his kingdom while he lived. He commanded that Moses should be slain. But he was not ignorant of Pharaoh's design, and he secretly left Egypt. The Lord directed his course, and he found a home with Jethro, a man that worshiped God. He was a shepherd, also priest of Midian. His daughters tended his flocks. But Jethro's flocks were soon placed under the care of Moses, who married Jethro's daughter, and remained in Midian forty years.

Moses was too fast in slaying the Egyptian. He supposed that the people of Israel understood that God's special providence had raised him up to deliver them. But God did not design to deliver the children of Israel by warfare, as Moses thought; but by his own mighty power, that the glory might be ascribed to him alone.

[187] God overruled the act of Moses in slaying the Egyptian to bring about his purpose. He had in his providence brought Moses into the royal family of Egypt, where he had received a thorough education; and yet he was not prepared for God to intrust to him the great work he had raised him up to accomplish. Moses could not immediately leave the king's court, and the indulgences granted him as the king's grandson, to perform the special work of God. He must have time to obtain an experience, and be educated in the school of adversity and poverty. His father-in-law feared God, and was especially honored of all the people around him for his far-seeing judgment. His influence with Moses was great.

While Moses was living in retirement, the Lord sent his angels to especially instruct him in regard to the future. Here he learned more fully the great lesson of self-control and humility. He kept the flocks of Jethro, and while he was performing his humble duties as a shepherd, God was preparing him to become a spiritual shepherd of his sheep, even of his people Israel. He had been fully qualified as a general, to stand at the head of armies, and now the Lord would have him learn the duties, and perform the offices of a faithful shepherd of his people, to tenderly care for his erring, straying sheep. As Moses led the flock to the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb, “the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire, out of the midst of a bush. And he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And he said, Draw not nigh hither. Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God. And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their task-masters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me; and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them.—Come now, therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.”

[188]

The time had fully come when God would have Moses exchange the shepherd’s staff, for the rod of God, which he would make powerful in accomplishing signs and wonders, in delivering his people from oppression, and in preserving them when pursued by their enemies. “And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel

[189] out of Egypt? And he said, Certainly I will be with thee, and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee. When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain. And Moses said unto God, Behold when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you, and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses I Am That I Am. And he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you. This is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.”

Moses did not expect that this was the manner in which the Lord would use him to deliver Israel from Egypt. He thought that it would be by warfare. And when the Lord made known to him that he must stand before Pharaoh, and in his name demand him to let Israel go he shrank from the task.

[190] The Pharaoh before whom he was to appear, was not the one who had decreed that he should be put to death. That king was dead, and another had taken the reins of government. Nearly all the Egyptian kings were called by the name of Pharaoh. Moses would have preferred to stand at the head of the children of Israel as their general, and make war with the Egyptians. But this was not God’s plan. He would be magnified before his people, and teach not only them, but the Egyptians, that there is a living God, who has power to save, and to destroy. Moses was commanded first to assemble the elders of Israel, the most noble and righteous among them, who had long grieved because of their bondage, and say unto them, “The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt. And I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt, unto the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, unto a land flowing with milk and honey. And they shall hearken to thy voice, and thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel, unto the king of Egypt, and ye shall say unto him, The Lord God of the Hebrews hath met with us, and now let us go,

we beseech thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God."

The Lord also assured Moses that Pharaoh would not let Israel go. Yet his courage should not fail, for he would make this the occasion of manifesting his signs and wonders before the Egyptians, and before his people. "And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand. And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof, and after that he will let you go."

[191]

The powerful works of God, which he wrought before the Egyptians for the deliverance of the Hebrews, would give them favor in the sight of the Egyptians, that when they should leave Egypt they should not go empty-handed. "But every woman shall borrow of her neighbor, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and ye shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters, and ye shall spoil the Egyptians."

The Egyptians had made slaves of the children of Israel, when they were not slaves, and the Egyptians were not entitled to their labor. They had only allowed the children of Israel a sustenance, and had enriched themselves with the labor which they had extorted from them. They had oppressed them, and bound them down under heavy burdens, until God interposed in their behalf. And as they were to go from their oppressors, they would need for their long journey that which they could exchange for bread, and use as their circumstances should require. Therefore, God directed them to borrow of their neighbors, and the stranger that sojourned with them. That is, the Egyptian that had been appointed over them to see that they performed a certain amount of labor each day. Although they might borrow quite an amount, it would be but a small recompense for the hard labor they had performed, which had enriched the Egyptians.

[192]

Moses plead with the Lord, and said, "But behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice; for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee." The Lord then assured him by the miracle of the rod becoming a serpent, and the hand turning leprous, that by such signs and wonderful works would he cause the Egyptians and Pharaoh to fear, so that they would not dare to harm him. By these signs he assured Moses that he would convince the king and his people that a greater than himself was manifesting

his power before them. And yet, after they should perform many miracles before Pharaoh in the sight of the people, they would not let Israel go. Moses wished to be excused from the laborious task. He plead a lack of ready speech as an excuse. That is, he had been so long from the Egyptians, he had not as clear knowledge and ready use of their language as when he was among them.

[193] The Lord reprov'd Moses for his fearfulness, as though the God who chose him to perform his great work was unable to qualify him for it, or as though God had made a mistake in his selection of the man. "And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the Lord?" What an appeal! What a rebuke to the distrustful!

"Now, therefore, go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say. And he said, O, my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send." He entreated the Lord to select a more proper person. The backwardness of Moses at first proceeded from humility, a modest diffidence. But after God promised to remove his difficulties, and be with his mouth, and teach him what to say, and to give him success finally, in his mission, then for him to still manifest reluctance was displeasing to God. His unwillingness to execute the mission God had preserved his life to fill, and had qualified him to perform, after the assurance that God would be with him, showed unbelief and criminal despondency, and distrust of God himself. The Lord rebuked him for this distrust. The deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, in the manner God proposed to do the work, looked hopeless to him of the mission ever being successful.

Moses excelled in wisdom in conducting affairs. Aaron, Moses' elder brother, had been in daily use of the language of the Egyptians, and understood it perfectly. He was eloquent.

[194] "And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses; and he said, Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, Behold, he cometh forth to meet thee, and when he seeth thee he will be glad in his heart. And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth. And I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do. And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people. And he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God.

And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs.”

Moses consented to perform the mission. He first visited his father-in-law and obtained his consent for himself and his family to return into Egypt. He did not dare to tell Jethro his message to Pharaoh, lest he should be unwilling to let his wife and children accompany him on such a dangerous mission. The Lord strengthened him, and removed his fears by saying to him: “Return into Egypt; for all the men are dead which sought thy life.”

“And the Lord said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand; but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go.” That is, the display of almighty power before Pharaoh, being rejected by him, would make him harder and more firm in his rebellion. His hardness of heart would increase by a continual resistance of the power of God. But he would overrule the hardness of Pharaoh’s heart, so that his refusing to let Israel go, would magnify his name before the Egyptians and before his people also.

The Lord directed Moses to say unto Pharaoh, “Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my first-born. And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me. And if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy first-born.” The Lord called Israel his first-born, because he had singled them out from all people to be the depositaries of his law, the obedience of which would preserve them pure amidst idolatrous nations. He conferred upon them special privileges, such as were generally conferred upon the first-born son. [195]

As Moses journeyed to Egypt, the angel of the Lord met him and assumed a threatening posture, as though he would slay him. He was fearful of his life. He had yielded to the refusal of his wife to have their son circumcised, and, in compliance with her wishes, had neglected to obey God. His wife, fearful that her husband might be slain, overcame her feelings of undue affection for her son, and performed the act herself. After this, the angel let Moses go. In his mission to Pharaoh, he was to be placed in a perilous position, where his life would be exposed to the will of the king, if God did not by his power, through the presence of his angels, preserve

[196] him. While Moses was living in neglect of one of God's positive commands, his life would not be secure, for God's angels could not protect him while in disobedience. Therefore, the angel met him in the way and threatened his life. He did not explain to Moses why he assumed that threatening aspect. Moses knew that there was a cause. He was going to Egypt according to God's express command, therefore the journey was right. He at once remembered that he had not obeyed God in performing the ordinance of circumcision upon his youngest son, and had yielded to his wife's entreaties to postpone the ceremony. After he had obeyed the command of God he was free to go before Pharaoh, and there was nothing in the way to hinder the ministration of angels in connection with his work.

In the time of trouble, just previous to the coming of Christ, the lives of the righteous will be preserved through the ministration of holy angels. Those who come up to that trying time, neglecting to obey God's commands, will have no security of their lives. Angels cannot protect them from the wrath of their enemies while they are living in neglect of any known duty, or express command of Jehovah.

[197] The Lord had informed Moses that Aaron, his brother, three years older than himself, would come forth to meet him, and when he should see him, would be glad. They had been separated for many years. Angels of God had instructed Moses in regard to the work he should perform. Angels also were sent to teach Aaron to go forth and meet Moses, for the Lord had chosen him to be with Moses, and when he should meet his brother to listen to his words, for God had given Moses words to speak to him in regard to the part he should act in connection with the deliverance of Israel. "And the Lord said to Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses. And he went, and met him in the mount of God, and kissed him. And Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord who had sent him, and all the signs which he had commanded him. And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel. And Aaron spake all the words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people. And the people believed. And when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshiped."

The Hebrews expected to be delivered from their bondage without any particular trial of their faith, or suffering on their part. They were many of them ready to leave Egypt, but not all. The habits of some had become so much like the Egyptians that they preferred to remain with them. “And afterward, Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness. And Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go. And they said, The God of the Hebrews hath met with us; let us go, we pray thee, three days’ journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto the Lord our God, lest he fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword.” The request of Moses and Aaron was very modest. They asked to go only three days’ journey. But Pharaoh haughtily refused this, and professed to be entirely ignorant of the God of Israel. But the Lord purposed to let Pharaoh know that his voice is to be obeyed; that he is above all, and will compel proud rulers to bow to his authority. “And the king of Egypt said unto them, Wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, let the people from their works? Get you unto your burdens. And Pharaoh said, Behold, the people of the land now are many, and ye make them rest from their burdens. And Pharaoh commanded the same day the task-masters of the people, and their officers, saying, Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore. Let them go and gather straw for themselves. And the tale of the bricks, which they did make heretofore, ye shall lay upon them. Ye shall not diminish aught thereof, for they be idle; therefore they cry, saying, Let us go and sacrifice to our God.”

[198]

Pharaoh’s heart was becoming more unfeeling toward the children of Israel. He greatly increased their labor. The task-masters placed over the Hebrews were Egyptians. They had officers under them who had oversight of the work, and directed the people. These officers were Hebrews, and they were responsible for the work of the people under them. And when the unjust requirement was given them to make them gather the scattered straw and stubble found in the fields for their brick, the people could not perform their usual amount of labor. “So the people were scattered abroad throughout all the land of Egypt to gather stubble instead of straw. And the task-masters hasted them, saying, Fulfill your works, your daily

[199]

tasks, as when there was straw. And the officers of the children of Israel, which Pharaoh's task-masters had set over them, were beaten, and demanded, Wherefore have ye not fulfilled your task in making brick both yesterday and today, as heretofore?"

Because the full amount of labor was not accomplished the Egyptian task-masters called the officers to account, and cruelly punished them, because they did not compel the people to perform their usual amount of labor. These officers thought that their oppression came from their task-masters, and not from the king himself. Therefore they went with their case to the king and told him their grievances, and the cruel treatment of their task-masters. Pharaoh's heart was hardened against their distress, and he derided them, and mocked at all their complaints. He was filled with hatred against them.

[200] "Then the officers of the children of Israel came and cried unto Pharaoh, saying, Wherefore dealest thou thus with thy servants? There is no straw given unto thy servants, and they say to us, Make brick; and, behold, thy servants are beaten; but the fault is in thine own people. But he said, Ye are idle, ye are idle; therefore ye say, Let us go and do sacrifice to the Lord. Go, therefore, now, and work, for there shall no straw be given you, yet shall ye deliver the tale of bricks. And the officers of the children of Israel did see that they were in evil case, after it was said, Ye shall not diminish ought from your bricks of your daily task. And they met Moses and Aaron, who stood in the way, as they came forth from Pharaoh. And they said unto them, The Lord look upon you and judge, because ye have made our savor to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us. And Moses returned unto the Lord and said, Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil-entreated this people? Why is it that thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people. Neither hast thou delivered thy people at all."

