

THE BANNER

READINGS FOR THE WEEK OF PRAYER

To Be Read in the Churches December 24 to 31, 1927

CONVERSION

Reading for Sabbath, December 24th.

It is a sad pity that among professed Christians, especially in these our days, so little is said, taught, and understood, and no prominence is given to this all important experience in the life of Christ's followers. And in the majority of cases when such professed followers are shown their obligations as Christians they ward it off by saying, they are converted ten, twenty, thirty, forty, and even fifty years ago, and are confirmed, baptized, joined church, keeping Sabbaths and all such things. But who as far as the Spirit of the lowly Nazarene is concerned, are positive strangers.

The Master told Nicodemus in words that are too plain to be misunderstood and too important to be overlooked that the one great essential for any man to see the Kingdom if God is the new birth. "Jesus answered and said unto him, verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." John 3:3. Thus the man that is not renewed is entirely incapable to see the Kingdom of God, as is the blind incapable to see any natural object.

Conversion Misapplied.

There is no vital truth and experience necessary for salvation but what Satan seeks to pervert and counterfeit. And this counterfeit very often precedes the true, and creates an excitement which may last for awhile, then dies, or if it continues it is so void of the power to

transform the life, that it becomes the sport of skeptics, and no power to put to shame those that speak evil of it. I. Pet. 3:16; then when the true appears, the casual observer can discern no difference. "A wrong conception of the character, perpetuity, and obligation of the divine law has led to errors in relation to conversion and sanctification, and has resulted in lowering the standard of piety in the church. Here is found the secret of the lack of the spirit and power of God in the revivals of our time." "The Great Controversy," p. 465. This wrong conception leads two ways. One believes that the binding obligation of the law is discontinued at the cross, while the other sees its claim only in the letter like the Jewish leaders to whom Jesus said, "Ye do err not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God." Matt. 22:29. One of the latter, Paul, kept the law blameless in the letter before his conversion but when he was converted he saw new light upon the law. He perceived it to be spiritual. But that he was carnal sold under sin. Therefore whosoever claims to be keeping the law, and is still the slave of sin, still have a wrong conception of the character and obligation of God's law. Because the Spirit gives victory over sin. Rom. 8:2, and "the law of the Lord is perfect converting the soul." Ps. 19:7.

The New Man In Christ.

The Apostle Paul writes to the Ephesians: "Be ye renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Eph. 4:23:24. Thus

conversion is not an improvement of the old man, or a reformation of the Adamic nature as some think, but it is a perfect change from the natural to the divine nature. 2 Pet. 1:4. John writes, "Beloved now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." I John 3:2, 3. One cannot be the son of God until he partakes, the nature of God, that is the idea conveyed in the text. And that is to be so in this present world, not after death or at the coming of Christ. Paul's letter to Titus says so. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men. Teaching us that denying ungodliness (that is anything that is not like God) and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and Godly, (God-like) in this present world." Titus 2:11, 12; we cannot live like God unless we have the nature of God; and we cannot have the nature of God unless the natural or Adamic nature dies. And at that any part of the natural man retained, will prevent the formation of the perfect nature of God to that extent. Peter said after "having escaped the corruption that is in the world." 2 Pet. 1:4.

Different Notions.

Some think that, because, due to some reasons of their own, their attitude to certain habits are changed to habits or customs more pleasing that they are converted. But while conversion involves this it is not necessarily conversion. The

heathen may change his idol and believe on the true God and like Nebuchadnezzar or Constantine may still retain the mind of an idolator and fail to become partaker of the divine nature. So he is reformed but not converted.

Sometimes a sensational sermon which appeals to the imagination, creates an emotional excitement which may lead the individual to connect himself to a church, and for a time or for the rest of his life brings himself in conformity to the teachings of that church outwardly, yet an absolute stranger to the character of Christ. There are others who are ardently desirous to have a change in their lives, but according to wrong ideas originated with themselves, or for which their minister, teacher, mother, or grandmother is responsible, believe that, if they pray, the Lord will send His Spirit and harness and compel them to obey Him, with their minds entirely unchanged. This is a fatal delusion. "Whenever man accomplishes anything, whether in spiritual or in temporal lines, he should bear in mind that he does it through co-operation with his Maker." Christ Object Lesson, p. 82. In like manner in conversion the individual must do something, no matter how infinitesimally small it may be.

The Sinner's Part.

What is the sinner's part in conversion? "Repent and be converted," said Peter. Acts 3:19. However, genuine conversion depends upon genuine repentance and genuine repentance upon genuine sorrow for sin, and this sorrow for sin depends upon the depth of the conviction or sense of guilt. An example of the conversion genuine sorrow for sin has wrought is found in 2 Cor. 7:8-11: "For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: For I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season. Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance, for ye were made sorry after a godly manner. . . . For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be re-

pented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter." In these statements there are found two kinds of repentance or sorrow, godly and worldly sorrow. A striking example is found in the story of Peter and Judas Iscariot. Judas' sorrow was a worldly one which led to death, and if he had even lived for a while, might have made some change in his outward deportment which would evidently have satisfied him, that he is converted while his complicity and conformity to evil both in the church and in the world is absolutely unchanged. With Peter, whose sorrow was just the opposite, the result was different. He sorrowed like the Corinthians, after a godly sort. Like the Psalmist, he said, "against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." Ps. 51:4; and the result was an entire change in his desire, motive, and act. The apostle said the Corinthians gave evidence of conversion by what was wrought among them, when they were grieved with a godly sorrow; what earnestness it wrought in you, what eagerness to clear yourselves from blame; they showed no desire to compromise with evil whether in the church or in the world. They could no more tolerate false teachers among them, and men and women who had no appreciation for Bible truth. They were ready to withdraw the right hand of fellowship from every brother that walketh disorderly: and to avenge those that have been wronged. In all these things he found that they were cleared from every stain of guilt.

Repentance means a change of mind which affects all the desires, purposes, actions, and associations. "Be not conformed to this world but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind that ye may prove what is that good, and accept-

able, and perfect will of God. Rom. 12:2. It is not the calling upon God will save; it is the doing of His perfect will. Mat. 7:21; James 1:25. No person then, can be converted and yet be worldly minded, light, vain, compromising with evil, indulging in known sin, having evil associates, frivolous, dislike those that fear God, stab and destroy the reputation of other people, slanderous, envious, jealous, giving little or no heed to Bible counsel, warnings, and reproofs; dishonest, having no taste for Bible topics. Jesus said he that is of God heareth God's words. John 8:47. The Lord said by the prophet Ezekiel, that the converted man will regard all these things loathsomely. "Then shall ye remember your own evil ways and your doings that were not good and shall lothe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities and for your abominations." Eze. 36:31.