[201] As the children of Israel charged all their suffering upon Moses, he was greatly distressed, and felt almost like murmuring because the Lord delayed to deliver his people. They were not yet prepared to be delivered. They had but little faith, and were unwilling to patiently suffer and perseveringly endure their afflictions, until God should work for them a glorious deliverance.

“Then the Lord said unto Moses, Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh, for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land. And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the Lord; and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty; but by my name Jehovah was I not known to them. And I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers. And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered my covenant.”

Many years had the children of Israel been in servitude to the Egyptians. Only a few families went down into Egypt, but they had become a large multitude. And being surrounded with idolatry, many of them had lost the knowledge of the true God, and had forgotten his law. And they united with the Egyptians in their worship of the sun, moon, and stars, also of beasts and images, the work of men’s hands. Everything around the children of Israel was calculated to make them forget the living God. Yet there were those among the Hebrews who preserved the knowledge of the true God, the Maker of the heavens and of the earth. They were grieved to see their children daily witnessing, and even engaging in, the abominations of the idolatrous people around them, and bowing down to Egyptian deities, made of wood and stone, and offering sacrifice to these senseless objects. The faithful were grieved, and in their distress they cried unto the Lord for deliverance from the Egyptian yoke; that he would bring them out of Egypt, where they might be rid of idolatry, and the corrupting influences which surrounded them. [202]

But many of the Hebrews were content to remain in bondage rather than to go to a new country and meet with the difficulties attending such a journey. Therefore the Lord did not deliver them by the first display of his signs and wonders before Pharaoh. He overruled events to more fully develop the tyrannical spirit of Pharaoh, and that he might manifest his great power to the Egyptians, and also before his people to make them anxious to leave Egypt, and choose the service of God. The task of Moses would have been much easier had not many of the Hebrews become corrupted, and were unwilling to leave Egypt.

[203]

Chapter 17—The Plagues on Egypt

The Lord said unto Moses, “Wherefore, say unto the children of Israel, I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments. And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God, and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, and I will give it you for a heritage. I am the Lord. And Moses spake so unto the children of Israel; but they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Go in, speak unto Pharaoh, king of Egypt, that he let the children of Israel go out of his land.”

[204]

Moses was somewhat discouraged. In his despondency he inquired of the Lord, If the children of Israel, thine own circumcised people, will not hearken unto me, how then shall Pharaoh, who is uncircumcised, and an idolater, hear me? “And the Lord said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a God to Pharaoh, and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet. Thou shalt speak all that I command thee, and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh, that he send the children of Israel out of his land. And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt. But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth mine armies, and my people, the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch forth mine hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them. And Moses and Aaron did as the Lord commanded them, so did they.”

The Lord told Moses that the signs and wonders which he should show before Pharaoh would harden his heart, because he would not

receive them, and God would multiply his signs. Every punishment which the king rejected would bring the next chastisement more close and severe, until the proud heart of the king would be humbled, and he should acknowledge the Maker of the heavens and the earth as the living and all-powerful God.

The Lord brought up his people from their long servitude in a signal manner, giving the Egyptians an opportunity to exhibit the feeble wisdom of their mighty men, and array the power of their gods in opposition to the God of Heaven. The Lord showed them by his servant Moses that the Maker of the heavens and the earth is the living and all-powerful God, above all gods. That his strength was mightier than the strongest—that Omnipotence could bring forth his people with a high hand and with an out-stretched arm. The signs and miracles performed in the presence of Pharaoh were not given for his benefit alone, but for the advantage of God's people, to give them more clear and exalted views of God, and that all Israel should fear him, and be willing and anxious to leave Egypt, and choose the service of the true and merciful God. Had it not been for these wonderful manifestations, many would have been satisfied to remain in Egypt rather than to journey through the wilderness.

[205]

“And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the Lord had commanded; and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent. Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers. Now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments; for they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents; but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods. And he hardened Pharaoh's heart, that he hearkened not unto them, as the Lord had said.”

The magicians seemed to perform several things with their enchantments similar to those things which God wrought by the hand of Moses and Aaron. They did not really cause their rods to become serpents, but by magic, aided by the great deceiver, made them to appear like serpents, to counterfeit the work of God. Satan assisted his servants to resist the work of the Most High, in order to deceive the people, and encourage them in their rebellion. Pharaoh would grasp at the least evidence he could obtain to justify himself in resisting the work of God, performed by Moses and Aaron. He told these servants of God that his magicians could do all these wonders.

[206]

The difference between the work of God and that of the magicians was, one was of God, the other of Satan. One was true, the other false.

Pharaoh declared that Moses and Aaron were impostors, and could accomplish no more than his magicians. Said Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh, That Jehovah whom thou pretendest not to know, will convince thee that he is more powerful than all gods. They informed him that God would yet perform greater wonders, which would leave him without excuse, and which would be perpetual monuments of his providence and power in behalf of Israel.

[207] “And the Lord said unto Moses, Pharaoh’s heart is hardened. He refuseth to let the people go. Get thee unto Pharaoh in the morning; lo, he goeth out unto the water; and thou shalt stand by the river’s brink against he come; and the rod which was turned to a serpent shalt thou take in thine hand. And thou shalt say unto him, The Lord God of the Hebrews hath sent me unto thee, saying, Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness; and, behold, hitherto thou wouldest not hear. Thus saith the Lord, In this thou shalt know that I am the Lord. Behold, I will smite with the rod that is in mine hand upon the waters which are in the river, and they shall be turned to blood. And the fish that is in the river shall die, and the river shall stink; and the Egyptians shall loathe to drink of the water of the river.”

Pharaoh would not listen to Moses and Aaron, but despised their words; yet he had no power to harm them. “And Moses and Aaron did so, as the Lord commanded; and he lifted up the rod, and smote the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants; and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood.” For seven days the plague upon the waters continued. Yet the king humbled not himself, but hardened his heart. Moses and Aaron were commanded, first, before bringing the plagues, to faithfully relate to Pharaoh the nature of each plague which was to come, and the effect of the plague, that he might have the privilege of saving himself from it if he chose, by letting the children of Israel go to sacrifice unto God. But if the king should refuse to obey the command of God, then would he still visit him with judgments.

“And the Lord spake unto Moses, Go unto Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Let my people go, that they may serve me. [208] And if thou refuse to let them go, behold, I will smite all thy borders with frogs.”

“And Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came up, and covered the land of Egypt. And the magicians did so with their enchantments, and brought up frogs upon the land of Egypt. Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, Entreat the Lord that he may take away the frogs from me, and from my people, and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the Lord. And Moses said unto Pharaoh, Glory over me. When shall I entreat for thee, and for thy servants, and for thy people, to destroy the frogs from thee and thy houses, that they may remain in the river only? And he said, Tomorrow. And he said, Be it according to thy word, that thou mayest know that there is none like unto the Lord our God.”

Although the magicians appeared to produce frogs like Moses and Aaron, they could not remove them. When Pharaoh saw that the magicians could not stay the plague, or remove the frogs, he was somewhat humbled, and would have Moses and Aaron entreat the Lord for him, to remove the plague of the frogs. He was beginning to know something about that God whom he professed to be wholly ignorant of. Moses and Aaron had told Pharaoh that they did not produce the frogs by magic, or by any power they possessed; that [209] God, the living God, had caused them to come by his power, and that he alone could remove them. Previous to this, Pharaoh had exulted over Moses and Aaron, because the magicians could cause the same things to appear with their enchantments. And when he asked Moses to entreat the Lord for him, he reminded him of his former haughty boasting and glorying because of the works performed by his magicians; and he asked Pharaoh where was now his glorying over him, and where was the power of those magicians to remove the plague.

The Lord listened to the entreaties of Moses, and stayed the plague of the frogs. When the king was relieved of his immediate distress, he again stubbornly refused to let Israel go. Moses and Aaron, at the commandment of the Lord, caused the dust of the land to become lice throughout all the land of Egypt. Pharaoh

called the magicians to stand before him to do the same with their enchantments, but they could not. Moses and Aaron, the servants of God, at his command, produced the plague of the lice. The magicians, the servants of Satan, at his command tried to produce the same with their enchantments, but could not. The work of God was shown superior to the power of Satan; for the magicians with their enchantments could perform but a few things. When the magicians saw that they could not produce the lice, they said unto Pharaoh, [210] “This is the finger of God. And Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them, as the Lord had said.”

The Lord again commanded Moses and Aaron to say unto Pharaoh, “Let my people go, that they may serve me; else, if thou wilt not let my people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies upon thee, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people, and into the houses, and the houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms of flies, and also the ground whereon they are. And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there, to the end thou mayest know that I am the Lord in the midst of the earth. And I will put a division between my people and thy people. Tomorrow shall this sign be. And the Lord did so. And there came a grievous swarm of flies into the house of Pharaoh, and into his servants’ houses, and into all the land of Egypt. The land was corrupted by reason of the swarms of flies. And Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron, and said, Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land. And Moses said, It is not meet so to do; for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to the Lord our God. Lo, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us? We will go three days’ journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to the Lord our God as he shall command us.”

[211] The Egyptians worshiped certain beasts, and they regarded it an unpardonable offense to have one of these beasts slain. And if one of their objects of worship were slain, even accidentally, the person’s life alone could answer for the offense. Moses shows Pharaoh the impossibility of their sacrificing to God in the land of Egypt, in the sight of the Egyptians, for they might select for their offering some one of the beasts which they considered sacred.

Moses again proposed to go three days' journey into the wilderness. The king consented while under the chastening hand of God. "And Pharaoh said, I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness; only ye shall not go very far away. Entreat for me. And Moses said, Behold, I go out from thee, and I will entreat the Lord that the swarms of flies may depart from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people, tomorrow; but let not Pharaoh deal deceitfully any more in not letting the people go to sacrifice to the Lord. And Moses went from Pharaoh and entreated the Lord. And the Lord did according to the word of Moses; and he removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people. There remained not one. And Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go."

And the Lord commanded Moses and Aaron to go again before Pharaoh and tell him, "Thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews, Let [212] my people go, that they may serve me." And if he should refuse to let them go, and should hold them still, the plague should be upon their cattle. "And the Lord shall sever between the cattle of Israel and the cattle of Egypt, and there shall nothing die of all that is the children of Israel's." And all the cattle died that were visited with the plague, but not one of the cattle of the Hebrews died. And Pharaoh sent messengers to inquire if any of the cattle of the Israelites were dead. The messenger returned to the king with the word that not one of them had died, neither were they afflicted at all with the plague. Yet his heart was hardened, and he refused to let Israel go.

Then Moses and Aaron, according to the command of God, "took ashes of the furnace, and stood before Pharaoh; and Moses sprinkled it up toward heaven, and it became a boil breaking forth with blains upon man, and upon beast. And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boil, for the boil was upon the magicians, and upon all the Egyptians. And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he hearkened not unto them, as the Lord had spoken unto Moses."

The magicians with all their magic, and supposed power, could not, by any of their enchantments, shield themselves from the grievous plague of the boils. They could no longer stand before Moses and Aaron, because of this grievous affliction. The Egyptians [213] were thus permitted to see how useless it would be for them to put

their trust in the boasted power of the magicians, when they could not save even their own bodies from the plagues.

[214] “And the Lord said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me. For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people, that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth. For now I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence, and thou shalt be cut off from the earth. And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee my power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth. As yet exaltest thou thyself against my people, that thou wilt not let them go? Behold, tomorrow about this time I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail, such as hath not been in Egypt since the foundation thereof even until now. Send therefore now, and gather thy cattle, and all that thou hast in the field, for upon every man and beast which shall be found in the field, and shall not be brought home, the hail shall come down upon them, and they shall die. He that feared the word of the Lord among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses. And he that regarded not the word of the Lord left his servants and his cattle in the field. And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch forth thine hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, upon man, and upon beast, and upon every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt. And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven, and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt.”

Those who regarded the word of the Lord gathered their cattle into barns and houses, while those whose hearts were hardened, like Pharaoh's, left their cattle in the field. Here was an opportunity to test the exalted pride of the Egyptians, and to show the number whose hearts were really affected by the wonderful dealings of God with his people, whom they had despised and cruelly entreated. “So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and beast. And the hail smote every herb

of the field, and brake every tree of the field. Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail. And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time. The Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked. Entreat the Lord (for it is enough) that there be no more mighty thunderings and hail, and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer. And Moses said unto him, As soon as I am gone out of the city, I will spread abroad my hands unto the Lord, and the thunder shall cease, neither shall there be any more hail, that thou mayest know how that the earth is the Lord's. But as for thee and thy servants, I know that ye will not yet fear the Lord God. And the flax and the barley was smitten, for the barley was in the ear, and the flax was balled. But the wheat and the rye were not smitten, for they were not grown up.” [215]

After the plague was stayed, the king refused to let Israel go. Rebellion produces rebellion. The king had become so hardened with his continual opposition to the will of God, that his whole being rose in rebellion to the awful exhibitions of his divine power.

Moses and Aaron were commanded to again go in unto Pharaoh, and request him to let Israel go. The Lord tells them that he has suffered the king to resist them, and has borne with his continual rebellion, that he might show his great signs and wonders before him, and before the children of Israel, “that thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son's son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs which I have done among them, that ye may know how that I am the Lord.”

Here the Lord was manifesting his power to confirm the faith of his people Israel in him as being the only true and living God. He would give them unmistakable evidences of the difference he placed between the Egyptians and his people. His wonderful works in their deliverance should cause all nations to know that although they had been bound down by hard labor, and had been despised, yet he had chosen them as his peculiar people, and that he would work for their deliverance in a wonderful manner. [216]

Moses and Aaron obeyed the command of God, and related to the king the nature of the grievous plague which God was about to send upon him; that if he would not let Israel go, he would bring locusts into the coasts of Egypt, which would cover the face of the

earth, and would eat the residue of that which escaped the hail. The king was permitted to choose—to humble himself before God, and let Israel go, or refuse and suffer the effects of the plague.

[217] “And Pharaoh’s servants said unto him, How long shall this man be a snare unto us? Let the men go, that they may serve the Lord their God. Knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?” The king’s rulers or counselors were called his servants, because they were under Pharaoh. They entreated the king to let Israel go. They related to him that they had sustained great loss by the death of their cattle, and that Egypt was nearly ruined by lightning. And the hail mingled with fire, had broken down their forests, and had destroyed their fruit, and nearly all their grain; that everything was in a ruinous condition, and that they were losing all that they had gained through the labor of the Hebrews. The king sent for Moses and Aaron, and he said unto them. “Go serve the Lord your God; but who are they that shall go? And Moses said, We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go; for we must hold a feast unto the Lord. And he said unto them. Let the Lord be so with you, as I will let you go, and your little ones. Look to it, for evil is before you. Not so. Go now ye that are men, and serve the Lord, for that ye did desire. And they were driven out from Pharaoh’s presence.”

[218] The king shows his contempt of God’s command by his answer to Moses and Aaron. Let your God require this of you if he will, for you to take your little ones, I will not let you go. Your little children are not needed in your journey. Does your God think I will do this thing, and let you go with your wives and little children into the wilderness upon so dangerous an expedition to them? I will not do this, but only you that are men shall go to serve the Lord. This hard-hearted, oppressive king would now pretend to the Hebrews that he had a special interest in their welfare, and a tender care for their little ones. He had tried to destroy the Israelites with hard labor; but now, to serve his own purpose, professes to have a very special care for them, and plainly declares to Moses and Aaron that God, who would require such a thing as for them to go with their families into the wilderness, should not be obeyed; for he would only lead them out to destroy them, and their bodies would certainly lie in the wilderness.

“And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come up upon the land of Egypt, and eat every herb of the land, even all that the hail hath left. And Moses stretched forth his rod over the land of Egypt, and the Lord brought an east wind upon the land all that day, and all that night; and when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts. And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt, and rested in all the coasts of Egypt; very grievous were they. Before them there were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall be such. For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened. And they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left; and there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field through all the land of Egypt. Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste. And he said, I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you. Now, therefore, forgive, I pray thee, my sin only this once, and entreat the Lord your God, that he may take away from me this death only.” The Egyptians were afraid that after the locusts had eaten everything in the field, they would even attack the people of Egypt and devour them. [219]

“And he went out from Pharaoh and entreated the Lord. And the Lord turned a mighty strong west wind which took away the locusts, and cast them into the Red Sea. There remained not one locust in all the coasts of Egypt. But the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go.” Notwithstanding his humility, while death threatened him, and his promise to let Israel go, after he was relieved from the plague, he hardened his heart and refused to let them go.

“And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thy hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt. And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven, and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days. They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days. But all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings. And Pharaoh called unto Moses, and said, Go ye, serve the Lord, only let your flocks and herds be stayed. Let your little ones also go with you. And Moses said, Thou must give us also sacrifices and burnt-offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the Lord our God. Our cattle also shall go with us. There shall not a

[220] hoof be left behind; for thereof we must take to serve the Lord our God; and we know not with what we must serve the Lord until we come thither. But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go. And Pharaoh said unto him, Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in that day thou seest my face thou shalt die. And Moses said, Thou hast spoken well; I will see thy face again no more."

Pharaoh hardened his heart against the Lord, and he ventured, notwithstanding all the signs and mighty wonders he had witnessed, to threaten that if Moses and Aaron appeared before him again they should die. If the king had not become hardened in his rebellion against God, he would have been humbled under a sense of the power of the living God who could save or destroy. He would have known that he who could do such miracles, and multiply his signs and wonders, would preserve the lives of his chosen servants, even if he should have to slay the king of Egypt.

[221] As Moses had witnessed the wonderful works of God, his faith had grown strong, and his confidence had become unshaken, while God had been fitting him and qualifying him by manifestations of his power to stand at the head of the armies of Israel, and as a shepherd of his people, lead them from Egypt. He was elevated above fear by his firm trust in God, which led him to say to the king, "Our cattle shall go with us. There shall not a hoof be left behind." This firm courage in the presence of the king annoyed his haughty pride, and he uttered the threat of killing the servants of God. He did not realize in his blindness that he was not contending only against Moses and Aaron, but against the mighty Jehovah, the Maker of the heavens and of the earth. Moses had obtained the favor of the people. He was regarded as a very wonderful man, and the king would not dare to harm him.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterward he will let you go hence. When he shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether. Speak now in the ears of the people, and let every man borrow of his neighbor, and every woman of her neighbor, jewels of silver and jewels of gold."

Notwithstanding Moses had been forbidden to come again into the presence of Pharaoh, for in the day he should see his face he

should die, yet he had one more message from God for the rebellious king, and he firmly walked into his presence, and stood fearlessly before him to declare to him the word of the Lord.

“And Moses said, Thus saith the Lord, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt. And all the first-born in the land of Egypt shall die, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the first-born of the maid-servant that is behind the mill, and all the first-born of beasts. And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more. But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast, that ye may know how that the Lord doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel. And all these thy servants shall come down unto me, and bow down themselves unto me, saying, Get thee out, and all the people that follow thee; and after that I will go out. And he went out from Pharaoh in a great anger.” [222]

As Moses told the king of the plague which would come upon them, more dreadful than any that had yet visited Egypt, which would cause all his great counselors to bow down before him, and entreat the Israelites to leave Egypt, the king was exceedingly angry. He was enraged because he could not intimidate Moses, and make him tremble before his kingly authority. But Moses leaned for support upon a mightier arm than that of any earthly monarch.

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Chapter 18—The Passover

[223] The Lord then gave Moses special directions, to give to the children of Israel, in regard to what they must do to preserve themselves and their families from the fearful plague that he was about to send upon Egypt. Moses was also to give them instructions in regard to their leaving Egypt. He related to them the command of God to slay a lamb without blemish, and take the blood of the lamb and strike it upon the door-posts, and also upon the upper door-posts of their houses. And while this token should be without for a sign, and they should be eating the lamb, roasted whole, with bitter herbs, within, the angel of God would be passing through the land of Egypt doing his dreadful work, slaying the first-born of man and the first-born of beast. “And thus shall ye eat it, with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord’s passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment. I am the Lord. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations. Ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever.”

[224] Here was a work required of the children of Israel, which they must perform on their part, to prove them and to show their faith by their works in the great deliverance God had been bringing about for them. In order to escape the great judgment of God which he was to bring upon the Egyptians, the token of blood must be seen upon their houses. And they were required to separate themselves and their children from the Egyptians, and gather them into their own houses, for if any of the Israelites were found in the houses of the Egyptians, they would fall by the hand of the destroying angel. They were also directed to keep the feast of the passover for an

ordinance, that when their children should inquire what such service meant, they should relate to them their wonderful preservation in Egypt. That when the destroying angel went forth in the night to slay the first-born of man, and the first-born of beast, he passed over their houses, and not one of the Hebrews was slain that had the token of blood upon their door-posts. And the people bowed their heads and worshiped, grateful for this remarkable memorial given to preserve to their children the remembrance of God's care for his people. There was quite a number of Egyptians who were led to acknowledge, by the manifestations of the signs and wonders shown in Egypt, that the God of the Hebrews was the only true God. They entreated to be permitted to come to the houses of the Israelites with their families, upon that fearful night when the angel of God should slay the first-born of the Egyptians. They were convinced that their gods whom they had worshiped were without knowledge, and had no power to save or to destroy. And they pledged themselves to henceforth choose the God of Israel as their God. They decided to leave Egypt, and go with the children of Israel to worship their God. The Israelites welcomed the believing Egyptians to their houses.

[225]

The passover pointed backward to the deliverance of the children of Israel, and was also typical, pointing forward to Christ, the Lamb of God, slain for the redemption of fallen man. The blood sprinkled upon the door-posts pre-figured the atoning blood of Christ, and also the continual dependence of sinful man upon the merits of that blood for safety from the power of Satan, and for final redemption. Christ ate the passover supper with his disciples just before his crucifixion, and the same night instituted the ordinance of the Lord's supper, to be observed in commemoration of his death. The passover had been observed to commemorate the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egypt. It had been both commemorative and typical. The type had reached the antitype when Christ, the Lamb of God without blemish, died upon the cross. He left an ordinance to commemorate the events of his crucifixion.

Christ ate the passover supper with his disciples, then arose from the table and said unto them, "With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." He then performed the humiliating office of washing the feet of his disciples. Christ gave his disciples the ordinance of washing feet for them to practice,

[226]

which would learn them lessons of humility. He connected this ordinance with the supper. He designed that this should be a season of self-examination, that his followers might have an opportunity to become acquainted with the true feelings of their own hearts toward God and one another. If pride existed in their hearts, how soon would it be discovered to the honest, erring ones, as they should engage in this humble duty. If selfishness or hatred to one another should exist, it is more readily discovered as they engage in this humble work. This ordinance was designed to result in mutual confessions to one another, and to increase feelings of forbearance, forgiveness of each other's errors, and true love, preparatory to engaging in the solemn ordinance of commemorating the sufferings and death of Christ. He loved his disciples well enough to die for them. He exhorted them to love one another, as he had loved them. The example of washing the feet of his disciples was given for the benefit of all who should believe in him. He required them to follow his example. This humble ordinance was not only designed to test their humility and faithfulness, but to keep fresh in their remembrance, that the redemption of his people was purchased upon conditions of humility and continual obedience upon their part. "So, after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them,"

[227]

Jesus then took his place again at the table, whereon were placed bread and unfermented wine, which arrangements had been made according to Christ's directions. He appeared very sorrowful. "And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of me. Likewise, also, the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you. Verily, I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

Here our Saviour instituted the Lord's supper, to be often celebrated, to keep fresh in the memory of his followers the solemn scenes of his betrayal and crucifixion for the sins of the world. He would have his followers realize their continual dependence upon his blood for salvation. The broken bread was a symbol of Christ's broken body, given for the salvation of the world. The wine was a symbol of his blood, shed for the cleansing of the sins of all those who should come unto him for pardon, and receive him as their Saviour.

[228]

The salvation of men depends upon a continual application to their hearts of the cleansing blood of Christ. Therefore, the Lord's supper was not to be observed only occasionally or yearly, but more frequently than the annual passover. This solemn ordinance commemorates a far greater event than the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egypt. That deliverance was typical of the great atonement which Christ made by the sacrifice of his own life for the final deliverance of his people.