May the love for your own soul prompt the following request: "Saviour, Prince enthroned above, Repentance to impart, Give me, thro' thy dying love, The humble, contrite heart; Give what I have long implor'd, A portion of thy grief unknown; Turn, and look upon me, Lord, And break this heart of stone."

C. A. EDWARDS.

SOUL-WINNING

Reading for Sunday, December 25th.

The one great purpose that brought Jesus into this world of ours, is soul-winning. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16. "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation. To-wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." 2 Cor. 5:18, 19. It is very plain from these statements of Scripture, that the work that Jesus came

here to do was not completed when he returned to heaven. But that the completion is left to every one of his faithful followers. God hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation. What a responsibility! To every child of God "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." And what shall we say to the Lord if through our negligence or disinterestedness those that could have been saved or reconciled are not reconciled.

The One Great Object.

The one great object of the individual who finds Jesus is soul-winning. "Let this mind be Jesus. . . . Now if any man in you which was also in Christ have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his." Phil 2:5; Rom. 8:9. Notice the one great object David had in mind when he prayed for a clean heart; to teach transgressors God's ways and see them converted to him. "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. . . . Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation: And uphold me with thy free spirit. Then (at that time) will I teach transgressors thy ways: and sinners shall be converted unto thee." Ps. 51:10, 7, 11-13. So the work of reconciling sinners to God or teaching transgressors God's way and seeing them converted not to the church or to the minister but to God, must be preceded by the conversion of the one who must minister the word of reconciliation. This perhaps accounts for the failure of church and pulpit to reach the heart of the transgressors more than anything else. A clean hand which is inseparable with a clean heart, is one of the great essentials, because sinners read the Bible in the life of the professed followers of Christ. In the absence of this new life, in the church and pulpit, sinners may join the church, and in large quantities too, but in the majority they are twofold more the children of hell. Matt. 23:15. "To whom

God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you the hope of Glory." Col. 3:27. God will have sinners to come to a full knowledge of himself and of Christ Jesus our Lord: but this knowledge is to be obtained through the believers. But the believers must themselves also have Christ in them in evident to do this work. And Christ in them means a new life. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: (or creation) Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." 2 Cor. 5:17; "Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord." Is. 52:11. "But unto the wicked, God saith, what has thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction and castest my word behind thy back." Ps. 50:16, 17. Men whose hands and heart are not clean and who do not fear God and take delight in his statutes; cannot teach transgressors His (God's) ways. The following refers to those who, though indulging in these wrong acts want to declare his statutes. "When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers. Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thy own mother's son. These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes." Ps. 50:18-21. It is nothing short of a reprobate mind, who being in complicity with, and conformity to all, or any one of these evils outlined in Psalm 50:18-21 and still believe he can teach sinners the ways of God. For such ways are not the ways of God though he thinks so. And as man is more prone to imitate the evil, the sinner will unconsciously imitate the evil, which will make him twofold more the child of hell than himself. When men who make profession of Godliness and espe-

cially leaders, will, maliciously and slanderously make it their chief business to attack and rend to pieces, the character of other people and especially other leaders because they are not in harmony with them, and lead lay members to be so engaged, can such teach sinners God's ways? And if sinners join the church under the labor of such men can such sinners be converted to God? Methinks I hear you honest-hearted reader shout NO! This does not carry the idea, that evil and un-Christlike practices and doctrinal errors in a church or denomination should not be strenuously pointed out and denounced in a general way. Every renewed or converted soul is a light-bearer or a reflector of the glory of Christ. It is beautifully stated by Paul to the Corinthians in the following expression: "And we all, while with face unveiled we behold as in a mirror the brightness of our Lord's glory, are ourselves transformed into the same likeness. And the glory which shines upon us is reflected by us, even as it proceedeth from the Lord the Spirit." 2 Cor. 3:18. Conybeare and Howson translation. It is very plain here that there can not be one soul whose soul has been lightened with the glory of God and yet fail to enlighten others. If you fail to do so sin is at your door and its veil hangs dark between that soul and his Lord. Christ Object Lesson contains the following: "In profession they claim to be sons of God, but in life and character they deny the relationship. They do not surrender the will to God. They are living a lie. . . . Satan uses the listless, sleepy indolence of professed Christians to strengthen his forces and win souls to his side. Many who think that though they are doing no actual work for Christ, they are yet on his side, are enabling the enemy to preoccupy ground and gain advantage. By their failure to be diligent workers for the Master, by leaving duties undone, and words unspoken they have allowed Satan to gain control of souls who might have been won for Christ. We can never be

saved in indolence and inactivity. There is no such thing as a truly converted person living a helpless, useless life. It is not possible for us to drift into heaven. No sluggard can enter there. If we do not strive to gain an entrance into the Kingdom, if we do not seek earnestly to learn what constitutes its laws, we are not fitted for a part in it. Those who refuse to co-operate with God on earth, would not co-operate with Him in heaven. It would not be safe to take them to heaven. There is more hope for publicans and sinners than for those who know the word of God but refuse to obey it. He who sees himself a sinner with no cloak for his sin, who knows that he is corrupting soul, body, and spirit before God, becomes alarmed lest he be eternally separated from the kingdom of heaven. He realizes his diseased condition, and seeks healing from the great Physician who has said, "him that cometh to Me I will in nowise cast out." These souls the Lord can use as workers in His vineyard. The son who for a time refused obedience to his father's command was not condemned by Christ; and neither was he commended. The class who act the part of the first son in refusing obedience deserve no credit for holding this position. Their frankness is not to be regarded as a virtue. Sanctified by truth and holiness it would make men bold witnesses for Christ; but used as it is by the sinner it is insulting and defiant, and approaches to blasphemy (as that class of sinners teaches in Ps. 50:16-21.) The fact that a man is not a hypocrite does not make him any the less really a sinner. When the appeals of the Holy Spirit come to the heart, our only safety lies in responding to them without delay when the call comes, "Go work today in My vineyard," do not refuse the invitation. "Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." It is unsafe to delay obedience. You may never hear the invitation again. Let none flatter themselves that sins cherished for a time can easily be given up by and by. This is not so. Every sin cher-

ished weakens the character and strengthens habit; and physical, mental and moral depravity is the result. You may repent of the wrong you have done, and set your feet in right paths; but the mould of your mind and your familiarity with evil will make it difficult for you to distinguish between right and wrong. Through the wrong habits formed, Satan will assail you again and again. In the command, "Go work today in My vineyard," the test of sincerity is brought to every soul. Will there be deeds as well as words? Will the one called put to use all the knowledge he has, working faithfully, disinterestedly, for the Owner of the vineyard? The Apostle Peter instructs us as to the plan on which we must work. "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you," he says, "through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord according as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertaineth unto life and Godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience Godliness; and to Godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity." If you cultivate faithfully the vineyard of your soul, God is making you a laborer together with Him. And you will have a work to do not only for yourself, but for others. . . . "All who would be sons and daughters of God must prove themselves co-workers with God and Christ and the heavenly angels. This is the test for every soul."