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Chapter 19—Israel Leaves Egypt

[229] The children of Israel had followed the directions given them of God, and while the angel of death was passing from house to house among the Egyptians, they were all ready for their journey, and waiting for the rebellious king and his great men to bid them go. “And it came to pass, that at midnight the Lord smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne, unto the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon, and all the first-born of cattle. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead. And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel, and go, serve the Lord, as ye have said. Also, take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me, also. And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste, for they said, We be all dead men. And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading-troughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders. And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment. And the Lord gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required; and they spoiled the Egyptians.”

[230] The Lord revealed this to Abraham about four hundred years before it was fulfilled. “And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not their’s, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years. And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge, and afterward shall they come out with great substance.”

“And a mixed multitude went up also with them, and flocks and herds, even very much cattle.” The children of Israel went out of Egypt with their possessions, which did not belong to Pharaoh, for

they had never sold them to him. Jacob and his sons took their flocks and cattle with them into Egypt. The children of Israel had become exceedingly numerous, and their flocks and herds had greatly increased. God had judged the Egyptians by sending the plagues upon them, and made them hasten his people out of Egypt, with all that they possessed.

“And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest, peradventure, the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt. But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea. And the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt. And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him; for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you. And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness. And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way, and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light, to go by day and night. He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.”

[231]

The Lord knew that the Philistines would oppose their passing through their land. They would say of them, They have stolen away from their masters in Egypt, and would have made war with them. Thus God, by bringing them by the way of the sea, revealed himself a compassionate God, as well as a God of judgment. The Lord informed Moses that Pharaoh would pursue them, and he directed him just where to encamp before the sea. He told Moses that he would be honored before Pharaoh and all his host. After the Hebrews had been gone from Egypt some days, the Egyptians told Pharaoh that they had fled and would never return to serve him again. And they mourned because they had permitted them to leave Egypt. It was a very great loss for them to be deprived of their services, and they regretted that they had consented to let them go. Notwithstanding all they had suffered with the judgments of God, they were so hardened by their continual rebellion that they decided to pursue the children of Israel and bring them back by force into Egypt. The king took a

very large army, and six hundred chariots, and pursued after them and overtook them while encamped by the sea.

[232] “And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid; and the children of Israel cried out unto the Lord. And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness. And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will shew to you today; for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more forever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.”

How soon the Israelites distrusted God! They had witnessed all his judgments upon Egypt to compel the king to let Israel go, and when their confidence in God was tested they murmured, notwithstanding they had seen such evidences of his power in their wonderful deliverance. Instead of trusting in God in their necessity, they murmured at faithful Moses, reminding him of their words of unbelief which they uttered in Egypt. They accused him of being the cause of all their distress. He encouraged them to trust in God, and withhold their expressions of unbelief, and they should see what [233] the Lord would do for them. Moses earnestly cried to the Lord to deliver his chosen people.

“And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward. But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it, and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.” God would have Moses understand that he would work for his people—that their necessity would be his opportunity. When they should go as far as they could, he must bid them to still go forward; that he should use the rod God had given him to divide the waters.

“And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them; and I will get me honor upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gotten me

honor upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them, and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them. And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel, and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these. So that the one came not near the other all the night.”

The Egyptians could not see the Hebrews, for the cloud of thick darkness was before them, which cloud was all light to the Israelites. Thus did God display his power to prove his people, whether they would trust in him after giving them such tokens of his care and love for them, and to rebuke their unbelief and murmuring. “And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left.” The waters rose up and stood, like congealed walls on either side, while Israel walked in the midst of the sea on dry ground. [234]

The Egyptian host was triumphing through that night that the children of Israel were again in their power. They thought there was no possibility of their escape, for before them stretched the Red Sea, and their large armies were close behind them. In the morning, as they came up to the sea, lo, there was a dry path, the waters were divided, and stood like a wall upon either side, and the children of Israel were half way through the sea, walking on dry land. They waited a while to decide what course they had better pursue. They were disappointed and enraged, that, as the Hebrews were almost in their power, and they were sure of them, an unexpected way was opened for them in the sea. They decided to follow them. “And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh’s horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians, and took off their chariot-wheels, that they drave them heavily, so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the Lord fighteth for them against the Egyptians.” [235]

The Egyptians dared to venture in the path God had prepared for his people, and angels of God went through their host and removed their chariot-wheels. They were plagued. Their progress was very slow, and they began to be troubled. They remembered the judgments the God of the Hebrews had brought upon them in Egypt, to compel them to let Israel go, and they thought that God might deliver them all into the hands of the Israelites. They decided that God was fighting for the Israelites, and they were terribly afraid, and were turning about to flee from them, when “the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen. And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared, and the Egyptians fled against it; and the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. There remained not so much as one of them. But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore. And Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians, and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and his servant Moses.”

As the Hebrews witnessed the marvelous work of God in the destruction of the Egyptians, they united in an inspired song of lofty eloquence, and grateful praise. Miriam, the sister of Moses, a prophetess, led the women in music.

“Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation; he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father’s God, and I will exalt him.

“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. The depths have covered them. They sank into the bottom as a stone. Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power. Thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in

pieces the enemy. And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee. Thou sentest forth thy wrath which consumed them as stubble. And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea. The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil. My lust shall be satisfied upon them. I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them. Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them. They sank as lead in the mighty waters.

“Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? Thou stretchedst out thy right hand, the earth swallowed them. Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed. Thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation. The people shall hear, and be afraid. Sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina. Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them. All the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. Fear and dread shall fall upon them. By the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone, till thy people pass over, O Lord, till the people pass over, which thou hast purchased. Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established. [238]

“The Lord shall reign forever and ever. For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and the Lord brought again the waters of the sea upon them; but the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea.”

Pharaoh, who would not acknowledge God and bow to his authority, delighted to show his power as ruler over those whom he could control. Moses declared to Pharaoh, after he required the people to make brick without straw, that God, whom he pretended not to know, would compel him to yield to his claims, and acknowledge his authority, as supreme ruler.

The time had come when God would answer the prayers of his oppressed people, and would bring them from Egypt with such mighty displays of his power that the Egyptians would be compelled to acknowledge that the God of the Hebrews, whom they had de-

[239] spised, was above all gods. He would now punish them for their idolatry, and for their proud boasting of the mercies bestowed upon them by their senseless gods. God would glorify his own name, that other nations might hear of his power and tremble at his mighty acts, and that his people, by witnessing his miraculous works, should fully turn from their idolatry to render to him pure worship.

God commanded Moses to say unto Pharaoh, "For this cause have I raised thee up for to show in thee my power." This does not mean that God had given him an existence for that purpose. But his providence had overruled events that such a rebellious tyrant as Pharaoh should be upon the throne of Egypt at the time God would deliver the Hebrews. For this purpose his life had been preserved, though he had justly forfeited the mercy of God by his crimes. Yet God saw fit to spare his life to manifest through his stubbornness his wonders in the land of Egypt. He would cause Pharaoh's rebellion against him to be the occasion to multiply evidences of his power for the good of his people, and that his name might be magnified before the Egyptians, and brought to the knowledge of those who should afterwards live upon the earth. The disposing of events is of his providence. He could have placed a more merciful king upon the throne of Egypt, who would not have dared to persist in his rebellion with the display of God's mighty power manifested before him as it was before Pharaoh. But then the purposes of God would not have been accomplished. His people would have been deceived in regard to the sinfulness of the idolatry of the Egyptians, and would not have experienced in themselves the hard-hearted cruelty which the idolatrous Egyptians could practice. God would manifest [240] before them that he hates idolatry, and that he will punish cruelty and oppression wherever it exists.

Although many of the Israelites had become corrupted by idolatry, yet the faithful stood firm. They had not concealed their faith, but openly acknowledged before the Egyptians that they served the only true and living God. They rehearsed the evidences of God's existence and power from creation down. The Egyptians had an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the faith of the Hebrews, and their God. They had tried to subvert the faithful worshipers of the true God, and were annoyed because they had not succeeded, either by threats, the promise of rewards, or by cruel treatment.

The two last kings who had occupied the throne of Egypt had been tyrannical, and had cruelly entreated the Hebrews. The elders of Israel had endeavored to encourage the sinking faith of the Israelites, by referring to the promise made to Abraham, and the prophetic words of Joseph just before he died, foretelling their deliverance from Egypt. Some would listen and believe. Others looked at their own sad condition, and would not hope. The Egyptians had learned the expectations of the children of Israel, and derided their hopes of deliverance, and spoke scornfully of the power of their God. They pointed them to their own situation as a people, as merely a nation of slaves, and tauntingly said to them, If your God is so just and merciful, and possesses power above the Egyptian gods, why does he not make you a free people? Why not manifest his greatness and power, and exalt you? The Egyptians then called the attention of the Israelites to their own people, who worshiped gods of their own choosing, which the Israelites termed false gods. They exultingly said that their gods had prospered them, and had given them food, and raiment, and great riches, and that their gods had also given the Israelites into their hands to serve them, and that they had power to oppress them and destroy their lives, so that they should be no people. They derided the idea that the Hebrews would ever be delivered from slavery. [241]

Pharaoh boasted that he would like to see their God deliver them from his hands. These words destroyed the hopes of many of the children of Israel. It appeared to them very much as the king and his counselors had said. They knew that they were treated as slaves, and that they must endure just that degree of oppression their taskmasters and rulers might put upon them. Their male children had been hunted and slain. Their own lives were a burden, and they were believing in, and worshipping, the God of Heaven. Then they contrasted their condition with that of the Egyptians. They did not believe at all in a living God, who had power to save or to destroy. Some of them worshiped idols, images made of wood and stone, while others chose to worship the sun, moon, and stars, yet they were prospered, and wealthy. And some of the Hebrews thought if God was above all gods he would not thus leave them as slaves to an idolatrous nation. [242]

The faithful servants of God understood that it was because of their unfaithfulness to God as a people, and their disposition to intermarry with other nations, and thus being led into idolatry, that the Lord suffered them to go into Egypt. And they firmly declared to their brethren that God would soon bring them up from Egypt, and break their oppressive yoke.

In the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, God plainly showed his distinguished mercy to his people, before all the Egyptians. God saw fit to execute his judgments upon Pharaoh that he might know by sad experience, since he would not otherwise be convinced, that his power was superior to all others. That his name might be declared throughout all the earth, he would give exemplary and demonstrative proof to all nations of his divine power and justice. It was the design of God that these exhibitions of his power should strengthen the faith of his people, and that their posterity should steadfastly worship him alone who had wrought such merciful wonders in their behalf.

[243] The miracle of the rod becoming a serpent, and the river being turned to blood, did not move the hard heart of Pharaoh, only to increase his hatred of the Israelites. The work of the magicians led him to believe that these miracles were performed by magic. But he had abundant evidence that this was not the case when the plague of frogs was removed. God could have caused them to disappear, and return to dust in a moment; but he did not do this, lest after they should be removed, the king and the Egyptians should say that it was the result of magic, like the work of the magicians. They died, and then they gathered them together into heaps. Their bodies they could see before them, and they corrupted the atmosphere. Here the king, and all Egypt, had evidences which their vain philosophy could not dispose of, that this work was not magic, but a judgment from the God of Heaven.

The magicians could not produce the lice. The Lord would not suffer them to make it even appear to their own sight, or to that of the Egyptians, that they could produce the plague of the lice. He would remove all excuse of unbelief from Pharaoh. He compelled even the magicians themselves to say, "This is the finger of God."

Next came the plague of the swarms of flies. They were not such flies as harmlessly annoy us in some seasons of the year; but the flies brought upon Egypt were large and venomous. Their sting was

very painful upon man and beast. God separated his people from the Egyptians, and suffered no flies to appear throughout their coasts. [244]

The Lord then sent the plague of the murrain upon their cattle, and at the same time preserved the cattle of the Hebrews, that not one of them died. Next came the plague of the boil upon man and beast, and the magicians could not protect themselves from it. The Lord then sent upon Egypt the plague of the hail mingled with fire, with lightnings and thunder. The time of each plague was given before it came that it might not be said to have happened by chance. The Lord demonstrated to the Egyptians that the whole earth was under the command of the God of the Hebrews—that thunder, hail, and storm obey his voice. Pharaoh, the proud king, who once inquired, Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice? humbled himself and said, I have sinned. The Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked. He begged of Moses to be his intercessor with God that the terrific thunder and lightning might cease.