"With the consecrated worker for God, in whatever place he may be the Holy Spirit abides." . . . "But unless, unless the members of God's church, church today have a living connection with the source of all spiritual growth, they will not be ready for the time

of reaping. . . . Those only who are constantly receiving fresh supplies of grace will have power proportionate to their daily need and their ability to use that power. Instead of looking forward to some future time when, through a special endowment of spiritual power, they will receive a miraculous fitting up for soul-winning, they are yielding themselves daily to God, that He may make them vessels meet for His use. Daily they are improving the opportunities for service that lie within their reach. Daily they are witnessing for the Master wherever they may be, whether in some humble sphere of labor in the home or in a public field of usefulness." Acts of The Apostle P.P. 51:53:55. I believe in these statements many of us have seen how unfaithful we have been in the past with the word of reconciliation with which we have been entrusted and have already decided to show for the ensuing year, far greater activity for the salvation of precious souls for whom Christ died.

C. A. EDWARDS.

THE COMING OF OUR LORD JESUS TO RE- CEIVE HIS CHURCH

*Reading for Monday, December
26th.*

One of the most solemn and yet most glorious truths revealed in the Bible is that of Christ's second coming, to complete the great work of redemption. To God's pilgrim people, so long left to sojourn in "the region and shadow of death," a precious, joy-inspiring hope is given in the promise of His appearing, who is "the resurrection and the life" to "bring home again his banished." The doctrine of the second advent is the very key-note of the sacred Scriptures. From the day when the first pair turned their sorrowing steps from Eden, the children of faith have waited the coming of the Promised One to break the destroyer's power and bring them again to the lost paradise. Holy men of old looked forward to the advent of the Mes-

siah in glory, as the consummation of their hope. Enoch, only the seventh in descent from them that dwelt in Eden, he who for three centuries on earth walked with his God, was permitted to behold from afar the coming of the Deliverer. "Behold," he declared, "the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all." The patriarch Job in the night of his affliction exclaimed with unshaken trust: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; . . . in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another."

The coming of Christ to usher in the reign of righteousness, has inspired the most sublime and impassioned utterances of the sacred writers. The poets and prophets of the Bible have dwelt upon it in words glowing with celestial fire. The psalmist sung of the power and majesty of Israel's King: "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence. . . . He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people." "Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad before the Lord; for he cometh to judge the earth; he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth."

Said the prophet Isaiah: "Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise." "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth; for the Lord hath spoken it. And it shall be said in the day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

And Habakuk, rapt in holy vision, beheld His appearing, God came from Teman, and the

Holy One from Mount Paran. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. And his brightness was as the light." He stood, and measured the earth; he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow; his ways are everlasting." Thou didst ride upon thine horses and thy chariots of salvation." "The mountains saw thee, and they trembled. . . . The deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high. The sun and moon stood still in their habitation; at the light of thine arrows they went, and at the shining of thy glittering spear." "Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, even for salvation with thine anointed."

When the Saviour was about to be separated from his disciples, he comforted them in their sorrow with the assurance that he would come again: "Let not your heart be troubled." "In my Father's house are many mansions." "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself." "The Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him. Then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations."

The angels who lingered upon Olivet after Christ's ascension, repeated to the disciples the promise of his return: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as we have seen him go into heaven." And the apostle Paul, speaking by the Spirit of inspiration, testified: "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." Says the prophet of Patmos: "Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him."

About his coming cluster the glories of that "restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." Then the long-continued rule of evil shall be broken; "the kingdoms of this

world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and his Christ; and he shall reign forever and forever." "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together." The Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations." He shall be "for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people."

It is then that the peaceful and long-desired kingdom of the Messiah shall be established under the whole heaven. "The Lord shall comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places, and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord." "The glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon." "Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate; but thou shalt be called My Delight, and thy land Beulah." "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee."

The coming of the Lord has been in all ages the hope of his true followers. The Saviour's parting upon Olivet, that he would come again, lighted up the future for his disciples, filling their hearts with joy and hope, that sorrow could not quench, nor trials dim. Amid suffering and persecution, "the appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" was the "blessed hope." When the Thessalonian Christians were filled with grief as they buried their loved ones, who had hoped to live to witness the coming of the Lord, Paul, their teacher, pointed them to the resurrection, to take place at the Saviour's advent. Then the dead in Christ shall rise, and together with the living be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. "And so," he said, "shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

On rocky Patmos the beloved disciple hears the promise, "Surely, I come quickly," and his longing response voices the prayer of the church in all her pilgrimage, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

From the dungeon, the stake, the scaffold, where saints and martyrs witnessed for the truth comes down the centuries the utterance of their faith and hope. "Being assured of Christ's personal resurrection, and consequently of their own at his coming, for this cause," says one of these Christians, "they despised death, and were found to be above it." They were willing to go down to the grave, that they might rise free." They looked for the Lord to come from Heaven in the clouds with the glory of his Father," "Bringing to the just the times of the kingdom." The Waldenses cherished the same faith. Wycliffe looked forward to the Redeemer's appearing as the hope of the church.

Luther declared: "I persuade myself verily, that the day of Judgment will not be absent full three hundred years. God will not, cannot, suffer this wicked world much longer." The great day is drawing near in which the kingdom of abominations shall be overthrown."

"This aged world is not far from its end," said Melancthon. Calvin bids Christians "not to hesitate, ardently desiring the day of Christ's coming as of all events most auspicious," and declares that "the whole family of the faithful will keep in view that day." "We must hunger after Christ, we must seek, contemplate," he says, "till the dawning of that great day, when our Lord will fully manifest the glory of his kingdom."

"Has not our Lord Jesus carried up our flesh into heaven?" said Knox, the Scotch reformer "and shall he not return? We know that he shall return, and that with expedition." Ridley and Latimer, who laid down their lives for the truth, looked in faith for the Lord's coming, and therefore I say it—draws to an end. Let us with John, the servant of God, cry in our hearts unto our Saviour Christ, Come, Lord Jesus, come."

"The thoughts of the coming of the Lord," said Baxter, "are most sweet and joyful to me." "It is the work of faith and the character of his saints to love his appearing and to look for

that blessed hope." "If death be the last enemy to be destroyed at the resurrection, we may learn how earnestly believers should long and pray for the second coming of Christ, when this full and final conquest shall be made." "This is the day that all believers should long, and hope, and wait for, as being the accomplishment of all the work of their redemption, and all the desires of their souls." "Hasten, O, Lord, this blessed day!" Such was the hope of the apostolic church of the "church in the wilderness" and of the reformers.

SIGNS OF OUR COMING LORD

Reading, For Tuesday, December 27th.