The Lord next sent the dreadful plague of the locusts. The king chose to receive the plagues rather than to submit to God. Without remorse he sees his whole kingdom under the miracle of these dreadful judgments. The Lord then sent darkness upon Egypt. The people were not merely deprived of light, but the atmosphere was very oppressive, so that breathing was difficult, yet the Hebrews had a pure atmosphere, and light in their dwellings. One more dreadful [245] plague God brought upon Egypt, more severe than any before it. It was the king and his idolatrous priests who opposed to the last the request of Moses. The people desired that the Hebrews should be permitted to leave Egypt. Moses related to Pharaoh, and to the people of Egypt, also to the Israelites, the nature and effect of the last plague. On that night, so terrible to the Egyptians, and so glorious to the people of God, was the solemn ordinance of the passover instituted.

It was very hard for the Egyptian king and a proud and idolatrous people, to yield to the requirements of the God of Heaven. Very slow was the king of Egypt to yield. While under most grievous affliction he would yield a little, but when the affliction was removed, he would take back all he had granted. Thus plague after plague was brought upon Egypt, and he yielded no more than he was compelled to do by the dreadful visitations of God's wrath. The king even

[246]

persisted in his rebellion after Egypt had been ruined. Moses and Aaron related to Pharaoh the nature and effect of each plague which should follow his refusal to let Israel go. Every time he saw these plagues come exactly as he was told they would come. Yet he would not yield. First he would only grant them permission to sacrifice to God in the land of Egypt. Then after Egypt had suffered by God's wrath, he granted that the men alone should go. After Egypt had been nearly destroyed by the plague of the locusts, then he granted that their children and their wives might go also; but would not let their cattle go. Moses then told the king that the angel of God would slay their first-born.

Every plague had come a little closer and more severe, and this was to be more dreadful than any before it. But the proud king was exceedingly angry, and humbled not himself. And when the Egyptians saw the great preparations being made among the Israelites for that dreadful night, they ridiculed the token of blood upon their door-posts. But when the Egyptians, from the king upon his throne down to the lowliest servant, were afflicted, and their first-born were slain, then there was wailing throughout all Egypt. Then Pharaoh remembered his proud boast, "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice, to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." He humbled himself and went with his counselors and his rulers to Goshen in haste, and bowed before Moses and Aaron, and bid them go and serve their God. Their flocks and herds should go also as they had requested. They implored them to be gone, fearing if they continued longer, they would be all as dead men. Pharaoh also entreated Moses to bless him, thinking at the time that a blessing from the servant of God would protect him from the further effects of the dreadful plague.

[247]

The Israelites left Egypt in haste, yet in order. They were divided into several bodies, and each division had its leader. The obstinacy of Pharaoh was such that after they had buried their dead, and they saw that the dreadful judgments of God had ceased, he repented of having given Moses permission to depart. The Egyptians regretted that they had been so foolish as to think that the death of their first-born was the result of the power of God. They asked in bitterness of one another, Why have we done this and let Israel go from serving us? Pharaoh prepared a well-equipped army, composed of the priests

of their idol gods, and of the rulers, and all the great men of his kingdom. They thought if their priests accompanied them, they would be more sure of success. The most mighty of Egypt were selected that they might intimidate the Israelites with the grand display of their power and greatness. They thought that when the news should reach other nations, that they were compelled to yield to the power of the God of Israel whom they had despised, they would be looked upon with derision. But if they should go with great pomp, and bring Israel back with force, they would redeem their glory, and would also have the services of the children of Israel again. They overtook the Hebrews at the Red Sea. This place was appointed for the last display of the power of God before the infatuated Egyptians. In the morning they came up to the Red Sea, and saw the Hebrew host walking upon a dry path prepared for them in the sea, while high walls of water stood upon either side, congealed by the power of God. This exhibition of God's power only increased their feelings of rebellion, and they had so long resisted such manifestations, that they were hardened, and in their blindness rushed into the path God had miraculously prepared for his people. Then were fulfilled the words which the Lord spake to Moses, "And against all the gods of Egypt, I will execute judgment. I am the Lord." The judgment of God was manifested in the utter destruction of the Egyptian host.

[248]

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Chapter 20—Their Journeyings

For three days the children of Israel traveled in the wilderness, and could find no good water to drink. They were suffering with thirst, and the people murmured against Moses, saying, “What shall we drink? And he cried unto the Lord; and the Lord shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet. There he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them, and said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians; for I am the Lord that healeth thee.” The children of Israel seemed to possess an evil heart of unbelief. They were unwilling to endure hardships in the wilderness. When they met with difficulties in the way, they would regard them as impossibilities. Their confidence in God would fail, and they could see nothing before them but death. “And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots, and when we did eat bread to the full! For ye have brought us forth into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”

They had not really suffered the pangs of hunger. They had food for the present, but they feared for the future. They could not see how the host of Israel was to subsist, in their long travels through the wilderness, upon the simple food they then had, and in their unbelief they saw their children famishing. The Lord was willing that they should be brought short in their food, and that they should meet with difficulties, that their hearts should turn to Him who had hitherto helped them, that they might believe in him. He was ready to be to them a present help. If in their want they would call upon him, he would manifest to them tokens of his love, and continual

care. But they seemed to be unwilling to trust the Lord any farther than they could witness before their eyes the continual evidences of his power. If they had possessed true faith and a firm confidence in God, inconveniences and obstacles, or even real suffering, would have been cheerfully borne, after the Lord had wrought in such a wonderful manner for their deliverance from servitude. Moreover, the Lord promised them if they would obey his commandments, no disease should rest upon them; for he says, "I am the Lord that healeth thee."

After this sure promise from God, it was criminal unbelief in them to anticipate that themselves and children might die with hunger. They had suffered greatly in Egypt by being overtaxed in labor. Their children had been put to death, and in answer to their prayers of anguish, God had mercifully delivered them. He promised to be their God, and take them to himself as a people, and to lead them to a large and good land. But they were ready to faint at any suffering they should endure in the way to that land. They had endured much in the service of the Egyptians; but now could not endure suffering in the service of God. They were ready to give up to gloomy doubts, and sink in discouragement, when they were tried. They murmured against God's devoted servant, Moses, and charged him with all their trials, and expressed a wicked wish that they had remained in Egypt, where they could sit by the flesh-pots and eat bread to the full. [251]

The unbelief and murmurings of the children of Israel illustrate the people of God now upon the earth. Many look back to them, and marvel at their unbelief and continual murmurings, after the Lord had done so much for them, in giving them repeated evidences of his love and care for them. They think that they should not have proved thus ungrateful. But some who thus think, murmur and repine at things of less consequence. They do not know themselves. God frequently proves them, and tries their faith in small things, and they do not endure the trial any better than did ancient Israel.

Many have their present wants supplied, yet they will not trust the Lord for the future. They manifest unbelief, and sink into despondency and gloom at anticipated want. Some are in continual trouble lest they shall come to want, and their children suffer. When difficulties arise, or when they are brought into strait places—when

their faith and love to God is tested, they shrink from the trial, and murmur at the process by which God has chosen to purify them. Their love does not prove pure and perfect, to bear all things. The faith of the people of the God of Heaven should be strong, active, and enduring—the substance of things hoped for. Then the language of such will be, Bless the Lord, oh my soul, and all that is within me, [252] bless his holy name; for he hath dealt bountifully with me. Self-denial is considered by some to be real suffering. Depraved appetites are indulged. And a restraint upon the unhealthy appetite would lead even many professed Christians to now start back, as though actual starvation would be the consequence of a plain diet. And, like the children of Israel, they would prefer slavery, diseased bodies, and even death, rather than to be deprived of the flesh-pots. Bread and water is all that is promised to the remnant in the time of trouble.

“And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoarfrost, on the ground. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna; for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, this is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat. This is the thing which the Lord hath commanded, Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer for every man according to the number of your persons; take ye every man for them which are in his tents.

“And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more, some less. And when they did mete it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack. They gathered every man according to his eating. And Moses said, Let no man leave of it till the morning. Notwithstanding they hearkened [253] not unto Moses; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms and stank. And Moses was wroth with them. And they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating, and when the sun waxed hot, it melted.

“And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man. And all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. And he said unto them, This is that which the Lord hath said, Tomorrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord. Bake that which ye will bake today, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over, lay up

for you, to be kept until the morning. And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade, and it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein. And Moses said, Eat that today; for today is a Sabbath unto the Lord. Today ye shall not find it in the field. Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh-day, which is the Sabbath, in it there shall be none.”

The Lord is no less particular now in regard to his Sabbath than when he gave the foregoing special directions to the children of Israel. He required them to bake that which they would bake, and seethe (that is, boil,) that which they would seethe on the sixth day, preparatory to the rest of the Sabbath. Those who neglect to prepare for the Sabbath on the sixth day, and who cook food upon the Sabbath, violate the fourth commandment, and are transgressors of God’s law. All who are really anxious to observe the Sabbath according to the commandment, will not cook any food upon the Sabbath. They will, in the fear of that God who gave his law from Sinai, deny themselves, and eat food prepared upon the sixth day, even if it is not as palatable. God forbade the children of Israel baking and boiling upon the Sabbath. That prohibition should be regarded by every Sabbath-keeper, as a solemn injunction from Jehovah to them. The Lord would guard his people from indulging in gluttony upon the Sabbath, which he has set apart for sacred meditation and worship. [254]

The Sabbath of the Lord is a day of rest from labor, and the diet upon that day should be more simple, and partaken of in less quantities, than upon the six laboring days, because they do not have that exercise upon the Sabbath that they have upon the other days of the week. Many have erred in not practicing self-denial upon the Sabbath. By partaking full meals, as on the six laboring days, their minds are beclouded. They are stupid, and often drowsy. Some suffer with headache. Such have no truly devotional feelings upon the Sabbath, and the blessing resting upon the Sabbath does not prove a blessing to them. The sick and suffering require care and attention upon the Sabbath, as well as upon the other six days of the week. And it may be necessary for their comfort to prepare warm food and drinks upon the Sabbath. In such instances, it is no violation of the fourth commandment to make them as comfortable [255]

as possible. The great Lawgiver is a God of compassion as well as of justice.

God manifested his great care and love for his people in sending them bread from Heaven. "Man did eat angels' food." That is, food provided for them by the angels. In the three-fold miracle of the manna, a double quantity on the sixth day, and none upon the seventh, and its keeping fresh through the Sabbath, while upon other days it would become unfit for use, was designed to impress them with the sacredness of the Sabbath. After they were abundantly supplied with food, they were ashamed of their unbelief and murmurings, and promised to trust the Lord for the future. But they soon forgot their promise, and failed at the first trial of their faith. They journeyed from the wilderness of Sin and pitched in Rephidim, and there was no water for the people to drink. "Wherefore, the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? Wherefore do ye tempt the Lord? And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst? And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, What shall I do unto this people? They be almost ready to stone me. And the Lord said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel, and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb, and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, Is the Lord among us, or not?"

[256]

God directed the children of Israel to encamp in that place, where there was no water, to prove them, to see if they would look to him in their distress, or murmur, as they had previously done. In view of what God had done for them in their wonderful deliverance, they should have believed in him in their distress. They should have known that he would not permit them to perish with thirst, whom he had promised to take unto himself as his people. But instead of entreating the Lord in humility to provide for their necessity,

they murmured against Moses, and demanded of him, water. God had been continually manifesting his power in a wonderful manner before them to make them understand that all the benefits which they should receive, came from him; that he could give them, or remove them, according to his own will. At times they had a full sense of this, and humbled themselves greatly before the Lord. But when thirsty, or when hungry, they charged it all upon Moses, as though they had left Egypt to please him. Moses was grieved with their cruel murmurings. He inquired of the Lord what he should do, for the people were ready to stone him. The Lord bade him go smite the rock with the rod of God. The cloud of his glory rested directly before the rock. "He clave the rock in the wilderness, and gave them drink as out of the great depths. He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers." Moses smote the rock, but it was Christ who stood by him, and caused the water to flow from the flinty rock. The people tempted the Lord in their thirst, and said, If God has brought us out here, why does he not give us water as well as bread. That *if* showed criminal unbelief, and made Moses afraid that God would punish them for their wicked murmurings. The Lord tested the faith of his people, but they did not endure the trial. They murmured for food, and for water, and complained of Moses. Because of their unbelief, God suffered their enemies to make war with them, that he might manifest to his people from whence cometh their strength. [257]

"Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur, went up to the top of the hill. And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur staid up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun." [258]

Moses held up his hands toward Heaven, with the rod of God in his right hand, entreating help from God. Then Israel prevailed, and drove back their enemies. When Moses let down his hands it was

seen that Israel soon lost all that they had gained, and were being overcome by their enemies. Moses again held up his hands toward Heaven, and Israel prevailed, and the enemy was driven back.