Prophecy not only foretells the manner and object of Christ's coming, but presents tokens by which men are to know when it is near. Said Jesus: "There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars." "The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory." The Revelator thus describes the first of the signs to precede the second advent: "There was a great earthquake; and the sun became as black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood."

These signs were witnessed before the opening of the present century. In fulfillment of this prophecy there occurred, in the year 1755, the most terrible earthquake that has ever been recorded. Though commonly known as the earthquake of Lisbon, it extended to the greater part of Europe, Africa and America. It was felt in Greenland, in the West Indies, in the island of Madeira, in Norway and Sweden, Great Britain and Ireland. It pervaded an extent of not less than four million square miles. In Africa the shock was almost as severe as in Europe. A great part of Algiers was destroyed,

and a short distance from Morocco, a village containing eight or ten thousand inhabitants was swallowed up. A vast wave swept over the coast of Spain and Africa, engulfing cities and causing great destruction.

It was in Spain and Portugal that the shock manifested its extreme violence. At Caliz the inflowing wave was said to be sixty feet high. Mountains—some of the largest in Portugal—"were impetuously shaken as it were from the very foundation; and some of them opened at their summits, which were split and rent in a wonderful manner, huge masses of them being thrown down into the subjacent valleys. Flames are related to have issued from these mountains."

At Lisbon a sound of thunder was heard underground, and immediately afterward a violent shock threw down the greater part of that city. In the course of about six minutes sixty thousand persons perished. The sea first retired, and laid the bar dry, it then rolled in, rising fifty feet above its ordinary level." "The most extraordinary circumstance which occurred at Lisbon during the catastrophe, was the subsidence of the new quay, built entirely of marble, at an immense expense. A great concourse of people had collected the reach of falling ruins but suddenly the quay sank down with all the people on it, and not one of the dead bodies ever floated to the surface."

The shock of the earthquake "was instantly followed by the fall of every church and convent, almost all the large and public buildings, and one-fourth of the houses. In about two hours afterward, fire broke out in different quarters and raged with violence for the space of nearly three days that the city was completely desolated. The earthquake happened on a holy day, when the churches and convents were full of people, very few of whom escaped." "The terror of the people was beyond description. Nobody wept, it was beyond tears. They ran hither and thither, delirious with horror

and astonishment, beating their faces and breasts, crying 'Misericordia! the world's at an end! Mothers forgot their children, and ran loaded with crucified images. Unfortunately, many ran to the churches for protection; but in vain was the sacrament exposed; in vain did the poor creatures embrace the altars; images, priests, and people were buried in one common ruin." "Ninety thousand persons were supposed to have been lost on that fatal day." Twenty-five years later appeared the sign next mentioned in prophecy—the darkening of the sun and moon. What rendered this more striking was the fact that the time of its fulfillment had been definitely pointed out. In the Saviour's conversation with his disciples upon Olivet, after describing the long period of trial for the church—the 1260 years of papal persecution, concerning which he had promised that the tribulation should be shortened—he thus mentioned certain events to precede his coming, and fixed the time when the first of these should be witnessed: "In those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light." The 1260 days or years terminated in 1798. A quarter of a century earlier, persecution had almost ceased. Between these two dates, according to the words of Christ, the sun was to be darkened. On the 19th of May, 1780, this prophecy was fulfilled.

"Almost if not altogether alone as the most mysterious and yet unexplained phenomenon of its kind, . . . stands the dark day of May 19, 1780—a most unaccountable darkening of the whole visible heavens and atmosphere in New England." That the darkness was not due to an eclipse is evident from the fact that the moon was then nearly full. It was not caused by clouds, or the thickness of the atmosphere for in some localities where the darkness extended, the sky was so clear that the stars could be seen. Concerning the inability of science to assign a satisfactory cause for this manifestation, Herschel, the astronomer

declares: "The dark day in North America was one of those wonderful phenomena of nature which philosophy is at a loss to explain."

"The extent of the darkness was also very remarkable. It was observed at the most easterly regions of New England; westward, to the farthest part of Connecticut, and at Albany, N. Y.; to the southward, it was observed all along the sea coast; and to the north, as far as the American settlements extended. It probably far exceeded those boundaries, but the exact limits were never positively known. With regard to its duration, it continued in the neighborhood of Boston for at least fourteen or fifteen hours."

"The morning was clear and pleasant, but about 8 o'clock there was observed an uncommon appearance in the sun. There were no clouds, but the air was thick, having a smoky appearance, and the sun shone with a pale, yellowish hue, but kept growing darker and darker, until it was hid from sight." There was "midnight darkness at noonday."

"The occurrence brought intense alarm and distress to multitudes of minds, as well as dismay to the whole brute creation, the fowls fleeing bewildered to their roosts, and the birds to their nests, and the cattle running to their stalls." Frogs and night hawks began their notes. The cocks crew at daybreak. Farmers were forced to leave their work in the fields. Business was generally suspended, and candles were lighted in the dwellings. "The legislature of Connecticut was in session at Hartford, but being unable to transact business adjourned. Everything bore the appearance and gloom of night."

The intense darkness of the day was succeeded, an hour or two before evening, by a partially clear sky, and the sun appeared, though it was still obscured by the black, heavy mist. But "this interval was followed by a return of the obscuration with greater density, that rendered the first half of the night hideously dark beyond all for-

mer experience of the probable millions of people who saw it. From soon after sunset until midnight, no ray of light from moon or star penetrated the vault above. It was pronounced "the blackness of darkness." Said an eye-witness of the scene: "I could not help conceiving, at the time, that if every luminous body in the universe had been shrouded in impenetrable darkness, or struck out of existence, the darkness could not have been more complete." Though the moon that night rose to the full "it had not the least effect to dispel the death-like shadows." After midnight the darkness disappeared, and the moon, when first visible, had the appearance of blood.

The poet Whittier thus speaks of this memorable day: "Twas on a May-day of the far old year
Seventeen hundred eighty, that there fell
Over the bloom and sweet life of the spring,
Over the fresh earth, and the heaven of noon,
A horror of great darkness."
"Men prayed, and women wept; all ears grew sharp
To hear the doom-blast of the trumpet shatter
The black sky."

May 19, 1780, stands in history as "The Dark Day." Since the time of Moses, no period of darkness of equal density, extent and duration has ever been recorded. The description of this event, as given by the poet and the historian, is but an echo of the words of the Lord, recorded by the prophet Joel, twenty-five hundred years previous to their fulfillment: "The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come."

Christ had bidden his people to watch for the signs of his advent, and rejoice as they should behold the tokens of their coming King. "When these things begin to come to pass," he said, "then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." He pointed his followers to the budding trees of spring, and said: "When they now shoot forth, ye see

THE BANNER

Entered as second-class matter August 7, 1923, at the post office at Savannah, Georgia, under the Act of March 3, 1879.

Published monthly by the Banner Publishing Association, a Corporation of Free S. D. A., 610 W. 36th St., Savannah, Ga.

Price.....10c per Copy, \$1.00 per Year

J. W. MANNS.....Editor
MRS. L. L. JOHNSON.....Associate Editor
J. B. MOSLEY.....Contributing Editor
C. A. EDWARDS.....Contributing Editor

General Assembly Directory

Office Address.....610 W. 36th Street
Telegraphic Address.....610 W. 36th Street
Cable Address.....Adventists, Savannah, Ga.

Executive Committee

(Office Address: 610 W. 36th Street)

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In fixing the dates for the week of prayer among Free Seventh-day Adventists, it will be noticed that we have returned practically to the time when this season of prayer was conducted among Seventh-day Adventists years ago. We believe in the old principles of the Message as were taught by the founders of the Adventists' Movement. Therefore, we will strive to find our way back to the old land-marks.

It is desired that this season of prayer will be a real blessing to every believer in the Third Angel's Message, and that it also will be the means of bringing souls to the fold of Christ.

Every soul who loves Christ supremely should let his actions show it during the heathen holiday festivals as well as at other times during the year. So, while the world is in the mad rush during the so-called Christmas time, let the people of God be drawn aside from the world to seek Him for His care and protection.

J. W. MANNS.

"Keep your wants, your joys, your sorrows, your cares and your fears before God."

"Conversion is the act of joining our hands to the pierced hand of the crucified Saviour. The new life begins with the taking of Christ's hand, and His taking hold, in infinite love, of our weak hands."

Signs of the Coming Lord
(Continued)

and know your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand."

But as the spirit of humility and devotion in the church had given place to pride and formalism, love for Christ and faith in his coming had grown cold. Absorbed in worldliness and pleasure-seeking, the professed people of God were blinded to the Saviour's instructions concerning the signs of his appearing. The doctrine of the second advent had been neglected; the scriptures relating to it were obscured by misinterpretations, until it was, to a great extent, ignored and forgotten. Especially was this the case in the churches of America. The freedom and comfort enjoyed by all classes of society, the ambitious desire for wealth and luxury, begetting an absorbing devotion to money-making, the eager rush for popularity and power, which seemed to be within the reach of all, led men to center their interests and hopes on the things of this life, and to put far in the future that solemn day when the present order of things should pass away.

When the Saviour pointed out to his followers the signs of his return, he foretold the state of backsliding that would exist just prior to his second advent. There would be, as in the days of Noah, the activity and stir of worldly business and pleasure-seeking — buying, selling, planting, building, marrying, and giving in marriage — with forgetfulness of God and the future life. For those living at this time, Christ's admonition is: "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon your unawares." "Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."

"Prayer is not conquering God's reluctance, but taking hold of God's willingness."

CONDITIONS OF THE
CHURCH FORETOLD

Reading For Wednesday, December 28th.

The condition of the church at this time is pointed out in the Saviour's words in the Revelation: "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and are dead." And to those who refuse to arouse from their careless security, the solemn warning is addressed: "If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee."

It was needful that men should be awakened to their danger; that they should be roused to prepare for the solemn events connected with the close of probation. The prophet of God declares: "The day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?" Who shall stand when He appeareth who is "of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity?" To them that cry, "My God, we know thee," yet have transgressed his covenant, and hastened after another god hiding iniquity in their hearts, and loving the paths of unrighteousness, to these, the day of the Lord is "darkness, and not light, even very dark, and no brightness in it." "It shall come to pass at that time," saith the Lord, "that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees; that say in their hearts, The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil." "I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible." "Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them;" "their goods shall become a booty, and their houses a desolation."

The prophet Jeremiah, looking forward to this fearful time exclaimed: "I am pained at my very heart." "I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war.

Destruction upon destruction is cried."

"That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm." "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, . . . to lay the land desolate, and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it."

In view of that great day the Word of God, in the most solemn and impressive language, calls upon his people to arouse from their spiritual lethargy, and to seek with repentance and humiliation: "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain. Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand." "Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly. Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children . . . Let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet. Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar." "Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting and with weeping, and with mourning. And rend your heart and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness."

To prepare a people to stand in the day of God, a great work of reform was to be accomplished. God saw that many of his professed people were not building for eternity, and in his mercy he was about to send a message of warning to arouse them from their stupor, and lead them to make ready for the coming of their Lord.

This warning is brought to view in Revelation 14. Here is a threefold message represented as proclaimed by heavenly beings, and immediately followed by the coming of the Son of man" to reap the harvest of the earth." The first of these warnings announces the approaching Judgment. The prophet beheld an angel flying in the midst of heaven, having

the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come; and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of water."

This message is declared to be a part of the "everlasting gospel." The work of preaching the gospel has not been committed to angels, but it has been intrusted to men. Holy angels have been employed in directing this work, they have in charge the great movements for the salvation of men, but the actual proclamation of the gospel is performed by the servants of Christ upon the earth.

Faithful men, who were obedient to the promptings of God's Spirit and the teaching of his Word, were to proclaim this warning to the world. They were those who had taken heed to the "sure word of prophecy," the "light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise." They had been seeking the knowledge of God more than all hid treasures, counting it "better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof of fine gold." And the Lord revealed to them the great things of the kingdom. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant."

It is not the leaders in the church who had an understanding of this truth, and engaged in its proclamation. Had these been faithful watchmen, diligently and prayerfully searching the Scriptures, they would have known the time of night, the prophecies would have opened to them the events about to take place. But they did not occupy this position, and the message was given by another class. Said Jesus, "Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you." Those who turn away from the light which God has given, or who neglect to seek it when it is within their reach, are left in darkness. But the Saviour declares, "He that

followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Whoever is with singleness of purpose seeking to do God's will, earnestly heeding the light already given, will receive greater light; to that soul some star of heavenly radiance will be sent, to guide him into all truth.

At the time of Christ's first advent, the priests and scribes of the holy city, to whom were intrusted the oracles of God, might have discerned the signs of the times, and proclaimed the coming of the Promised One. The prophecy of Micah designated his birthplace; Daniel specified the time of his advent. God had committed these prophecies to the Jewish leaders; they were without excuse if they did not know and declare to the people that the Messiah's coming was at hand. Their ignorance was the result of sinful neglect. The Jews were building monuments for the slain prophets of God, while their deference to the great men of earth they were paying homage to the servants of Satan. Absorbed in their ambitious strife for place and power among men, they lost sight of the divine honors proffered them by the King of Heaven.