[259] This act of Moses, reaching up his hands toward God, was to teach Israel that while they made God their trust, and laid hold upon his strength, and exalted his throne, he would fight for them, and subdue their enemies. But when they should let go their hold upon his strength, and should trust to their own power, they would be even weaker than their enemies, who had not the knowledge of God, and their enemies would prevail over them. Then Joshua “discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. 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 Jehovah-nissi, for he said, Because the Lord hath sworn that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.” If the children of Israel had not murmured against the Lord, he would not have suffered their enemies to make war with them.

[260] Before Moses had left Egypt he sent back his wife and children to his father-in-law. And after Jethro heard of the wonderful deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, he visited Moses in the wilderness, and brought his wife and children to him. “And Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, and did obeisance, and kissed him; and they asked each other of their welfare, and they came into the tent. And Moses told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done unto Pharaoh, and to the Egyptians for Israel’s sake, and all the travail that had come upon them by the way, and how the Lord delivered them. And Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which the Lord had done to Israel, whom he had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians. And Jethro said, Blessed be the Lord, who hath delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of Pharaoh, who hath delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods; for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly, he was above them. And Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, took a burnt-offering and sacrifices for God. And Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses’ father-in-law, before God.”

Jethro's discerning eye soon saw that the burdens upon Moses were very great, as the people brought all their matters of difficulty to him, and he instructed them in regard to the statutes and law of God. He said to Moses, "Hearken now unto my voice. I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee. Be thou for the people to God-ward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God. And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt show them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do. Moreover, thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness, and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, and rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And let them judge the people at all seasons. And it shall be that every great matter they shall bring unto thee; but every small matter they shall judge. So shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee. If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee so, then thou shalt be able to endure, and all this people shall also go to their place in peace. So Moses hearkened to the voice of his father-in-law, and did all that he had said. And Moses chose able men out of all Israel and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And they judged the people at all seasons. The hard causes they brought unto Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves. And Moses let his father-in-law depart; and he went his way into his own land."

[261]

Moses was not above being instructed by his father-in-law. God had exalted him greatly and wrought wonders by his hand. Yet Moses did not reason that God had chosen him to instruct others, and had accomplished wonderful things by his hand, and he therefore needed not to be instructed. He gladly listened to the suggestions of his father-in-law, and adopted his plan as a wise arrangement.

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Chapter 21—The Law of God

[262] After the children of Israel left Rephidim they came to the “desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the mount. And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel, Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself. Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the Lord commanded him. And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord.”

The people here entered into a solemn covenant with God, and accepted him as their ruler, by which they became the peculiar subjects of his divine authority. “And the Lord said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee forever.” When the Hebrews had met with difficulties in the way, they were disposed to murmur against Moses and Aaron, and accuse them of leading the host of Israel from Egypt to destroy them. God would honor Moses before them, that they might be led to confide in his instructions, and know that he had put his Spirit upon him.

[263] The Lord then gave Moses express directions in regard to preparing the people for him to approach nigh to them that they might hear his law spoken, not by angels, but by himself. “And the Lord said unto Moses, go unto the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes, and be ready against the third day; for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the

people upon Mount Sinai.” The people were required to refrain from worldly labor and care, and to possess devotional thoughts. God required them also to wash their clothes. He is no less particular now than he was then. He is a God of order, and requires his people now upon the earth to observe habits of strict cleanliness. And those who worship God with uncleanly garments and persons do not come before him in an acceptable manner. He is not pleased with their lack of reverence for him, and he will not accept the service of filthy worshipers, for they insult their Maker. The Creator of the heavens and of the earth considered cleanliness of so much importance that he said, “And let them wash their clothes.”

“And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it. Whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death. There shall not a hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through, whether it be beast or man, it shall not live. When the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount.” This command was designed to impress the minds of this rebellious people with a profound veneration for God, the author and authority of their laws. [264]

“And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud, so that all the people that was in the camp trembled.” The angelic host that attended the divine Majesty summoned the people by a sound resembling that of a trumpet, which waxed louder and louder until the whole earth trembled.

“And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire, and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.” The divine Majesty descended in a cloud with a glorious retinue of angels, who appeared as flames of fire.

“And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice. And the Lord came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount, and the Lord called Moses up to the top of the mount, and Moses

went up. And the Lord said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them perish. And let the priests also, which come near to the Lord, sanctify themselves, lest the Lord break forth upon them.”

[265] Thus the Lord, in awful grandeur, speaks his law from Sinai, that the people may believe. He then accompanies the giving of his law with sublime exhibitions of his authority, that they may know that he is the only true and living God. Moses was not permitted to enter within the cloud of glory, but only draw nigh and enter the thick darkness which surrounded it. And he stood between the people and the Lord.

After the Lord had given them such evidences of his power, he tells them who he is. “I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” The same God who exalted his power among the Egyptians now speaks his law.

“Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in Heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them; for I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

“Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

[266] “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates, for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.

“Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

“Thou shalt not kill.

“Thou shalt not commit adultery.

“Thou shalt not steal.

“Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

“Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor’s.”

The first and second commandments spoken by Jehovah are precepts against idolatry, which if practiced would lead men to great lengths in sin and rebellion, and result in the offering of human sacrifices. God would guard against the least approach to such abominations. The first four commandments were given to show men their duty to God. The fourth is the connecting link between the great God and man. The Sabbath especially, was given for the benefit of man, and for the honor of God. These last six precepts show the duty of man to his fellow-man. [267]

The Sabbath was to be a sign between God and his people forever. In this manner was it to be a sign—all who should observe the Sabbath signified by such observance that they were worshipers of the living God, the Creator of the Heavens and the earth. The Sabbath was to be a sign between God and his people as long as he should have a people upon the earth to serve him.

“And the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die. And Moses said unto the people, Fear not, for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not. And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was. And the Lord said unto Moses, Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, Ye have seen that I have talked with you from Heaven.” The majestic presence of God at Sinai, and the commotions in the earth occasioned by his presence, the fearful thundering and lightnings which accompanied this visitation of God, so impressed the minds of the people with fear and reverence to his sacred majesty, that they instinctively drew back from the awful presence of God, lest they should not be able to endure his terrible glory. [268]

Again God would guard the children of Israel from idolatry. He said unto them, “Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither

shall ye make unto you gods of gold.” They were in danger of imitating the example of the Egyptians, and making to themselves images to represent God.

The Lord said to Moses, “Behold, I send an angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions; for my name is in him. But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries. For mine angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; and I will cut them off.” The angel who went before Israel was the Lord Jesus Christ. “Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works; but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and quite break down their images. And ye shall serve the Lord your God, and he shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee.”

[269] God would have his people understand that he alone should be the object of their worship; and when they should overcome the idolatrous nations around them, they should not preserve any of the images of their worship, but utterly destroy them. Many of these heathen deities were very costly, and of beautiful workmanship, which might tempt those who had witnessed idol worship, so common in Egypt, to even regard these senseless objects with some degree of reverence. The Lord would have his people know that it was because of the idolatry of these nations, which had led them to every degree of wickedness, that he would use the Israelites as his instruments to punish them, and destroy their gods.

“I will send my fear before thee, and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee. And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee. I will not drive them out from before thee in one year, lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee. By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land. And I will set thy bounds from the Red Sea even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the

desert unto the river; for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and thou shalt drive them out before thee. Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me; for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee.” [270]

These promises of God to his people were on condition of their obedience. If they would serve the Lord fully, he would do great things for them. After Moses had received the judgments from the Lord, and had written them for the people, also the promises, on condition of obedience, the Lord said unto him, “Come up unto the Lord, thou, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship ye afar off. And Moses alone shall come near the Lord; but they shall not come nigh, neither shall the people go up with him. And Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments; and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord hath said, will we do.”

Moses had written—not the ten commandments, but the judgments which God would have them observe, and the promises, on conditions that they would obey him. He read this to the people, and they pledged themselves to obey all the words which the Lord had said. Moses then wrote their solemn pledge in a book, and offered sacrifice unto God for the people. “And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people, and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words.” The people repeated their solemn pledge to the Lord to obey all that he had said, and to be obedient. [271]

Moses obeyed the command of God, and took with him Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, with seventy of the most influential elders in Israel, who had assisted him in his work, and placed them at such distance that they might behold the majesty of the divine presence, while the people should worship at the foot of the mount. “And they saw the God of Israel, and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand. Also, they saw God, and did eat and drink.”

They did not behold the person of God, but only the inexpressible glory which surrounded him. Previous to this, had they looked upon such sacred glory, they could not have lived, for they were unprepared for it. But the exhibitions of God's power had filled them with fear, which wrought in them repentance for their past transgressions. They loved and revered God, and had been purifying themselves, and contemplating his great glory, purity and mercy, until they could approach nearer him who had been the subject of all their meditations. God had enshrouded his glory with a thick cloud, so that the people could not behold it. The office of the elders whom

[272] Moses took with him, was to aid him in leading the host of Israel to the promised land. This work was of such magnitude that God condescended to put his Spirit upon them. He honored them with a nearer view of the glory which surrounded his exalted majesty, that they might with wisdom act their part in the work assigned them of guiding his people with his fear and glory continually before them.

“And the Lord said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there, and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written, that thou mayest teach them. And Moses rose up, and his minister Joshua; and Moses went up into the mount of God. And he said unto the elders, Tarry ye here for us, until we come again unto you; and, behold, Aaron and Hur are with you; if any man have any matters to do, let him come unto them. And Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount. And the glory of the Lord abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days; and the seventh day he called unto Moses, out of the midst of the cloud. And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount, in the eyes of the children of Israel. And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount; and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights.”

[273] Even Moses could not go at once up into the mount, for he could not immediately approach so nigh unto God, and endure the exhibitions of his glory. Six days he was preparing to meet with God. His common thoughts and feelings must be put away. For six days he was devoting his thoughts to God, and sanctifying himself by meditation and prayer, before he could be prepared to converse with God.

After the Lord had given Moses directions in regard to the sanctuary, he again gave him special instructions in regard to his Sabbath. And then he handed down from the cloud with his own divine hands the tables of stone to Moses, whereon he had engraven with his own finger the ten commandments.

But while Moses was receiving special instructions from God, the children of Israel were corrupting themselves at the foot of the mount. “And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden ear-rings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. And all the people brake off the golden ear-rings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf. And they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it, and Aaron made proclamation, and said, Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord. And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt-offerings, and brought peace-offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.”

[274]

It was the mixed multitude who came from Egypt with the Israelites that were the principal movers in this dreadful departure from God. They were called a mixed multitude, because the Hebrews had intermarried with the Egyptians.

The children of Israel had seen Moses ascend up into the mount, and enter into the cloud while the top of the mountain was all in flames. They waited for his return every day, and as he did not come from the mount as soon as they expected he would, they became impatient. Especially were the believing Egyptians, who left Egypt with the Hebrew host, impatient and rebellious.

A large company assembled around the tent of Aaron, and told him that Moses would never return—that the cloud which had hitherto led them now rested upon the mount, and would no longer direct their route through the wilderness. They desired something which they could look upon to resemble God. The gods of the Egyptians

[275] were in their minds, and Satan was improving this opportunity, in the absence of their appointed leader, to tempt them to imitate the Egyptians in their idolatry. They suggested that if Moses should never return to them, they could return into Egypt, and find favor with the Egyptians, by bearing this image before them, acknowledging it as their god.