With profound and reverent interest the elders of Israel should have been studying the place, the time, the circumstances, of the greatest event in the world's history — the coming of the Son of God to accomplish the redemption of man. All the people should have been watching and waiting that they might be among the first to welcome the world's Redeemer. But, lo, at Bethlehem two weary travelers from the hills of Nazareth traverse the whole length of a narrow street to the eastern extremity of the town, vainly seeking a place of rest and shelter for the night. No doors are open to receive them. In a wretched hovel prepared for cattle, they at last find refuge, and there the Saviour of the world is born.

Heavenly angels had seen the glory which the Son of God shared with the Father before the world was, and they had

looked forward with intense interest to his appearing on earth as an event fraught with the greatest joy of all people. Angels were appointed to carry the glad tidings to those who were prepared to receive it, and who would joyfully make it known to the inhabitants of earth. Christ had stooped to take upon himself man's nature; he was to bear an infinite weight of woe as he should make his soul an offering for sin; yet angels desired that even in his mutilation, the Son of the Highest might appear before men with a dignity and glory befitting his character. Would the great men of earth assemble at Israel's capital to greet his coming? Would legions of angels present him to the expectant company?

An angel visits the earth to see who are prepared to welcome Jesus. But he can discern no tokens of expectancy. He hears no voice of praise and triumph that the period of Messiah's coming is at hand. The angel hovers for a time over the chosen city and the temple where the divine presence was manifested for ages; but even here is the same indifference. The priests, with their pomp and pride, are offering polluted sacrifices in the temple. The Pharises are with loud voices addressing the people, or making boastful prayers at the corners of the streets. In the palaces of kings, in the assemblies of philosophers, in the schools of the rabbis, all are alike unmindful of the wonderful fact which has filled all Heaven with joy and praise, that the Redeemer of men is about to appear upon the earth.

There is no evidence that Christ is expected, and no preparation for the prince of life. In amazement the celestial messenger is about to return to heaven with the shameful tidings, when he discovers a group of shepherds who are watching their flocks by night, and, as they gaze into the starry heavens, are contemplating the prophecy of a Messiah to come to earth, longing for the advent of the world's Redeemer. Here is a company that are prepared to receive the heaven-

ly messenger. And suddenly the angel of the Lord appeared declaring the good tidings of great joy. Celestial glory flooded all the plain. an innumerable company of angels was revealed, and as if the joy were too great for one messenger to bring from heaven, a multitude of voices broke forth in the anthem which all the nations of the saved shall one day sing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men."

Oh, what a lesson is this wonderful story of Bethlehem! How it rebukes our unbelief, our pride, and self-sufficiency. How it warns us to beware, lest by our criminal indifference we also fail to discern the signs of the times, and therefore know not the day of visitation.

It was not alone upon the hills of Judea, not among the lowly shepherds only, that angels found the watchers for Messiah's coming. In the land of the heathen also were those who look for him; they were wise men, rich and noble, philosophers of the east. Students of nature, the magi had seen God in his handiwork. From the Hebrew Scripture they had learned of the Star to rise out of Jacob, and with eager desire they waited His coming, who should be not only the "Consolation of Israel," but a "Light to lighten the Gentiles," and "for salvation unto the end of the earth." They were seekers for light, and light from the throne of God illumined the path for their feet. While the priests and rabbis of Jerusalem, the appointed guardians and expounders of the truth, were shrouded in darkness, the Heaven-sent star guided these Gentile strangers to the birthplace of the new-born King.

It is "unto them that look for him" that Christ is to "appear the second time, without sin unto salvation." Like the tidings of the Saviour's birth, the message of the second advent was not committed to the religious leaders of the people. They had failed to preserve their connection with God, and had refused light from Heaven; therefore they were not of the number described by the

Apostle Paul: "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness."

The watchman upon the walls of Zion should have been the first to catch the tidings of the Saviour's advent, the first to lift their voices to proclaim him near, the first to warn the people to prepare for his coming. But they were at ease, dreaming of peace and safety, while the people were asleep in their sins. Jesus saw his church, like the barren fig-tree, covered with pretentious leaves, yet obstinate of precious fruit. There was a boastful observance of the forms of religion, while the spirit of true humility, penitence, and faith—which alone could render the service acceptable to God—was lacking. Instead of the graces of the Spirit, there were manifested pride, formalism, vain-glory, selfishness, oppression. A backsliding church closed their eyes to the signs of the times. God did not forsake them, or suffer his faithfulness to fail; but they departed from him, and separated themselves from his love. As they refused to comply with the conditions his promises were not fulfilled to them.

Such is the sure result of neglect to appreciate and improve the light and privileges which God bestows. Unless the church will follow on in his opening providence, accepting every ray of light, performing every duty which may be revealed, religion will inevitably degenerate into the observance of forms, and the spirit of vital godliness will disappear. This truth has been repeatedly illustrated in the history of the church. God requires of his people works of faith and obedience corresponding to blessings and privileges bestowed. Obedience requires a sacrifice and involves a cross; and this is why so many of the professed followers refused to receive the light from Heaven and, like the Jews of old, knew not the time of their visitation. Because of their pride and unbelief, the

Lord passed them by and revealed his truth to those who, like the shepherds of Bethlehem and the Eastern magi, had given heed to all the light they had received.

BELIEF IN CHRIST

Reading For Thursday, December 29th

Whosoever beliveth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God (1 John 5:1.) This statement of Scripture strongly refutes the idea of faith in Christ in the absence of the new birth. So then, every one of us who profess faith in the Son of God and knows nothing of this new life experience, we ought to sit up and thoroughly examine ourselves. Both ministers and lay members and decide this issue before the dawn of 1928, whether we be in the faith. The Apostle admonished that we find by this examination how Jesus Christ is in us (2 Cor. 13:5), but he said "how," which seems to imply the impossibility of him being in us and yet we remain unchanged in our natural disposition. And if our heart condemns us let us remember that God is greater than our heart (2 John 3:20.) And again the Scripture speaks "Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creature (new creation). Old things are passed away: behold all things are become new." (2 Cor. 5-17). There can be no unconverted man in Christ Jesus; in other words there can be no unconverted man who believes in Christ. It's a contradiction of the Scripture to think otherwise. You may ask how about Peter? Well, a careful study of Peter's attitude will reveal the fact, that, he did not fully believe all that Jesus told him concerning himself, and not until what or some of what Jesus told him of himself came to pass, that he fully realized his weakness which brought the contrition that was necessary for the new experience. That accounts for him following his Master for three and one half years without this renewed mind. If any man be in Christ and if Christ be in any man, old

things are gone. "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself and that wicked one toucheth him not" (1 John 5:18); Jesus said "we know," but this is not generally known among professed followers of Christ today. No they trust in lying words that cannot profit. Formerly Israel said "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these." Yet said the Lord will they steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, follow the customs of the heathen, and go into the Lord's house and say we are delivered to do these abominations (Jer. 7.4, 9, 10, 77). So likewise professed Christians today, many are trusting in lying words that cannot profit, confirmation, baptism, join the church, and with others the Sabbath of the Lord, the Sabbath of the Lord are these. But they will steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, follow the customs and practices of the ungodly (of which Christmas celebration is one) and there is no difference between the vilest sinner and the professed Christian, except on Sabbath or on Sunday, they appear in the house that is called by Jehovah's name and say we are delivered. "Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the Lord (Jer 7:11). But said the great God, the king of the universe, "Amend your ways and your doings. Trust ye not in lying words."

True Children of God

The true children of God are those that are born of God and his spirit through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born (converted) of the spirit is spirit" (John 3:6), and of these it is said, some were fornicators, some idolators, some adulterers, some were thieves, some were coveters, some were drunkards, revilers, and extortioners, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God." (1 Cor. 6.9-11). "But God be thanked that

ye were the servant of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which were delivered you. And being made free from sin, ye became the servant of righteousness." (Rom. 6.17-18.)

The same word which washed, sanctified and justified the Corinthians, and made the Romans freed from sin and became the servants of righteousness, is the self same word that by the same gospel is being preached to you and me; and if we will obey it with the whole heart it will give us the same experience that it gave to them. But it seems to me that, right here, is where we as professed followers of Christ are making all the blunders. We are making effort after effort to become the servants of righteousness, while we are yet the servants of sin. But I believe this is the very thing the apostle meant to correct when he said, "Let not sin reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." (Rom. 6:12). Sin in the text means the inborn tendencies to evil in all men. The natural man himself in distinction from sins which is the manifestation of that nature. Now if he rules in our body we must surely obey him no matter what may be the desire to the contrary. Paul had had that awful struggle which made him feel wretched until Jesus delivered him. Read Romans 7 from the 15 to 25 verse.

New Born Babes

One of the vitally essential characteristics of the newly born babe is growth. The child that is not growing is sick, and must have attention, otherwise it will die and not live. The doctor must be called, for there is pathological or destructive process at work in the body producing degenerative changes in the cells and tissues. The same is true of the newly born child of God, he must grow, the apostle John saw them grown to be fathers. From babyhood to children, to young men, and to fathers. (1 John 2:12-14). And if there is no growth the baby must be examined for destructive changes in his spiritual composition, that are produced

by defective spiritual nutrition, defective elimination, or the accumulation of poisonous material in his life, and like David who feared this defective elimination asked to be "purged with hysop" and be nourished by the Spirit (Ps. 51:7-12). But we are told to examine ourselves. There can be no better person for this work. There is none who can be as true to you as yourself, none who can discover so accurately the obstruction between yourself and Jesus as yourself. Except your understanding of Christ be so bad that you cannot discern between the perfect nature of Christ and your carnal nature. But said John, "We know that the Son of God is come and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him (we know we are in him) that is true even in his son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life." (1 John 5:20). To know we are in him is life eternal. If we are not in him, and we do not know it, then, we are reprobates and no reprobate can have eternal life. (1 Cor. 13.5). "But I trust that ye shall know that which generates prevent the growth of the newly born babes in Christ—is named by Peter in his first epistle, verse one.

Malice, guile, hypocrisies, envies, evil speaking. Another reason why many for years do not grow spiritually is due to a lack of spiritual exercise. "For when ye ought to after so long a time," said Paul, "to be teachers ye need again to be taught of the poisonous materials we are not reprobates. Some yourselves what are the first principles of the oracles of God; and ye have come to need milk instead of meat. For every one that feeds on milk is ignorant of the doctrine of righteousness, for he is a babe; but meat is for men full grown, who, through habit, have their senses exercised to know good from evil." Heb. 5:12-14. But notice carefully reader, do not overlook this first great essential, "Born," or converted. Many of us are making this mistake seeking to grow without being yet born. Beloved let us make right with God. Thru

constant surrender to God you will be enabled to live the new life. Another year is dawning, another year of unfaithfulness to our God. According to statistics 40,000,000 are dying yearly, 109,589 daily, 4,566 hourly, 76 minutely. You are not numbered among the millions for this year yet; but you may be among the 4,566 for the next hour or the 109,589 for tomorrow or the 40,000,000 scheduled for 1928, now then be wise, thou canst be saved, why not now? "Tomorrow's sun may never rise to bless thy long deluded sight," it may be

"The last call of mercy now lingers for thee;
O sinner, receive it, to Jesus now flee!
He often has called thee, but thou hast refused;
His offered salvation and love are abused.
O slight not the warning now offered at last,
Till summer is ended and harvest is past;
Till mercy, long slighted, has left thy heart's door,
And pardon, sweet pardon is offered no more.
While Jesus is calling, O turn not away;
For swiftly approaches the dread Judgment day.
The Spirit invites you, O why will you roam?
Come now to life's waters, ye thirsty ones, come."

Let us give Him our hearts, let us will to serve Him; let us believe His promise, let us believe, receive, and obey His words. Let us resist the Spirit of God no longer for it will not always strive with man, and one day if we continue it will leave us as the antediluvian. Let us receive the Spirit of God and grieve Him no more; the Spirit whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption. We have long served the flesh and it gives, and will give us nothing, but sin and shame. Said Jesus: "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words which I speak unto you they are Spirit, and they are life." John 6:63. Remember this, whosoever you may be, and to whatever denomination you may belong, you are not going to be saved

because you belong to this or that church and people. But if you are saved you will be saved because you are a member of the Body of Christ, the true Church, and all who belong to that Body are born of God, converted, washed, sanctified, justified, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and by the Spirit of God. And sin shall not have dominion over them that they should obey it in the lust thereof. C. A. E.

THE MESSAGE TO THE CHURCH OF THE LAODICEANS

Reading For Sabbath, Dec. 31st.

"The message to the Church of the Laodiceans is a startling denunciation, and is applicable to the people of God at the present time." Vol. 3:252, Vol. 1:186, Vol. 4:87.

This does not mean that every individual among God's people are in this Laodicean or apostate condition. When ancient Israel had apostatized in the time of Elijah, God had 7,000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal. So when modern Israel has apostatized God has a remnant who are keeping their garments spotless. But nearly all of them, the great majority are in this Laodicean condition.

"And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write: These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would that thou wert cold or hot.

"So then because thou art luke warm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

"Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked.

"I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-

salve, that thou mayest see.

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore, and repent."

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Rev. 3:14-20.

Here is a class of people living just before the Lord comes, who believe they are so spiritually blessed of God that they are almost ready for translation (They are in need of nothing) when the straight testimony comes from the faithful and true witness that they are not even Christians (they are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked) the true witness counsels them to buy. ("We must buy—be zealous and repent of our lukewarm state.") Vol. 1:142. Faith that works by love and the righteousness of Christ. No one can be a Christian without the righteousness of Christ and without faith that works by love. The true witness says this class of people are unable to tell right from wrong and do not know their own standing before God. Of all the messages to the churches from the time of John the Revelator down to the coming of Jesus in the clouds of heaven, showing the spiritual condition of the churches in different periods of the Christian era, the Laodicean Church is the only one in which Jesus has no words of praise. Examine the messages in the second and third chapters of Revelation. The only hopeful thing about the message is that the day of salvation has not closed and that Jesus is knocking at the door of their hearts and if they will open to him he will come in and sup with them.