Aaron remonstrated against their plans, until he thought the people were determined to carry out their purpose, and he ceased his reasoning with them. The clamors of the people made Aaron afraid of his life. And instead of standing up nobly for the honor of God, and trusting his life in his hands who had wrought wonders for his people, he lost his courage, his trust in God, and cowardly yielded to the wishes of an impatient people, and this, too, in direct opposition to the commands of God. He made an idol, and built an altar whereon they offered sacrifice to this idol. And Aaron submitted to hear the people proclaim, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." What an insult to Jehovah! They had recently listened to the proclamation of the law of God from Sinai, amid the most sublime demonstrations of divine power, and when their faith was tested, by Moses' being from them for a few weeks, they engaged in idolatry which had been so recently specified, and expressly forbidden by Jehovah. By so doing

[276] they transgressed the first and second commandments. God's anger was kindled against them.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them. They have made them a molten calf, and have worshiped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And the Lord said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them. And I will make of thee a great nation."

God saw that the children of Israel, especially the mixed multitude, were continually disposed to rebel, and, by their works, provoke him to destroy them. He knew that they would murmur against Moses when in difficulty, and grieve him by their continual rebel-

lion. He proposed to Moses to consume them, and make of him a great nation. Here the Lord proved Moses. He knew that it was a laborious and soul-trying work to lead that rebellious people through to the promised land. He would test the perseverance, faithfulness and love of Moses, for such an erring and ungrateful people. But Moses would not consent to have Israel destroyed. He showed by his intercessions with God that he valued more highly the prosperity of God's chosen people than a great name, or to be called the father of a greater nation than was Israel. [277]

“And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak and say, For mischief did he bring them out to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it forever.”

The thought that the heathen nations, and especially the Egyptians, would triumph over Israel, and reproach God, was overwhelming to Moses. He could not let Israel go, notwithstanding all their rebellion, and their repeated murmurings against him. How could he give up a people for whom so much had been done, and who had in so wonderful a manner been brought out of Egypt. The news of their deliverance had been spread among all nations, and all people were anxiously watching to see what God would do for them. And Moses remembered well the words of the Egyptians, that he was leading them into the wilderness that they might perish, and he receive their possessions. And now if God should destroy his people, and exalt him to be a greater nation than Israel, would not the heathen triumph, and deride the God of the Hebrews, and say that he was not able to lead them to the land he had promised them? As Moses interceded for Israel before God, his timidity was lost in his deep interest and love for that people for whom he had, in the hands of God, been the means of doing so much. He presented before God his promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He prayed to God with firm [278]

faith and determined purpose. The Lord listened to his pleadings and regarded his unselfish prayer, and promised Moses that he would spare Israel.

Nobly did Moses stand the test, and show that his interest in Israel was not to obtain a great name, nor to exalt himself. The burden of God's people was upon him. God had proved him, and was pleased with his faithfulness, his simplicity of heart, and integrity before him, and he committed to him, as to a faithful shepherd, the great charge of leading his people through to the promised land.

[279] “And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand. The tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written. And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables. And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp. And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome; but the noise of them that sing do I hear. And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing. And Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount. And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strewed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it.”

As Moses beheld the children of Israel shouting and dancing in an excited manner, in imitation of the idolatrous feasts and idol-worshippers of Egypt, so unlike the reverential worship of God, he was overwhelmed. He had just come from the presence of God's glory, and although he had been warned of God that the people had corrupted themselves, had made an idol and had sacrificed to it, yet he was in a measure unprepared for the dreadful exhibition which he witnessed of the degradation of Israel. He threw down the tables of stone in utter discouragement and wrath, because of Israel's great sin before God.

[280] The act of Moses in burning the calf and grinding it to powder, and making them drink of it, was to show them the utter worthlessness of the God which they had been worshiping—that their God had no power at all. Men could burn it in the fire, grind it to powder

and drink it without receiving any injury therefrom. He asked them how then could they expect such a God to save them, or do them any good, or any evil? Then he rehearsed to them the exhibitions which they had witnessed of the unlimited power, glory, and majesty of the living God.

“And it came to pass, when ye heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness, (for the mountain did burn with fire,) that ye came near unto me, even all the heads of your tribes, and your elders. And ye said, Behold, the Lord our God hath shewed us his glory and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire. We have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he liveth. Now therefore why should we die? for this great fire will consume us. If we hear the voice of the Lord our God any more, then we shall die. For who is there of all flesh that hath heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived? Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say; and speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee, and we shall hear it, and do it. And the Lord heard the voice of your words, when ye spake unto me. And the Lord said unto me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto thee They have well said all that they have spoken. Oh, that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children forever!”

[281]

Moses then presented before them their disgraceful conduct in worshipping a calf, the work of man, in the place of offering sincere devotion to the living God. He pointed them to the broken tables of stone, which represented to them, that thus had they broken the covenant which they had so recently made with God. God did not reprove Moses for breaking the tables of stone; but was very angry with Aaron because of his sin, and he would have destroyed him had it not been for the special intercessions of Moses in his behalf. Moses inquired of Aaron, What did this people unto thee that thou hast brought this great sin upon them?

Aaron endeavored to excuse his sin, and related to Moses the clamors of the people—that if he had not complied with their wishes they would have killed him. “And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my Lord wax hot. Thou knowest the people, that they are set

[282] on mischief. For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me; then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.” He would have Moses think that a miracle was performed—that the gold was cast into the fire, and by some miraculous power it was changed to a calf. This was to lessen his guilt in the eyes of Moses, and cause it to appear that he had a plausible excuse for permitting the people to sacrifice to it, and to proclaim, “These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.”

Moses rebuked Aaron, and informed him that his conduct was highly censurable; for he had been blessed above the people, and had been admitted into close converse with God. That he should commit so great a sin, even to save his life, was a matter of astonishment to faithful Moses. He saw that the people were naked; that is, were stripped of their ornaments; for Aaron had made them naked to their shame, among their enemies. He had deprived them of their ornaments, and put them to a shameful use. They had not merely lost their ornaments, but they were divested of their defense against Satan, for they had lost their piety and consecration to God; and had forfeited his protection. He had in his displeasure removed his sustaining hand, and they were left exposed to the contempt and power of their enemies. Their enemies were well acquainted with the wonderful works performed by the hand of Moses in Egypt. And they knew that Moses had brought them from Egypt, in obedience to the command of the God of the Hebrews, to rid them of idolatry, and to secure to himself their undivided affections, and their sacred worship.

[283]

The children of Israel had broken their allegiance with God, and if he should see fit he would punish them as they deserved. “Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the Lord’s side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. And he said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor. And the children of Levi did according to the word of

Moses, and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men. For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves today to the Lord, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother, that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day.”

Moses requested all who had been free from this great sin of idolatry to come and stand by him at his right hand; also, those who had joined the rebellious in worshiping this idol, but who had repented of their sin in so quickly departing from God, to stand at his left hand. There was quite a large company, mostly of the mixed multitude, who instigated the making of the calf who were stubborn in their rebellion, and would not stand with Moses, either at his right hand or at his left. Moses then commanded those at his right hand to take their swords, and go forth and slay the rebellious, who wished to go back into Egypt. None were to execute the judgment of God on the transgressors only those who had taken no part in the idolatry. He commanded them to spare neither brother, companion, nor neighbor. Those who engaged in this work of slaying, however painful, were now to realize that they were executing upon their brethren a solemn punishment from God. And for executing this painful work, contrary to their own feelings, God would bestow upon them his blessing. By performing this act they showed their true feelings relative to the high crime of idolatry, and consecrated themselves more fully to the sacred worship of the only true God. The terror of the Lord was upon the people, and they were afraid that they would all be destroyed. As Moses saw their distress he promised according to their earnest request to plead with the Lord to pardon their great sin.

[284]

“And it came to pass on the morrow that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin, and now I will go up unto the Lord, peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin. And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written. And the Lord said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book. Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee. Behold, mine Angel shall go before thee. Nevertheless, in the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them. And the Lord plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made.”

[285]

[286]

Moses manifested his great love for the people in his entreaty to the Lord to forgive their sin, or blot his name out of the book which he had written. His intercessions here illustrate Christ's love and mediation for the sinful race. The Lord refused to let Moses suffer for the sins of his backsliding people. He declared to him that those who had sinned against him, would he blot out of his book which he had written; for the righteous should not suffer for the guilt of the sinner. The book here referred to is the book of records in Heaven, where every name is recorded, and their acts, their sins, and obedience are faithfully written. When any one commits sins which are too grievous for the Lord to pardon, their names are erased from the book, and they are devoted to destruction. Although Moses realized the dreadful fate of those whose names should be dropped from the book of God, yet he plainly declared before God that if the names of his erring Israel should be blotted out, and be no more remembered by him for good, he wished his name to be blotted out with theirs'. For he could never endure to see the fullness of his wrath come upon the people for whom he had wrought such wonders.

“And the Lord said unto Moses, Depart, and go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I swear unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, Unto thy seed will I give it. And I will send an Angel before thee, and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite. Unto a land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiff-necked people, lest I consume thee in the way. And when the people heard these evil tidings, they mourned. And no man did put on him his ornaments. For the Lord had said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel, Ye are a stiff-necked people. I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment, and consume thee; therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee. And the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments by the mount Horeb. And Moses took the tabernacle and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the tabernacle of the congregation. And it came to pass that every one which sought the Lord, went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was without the camp.”

The tabernacle here mentioned was a temporary tent arranged for the worship of God. The tabernacle, the pattern of which God gave to Moses, had not yet been built. [287]

All who sincerely repented of their sins made supplication unto God in the tabernacle, confessing their sins with great humility, and then returned again to their tents. Then Moses went into the tabernacle. The people watched with the deepest interest to see if God would accept his intercessions in their behalf, and if he condescended to meet with Moses, then they might hope that they should not be utterly consumed. When the cloudy pillar descended and stood at the door of the tabernacle, then all the people wept for joy, and rose up and worshiped, every man in his tent door. They bowed themselves upon their faces to the earth in humility. As the pillar of cloud, a token of God's presence, continued to rest at the door of the tabernacle, they knew that Moses was pleading in their behalf before God. "And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend."

"And Moses said unto the Lord, See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people; and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight. Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, show me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight, and consider that this nation is thy people." Moses was very urgent that the Lord should show him just the course which he would have him pursue toward Israel. He wished to have God mark out his course, that his instructions to Israel might be with such wisdom that the people would receive his teachings, and their course be approved of God, and that he would again consider them as his people. [288]

The Lord answered Moses' anxious inquiry, and said, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not in that thou goest with us? So shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth." He plead with God to know how it should be known that he and his people had found grace in his sight, if he did not let the token of his presence rest upon the tabernacle as

formerly. Moses was not willing to cease his entreaties with God until he should obtain the assurance that the token of his presence would still rest upon the tabernacle as it had done, and that he would continue to direct their journeyings by a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night. Then could Moses the more easily perform his laborious task in leading the people; for this token would be continually reminding them of the living God, and would also be an assurance to them of his divine presence. Then he could the more easily influence the people to right actions, as he could point them to the evidence of the nearness of God to them.

The Lord granted the earnest entreaty of his servant. “And the Lord said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken; for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name. And he said, I beseech thee, show me thy glory. And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee, and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. And he said, Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me, and live. And the Lord said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock. And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock; and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by. And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts; but my face shall not be seen.”

Never before was fallen man thus favored of God. As he laid upon Moses the great work of leading his people through to the promised land, he condescended to manifest to him his glory as he never had to any others upon the earth.

“And the Lord said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first, and I will write upon these tables the words which were in the first tables which thou brakest. And be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning unto mount Sinai, and present thyself there to me in the top of the mount. And no man shall come up with thee, neither let any man be seen throughout all the mount, neither let the flocks nor herds feed before that mount.”

The Lord forbade any man being seen throughout the mount, because of their recent transgression, lest his glory should consume them. This will give all to understand how God regards the transgression of his commandments. If the people could not look upon his

glory, which appeared upon Sinai the second time, as he again wrote his law, how will the wicked, who have trampled upon the authority of God, bear his burning glory as they meet the great Lawgiver over his broken law?

“And he hewed two tables of stone, like unto the first; and Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up unto mount Sinai, as the Lord had commanded him, and took in his hand the two tables of stone. And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.”

[291]

God did not mean in this threatening that the children should be compelled to suffer for their parents’ sins, but that the example of the parents would be imitated by the children. If the children of wicked parents should serve God and do righteousness, he would reward their right-doing. But the effects of a sinful life are often inherited by the children. They follow in the footsteps of their parents. Sinful example has its influence from father to son to the third and fourth generation. If parents indulge in depraved appetites, they will in almost every case see the same acted over in their children. The children will develop characters similar to their parents’; and unless they are renewed by grace, and overcome, they are truly unfortunate. If parents are continually rebellious, and inclined to disobey God, their children will generally imitate their example. Godly parents, who instruct their children by precept and example in the ways of righteousness, will generally see their children following in their footsteps. The example of God-fearing parents will be imitated by their children, and their children’s children will imitate the right example their parents have set before them, and thus the influence is seen from generation to generation.

As the Lord impressed upon the heart of Moses a clear sense of his goodness, his mercy and compassion, he was filled with transports of joy, which led him to worship God with profound reverence. He entreated that the Lord would pardon the iniquity of

[292]

his people, and take them for his inheritance. Then God graciously promised Moses that he would make a covenant before all Israel to do great things for his people, and that he would evidence to all nations his special care and love for them.

God then charged Moses to make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither they should go, lest they should be ensnared thereby. But they should destroy their idol altars, break their images, and cut down their groves, which were dedicated to their idols, and where the people assembled to hold their idolatrous feasts, given in honor of their idol gods. He then said to them, "Thou shalt worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God." God claims, as his due, supreme worship. He gave special directions in regard to his Sabbath. "Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest. In earing time and in harvest thou shalt rest." The Lord knows that Satan is continually at work to lead his people to transgress the law of God, and he condescended to be very definite in his directions to his erring people, that they might not err, and transgress his commandments for want of knowledge. He knew that in the busiest season of the year, when their fruits and grains were to be secured, they would be tempted to transgress the Sabbath, and labor on sacred time. He would have them understand that their blessings would be increased or diminished according to their integrity of soul, or unfaithfulness in his service.

[293]

God is no less particular now in regard to his Sabbath than when he made this requirement of the children of Israel. His eyes is upon all his people, and over all the works of their hands. He will not pass by unnoticed those who crowd upon his Sabbath, and employ time for their own use which belongs to him. Some professed Sabbath-keepers will intrude upon the Sabbath in doing those things which should have been done previous to the Sabbath. Such may think that they gain a little time, but instead of being advantaged by robbing God of holy time, which he has reserved to himself, they will lose. The Lord will afflict them for their transgression of the fourth commandment, and that time they thought to gain, by intruding upon the Sabbath, will prove to them a curse. God's prospering hand withdrawn will cause a decrease in all of their possessions, instead of an increase. God will surely punish the transgressor. Although he may bear with him for a while, his punishment may come suddenly.

Such do not always realize that judgments are from God. He is a jealous God, and requires heart service and perfect obedience to all his commandments.

“And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses’ hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him. And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come nigh him. And Moses called unto them, and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him, and Moses talked with them. And afterward all the children of Israel came nigh, and he gave them in commandment all that the Lord had spoken with him in mount Sinai. And till Moses had done speaking with them, he put a vail on his face. But when Moses went in before the Lord, to speak with him, he took the vail off, until he came out. And he came out, and spake unto the children of Israel that which he was commanded. And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses’ face shone; and Moses put the vail upon his face again, until he went in to speak with him.” [294]

Those who trample upon God’s authority, and show open contempt to the law given in such grandeur at Sinai, virtually despise the Lawgiver, the great Jehovah. The children of Israel, who transgressed the first and second commandments, were charged not to be seen anywhere near the mount, where God was to descend in glory to write the law a second time upon tables of stone, lest they should be consumed with the burning glory of his presence. And if they could not even look upon the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance, because he had been communing with God, how much less can the transgressors of God’s law look upon the Son of God when he shall appear in the clouds of heaven in the glory of his Father, surrounded by all the angelic host, to execute judgment upon all who have disregarded the commandments of God, and have trodden under foot his blood! [295]

The law of God existed before man was created. The angels were governed by it. Satan fell because he transgressed the principles of God’s government. After Adam and Eve were created, God made known to them his law. It was not then written, but was rehearsed to them by Jehovah.

The Sabbath of the fourth commandment was instituted in Eden. After God had made the world, and created man upon the earth, he made the Sabbath for man. After Adam's sin and fall nothing was taken from the law of God. The principles of the ten commandments existed before the fall, and were of a character suited to the condition of a holy order of beings. After the fall, the principles of those precepts were not changed, but additional precepts were given to meet man in his fallen state.

[296] A system was then established requiring the sacrificing of beasts to keep before fallen man that which the serpent made Eve disbelieve, that the penalty of disobedience is death. The transgression of God's law made it necessary for Christ to die a sacrifice, and thus make a way possible for man to escape the penalty, and yet the honor of God's law be preserved. The system of sacrifices was to teach man humility, in view of his fallen condition, and lead him to repentance, and to trust in God alone, through the promised Redeemer, for pardon for past transgression of his law. If the law of God had not been transgressed there never would have been death, and there would have been no need of additional precepts to suit man's fallen condition.

Adam taught his descendants the law of God, which law was handed down to the faithful through successive generations. The continual transgression of God's law called for a flood of waters upon the earth. The law was preserved by Noah and his family, who for right-doing were saved by a miracle of God in the ark. Noah taught his descendants the ten commandments. The Lord preserved a people for himself from Adam down, in whose hearts was his law. He says of Abraham, "He obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws."

[297] The Lord appeared unto Abraham, and said unto him, "I am the Almighty God. Walk before me, and be thou perfect, and I will make a covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee."

He then required of Abraham and his seed circumcision, which was a circle cut in the flesh, as a token that God had cut them out and separated them from all nations as his peculiar treasure. By this sign

they solemnly pledged themselves that they would not intermarry with other nations; for by so doing they would lose their reverence for God and his holy law, and would become like the idolatrous nations around them.

By the act of circumcision they solemnly agreed to fulfill the conditions of the covenant made with Abraham on their part, to be separate from all nations, and be perfect. If the descendants of Abraham had kept separate from other nations, they would not have been seduced into idolatry. By keeping separate from other nations, a great temptation would be removed from them to engage in their sinful practices, and rebel against God. They lost in a great measure their peculiar, holy character, by mingling with the nations around them. To punish them the Lord brought a famine upon their land, which compelled them to go down into Egypt to preserve their lives. But God did not forsake them while they were in Egypt, because of his covenant with Abraham. He suffered them to be oppressed by the Egyptians, that they might turn to him in their distress, and choose his righteous and merciful government, and obey his requirements. [298]

There were but a few families that first went down into Egypt. These increased to a great multitude. Some were careful to instruct their children in the law of God. But many of the Israelites had witnessed so much idolatry that they had confused ideas of God's law. Those who feared God cried to him in anguish of spirit to break their yoke of grievous bondage, and bring them from the land of their captivity, that they might be free to serve him. God heard their cries, and raised up Moses as his instrument to accomplish the deliverance of his people. After they had left Egypt, and the waters of the Red Sea had been divided before them, the Lord proved them to see if they would trust in him who had taken them, a nation from another nation, by signs, temptations, and wonders. But they failed to endure the trial. They murmured against God because of difficulties in the way, and wished to return again to Egypt. To leave them without excuse, the Lord himself condescended to come down upon Sinai, enshrouded in glory, and surrounded by his angels, and in a most sublime and awful manner made known his law of ten commandments. He did not trust them to be taught by any one, not even his angels, but spoke his law with an audible voice in the hearing of all the people. He did not even then trust them to the short [299]

memory of a people who were prone to forget his requirements, but wrote them with his own holy finger upon tables of stone. He would remove from them all possibility of mingling with his holy precepts any tradition, or of confusing his requirements with the practices of men.

He then came still closer to his people, and would not leave them, who were so readily led astray, with merely the ten precepts of the decalogue. He required Moses to write as he should bid him, judgments and laws, giving minute directions in regard to what he required them to perform, and thereby guarded the ten precepts which he had engraved upon the tables of stone. These specific directions and requirements were given to draw erring man to the obedience of the moral law which he is so prone to transgress.

If man had kept the law of God, as given to Adam after his fall, preserved in the ark by Noah, and observed by Abraham, there would have been no necessity of the ordinance of circumcision. And if the descendants of Abraham had kept the covenant, which circumcision was a token or pledge of, they would never have gone into idolatry, and been suffered to go down into Egypt, and there would have been no necessity of God's proclaiming his law from Sinai, and engraving it upon tables of stone, and guarding it by definite directions in the judgments and statutes given to Moses.

[300] Moses wrote these judgments and statutes from the mouth of God while he was with him in the mount. If the people of God had obeyed the principles of the ten commandments, there would have been no need of the specific directions given to Moses, which he wrote in a book, relative to their duty to God and to one another. The definite directions which the Lord gave to Moses in regard to the duty of his people to one another, and to the stranger, are the principles of the ten commandments simplified, and given in a definite manner that they need not err.

The Lord said of the children of Israel, "Because they had not executed my judgments, but had despised my statutes, and had polluted my Sabbaths, and their eyes were after their fathers' idols, wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live." Because of continual disobedience, the Lord annexed penalties to the transgression of his law, which

were not good for the transgressor, or whereby he should not live in his rebellion.

By transgressing the law which God had given in such majesty, and amid glory which was unapproachable, the people showed open contempt of the great Lawgiver, and death was the penalty. “Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them. But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness; they walked not in my statutes [statutes], and they despised my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them. And my sabbaths they greatly polluted. Then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them in the wilderness, to consume them.”

[301]

The statutes and judgments given of God were good for the obedient. “They should live in them.” But they were not good for the transgressor, for in the civil law given to Moses punishment was to be inflicted on the transgressor, that others should be restrained by fear.

Moses charged the children of Israel to obey God. He said unto them, “Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers giveth you.”

The Lord instructed Moses definitely in regard to the ceremonial sacrifices, which were to cease at the death of Christ. The system of sacrifices foreshadowed the offering of Christ as a Lamb without blemish.

The Lord first established the system of sacrificial offerings with Adam after his fall, which he taught to his descendants. This system was corrupted before the flood by those who separated themselves from the faithful followers of God, and engaged in the building of the tower of Babel. They sacrificed to gods of their own [making] instead of the God of Heaven. They did not offer sacrifices because they had faith in the Redeemer to come, but because they thought they should please their gods by offering a great many beasts upon polluted idol altars. Their superstition led them to great extravagances. They taught the people that the more valuable the sacrifice, the greater pleasure would it give their idol gods, and the greater would be the prosperity and riches of their nation. Hence human beings were

[302]

often sacrificed to these senseless idols. Those nations had laws and regulations to control the actions of the people which were cruel in the extreme. Their laws were made by those whose hearts were not softened by grace, and while they would pass over the most debasing crimes, a small offense would call forth the most cruel punishment from those in authority.

[303] Moses had this in view when he said to Israel, “Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep, therefore, and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?”

God was a wise and compassionate lawgiver, judging all cases righteously, and without partiality. While the Israelites were in Egyptian bondage, they were surrounded with idolatry. The Egyptians had received traditions in regard to sacrificing. They did not acknowledge the existence of the God of Heaven. They sacrificed to their idol gods. With great pomp and ceremony they performed their idol worship. They erected altars to the honor of their gods, and they required even their own children to pass through the fire. After they had erected their altars they required their children to leap over the altars through the fire. If they could do this without their being burned, the idol priests and people received it as an evidence that their God accepted their offerings, and favored especially the person who passed through the fiery ordeal. He was loaded with benefits, and was ever afterward greatly esteemed by all the people. He was never allowed to be punished, however aggravating might be his crimes. If another person who leaped through the fire was so unfortunate as to be burned, then his fate was fixed; for they thought that their gods were angry, and would be appeased with nothing short of the unhappy victim’s life, and he was offered up as a sacrifice upon their idol altars.

[304] Even some of the children of Israel had so far degraded themselves as to practice these abominations, and God caused the fire to

kindle upon their children, whom they made to pass through the fire. They did not go to all the lengths of the heathen nations; but God deprived them of their children by causing the fire to consume them in the act of passing through it.

Because the people of God had confused ideas of the ceremonial sacrificial offerings, and had heathen traditions confounded with their ceremonial worship, God condescended to give them definite directions, that they might understand the true import of those sacrifices which were to last only till the Lamb of God should be slain, who was the great antitype of all their sacrificial offerings.