"It (Laodicean Message) is designed to arouse the people of God, to discover to them their backslidings, and to lead to zealous repentance, that they may be favored with the presence of Jesus, and be fitted for the loud cry of the third angel." Vol. 1:186.

"If any man will not be purified through obeying the truth, and overcome their selfishness, their pride, and evil passions, the angels of God have the

charge: 'They are joined to their idols, let them alone,' and they pass on to their work, leaving these with their sinful traits unsubdued, to the control of evil angels." Vol. 1:187.

A Great Reformatory Movement and the Work.

"I have been deeply impressed by scenes that have recently passed before me in the night season. There seemed to be a great movement—a work of revival—going forward in many places. Our people were moving into line, responding to God's call." "God calls upon those who are willing to be controlled by the Holy Spirit to lead out in a work of thorough reformation. I see a crisis before us, and the Lord calls for his laborers to come in line. Every soul should now stand in a position of deeper, truer consecration to God than during the years that have passed." "Do not the Scriptures call for a more pure and holy work than we have yet seen?"

"The time has come for a thorough reformation to take place. When this reformation begins, the spirit of prayer will actuate every believer, and will banish from the church the spirit of discord and strife. Those who have not been living in Christian fellowship will draw close to one another. . . . The barriers separating believer from unbeliever will be broken down, and God's servants will speak the same things. The Lord will co-operate with his servants." — Testimonies, Vol. VIII, p. 251.

"God calls for a spiritual revival and a spiritual reformation. . . . A revival and a reformation must take place under the ministration of the Holy Spirit. Revival and reformation are two different things. Revival signifies a renewal of spiritual life, a quickening of the powers of mind and heart, a resurrection from spiritual death. Reformation signifies a reorganization, a change of ideas, theories, habits, and practices. . . . Revival and reformation are to do their appointed work." Special Testimony 1905.

"In visions of the night representations passed before me

of a great reformatory movement among God's people. Many were praising God. The sick were healed, and other miracles were wrought. . . . Hundreds and thousands were seen visiting families, and opening before them the word of God. Hearts were convicted by the power of the Holy Spirit, and a spirit of genuine conversion was manifest. On every side doors were thrown open to the proclamation of the truth. The world seemed to be lightened with the heavenly influence. Great blessings were received by the true and humble people of God." Testimonies, Vol. IX, p. 126.

"Let all who believe the truth begin to work. Do the work that lies nearest you. . . . If the lay members of the church will arouse to do the work that they can do, . . . each seeing how much he can accomplish in winning souls to Jesus, we shall see many leaving the ranks of Satan to stand under the banner of Christ. If our people will act upon the light that is given in these few words of instruction, we shall surely see of the salvation of God. Wonderful revivals will follow. Sinners will be converted, and many souls will be added to the church. When we bring our hearts into unity with Christ, and our lives into harmony with his work, the Spirit that fell on his disciples on the day of Pentecost will fall on us."—Testimonies, Vol. VIII, p. 246.

"The church of Christ is organized for service. . . . Every church member should be engaged in some line of service for the Master. . . . Many would be willing to work if they were taught how to begin. . . . Every church should be a training school for Christian workers. . . . Let the teachers lead the way in working among the people, and others, uniting with them, will learn from their example. One example is worth more than many precepts."—"Ministry of Healing," pp. 148, 149.

"Because the church members have not been properly instructed by those whom God has placed as overseers, many are slothful servants. . . . They expect to be attended like

sick children. This condition of weakness must not continue."—Test. Vol. VI, pp. 434, 435.

"The members of the church have not done a hundredth part of that which God requires of them. What can we expect but deterioration in religious life when the people listen to sermon after sermon, and do not put the instruction into practice?" Id., p. 425.

The Work of Women Important

"Women as well as men can engage in the work of hiding the truth where it can work out and be made manifest. They can take their place in the work at this crisis, and the Lord will work through them. If they are imbued with a sense of their duty, and labor under the influence of the spirit of God, they will have just the self-possession required for this time. The Saviour will reflect upon these self-sacrificing women the light of His countenance, and this will give them a power that will exceed that of men. They can do in families a work that men cannot do, a work that reaches the inner life.

discreet and humble women can do a good work in explaining the truth to the people in their homes. The word of God thus explained will do its leavening work, and through its influence whole families will be converted."—Test. Vol. IX, pp. 128, 129.

Children May Have a Part in the Work.

"Parents, your children should be your helping hand, increasing your power and ability in working for the Master. Children are the younger members of the Lord's family. They should be led to consecrate themselves to God, whose they are by creation and redemption.

With you the children should share spiritual as well as physical burdens. By helping others they increase their own happiness and usefulness."—Test. Vol. VII, p. 63.

The work of Sabbath reform to be accomplished in the last days is foretold in the prophecy of Isaiah: "Thus saith the Lord, Keep ye judgment, and do justice; for my salvation is near to come, and my right-

eousness to be revealed. Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil." "The sons of the stranger that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer."

These words apply in the Christian age, as is shown by the context: "The Lord God which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather others to him, besides those that are gathered unto him." Here is foreshadowed the gathering in of the Gentiles by the gospel. And upon those who then honor the Sabbath, a blessing is pronounced. Thus the obligation of the fourth commandment extends past the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, to the time when His servants shall preach to all nations the message of glad tidings.

The Lord commands by the same prophet, "Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples." The seal of God's law is found in the fourth commandment. This only of all the ten, brings to view both the name and the title of the Lawgiver. It declares Him to be the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and thus shows His claim to reverence and worship above all others. Aside from this precept, there is nothing in the decalogue to show by whose authority the law is given. When the Sabbath was changed by the papal power, the seal was taken from the law. The disciples of Jesus are called upon to restore it, by exalting the Sabbath of the fourth commandment to its rightful position as the Creator's memorial and the sign of His authority.

"To the law and to the testimony." While conflicting doctrines and theories abound, the law of God is the one unerring rule by which all opinions, doctrines, and theories are to be tested. Says the prophet, "If they speak not according to this

word, it is because there is no light in them."

Again, the command is given, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression and the house of Jacob their sins." It is not the wicked world, but those whom the Lord designates as "my people," that are to be reproved for their transgressions. He declares further, "Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation they did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God." Here is brought to view a class who think themselves righteous and appear to manifest great interest in the service of God; but the stern and solemn rebuke of the Searcher of hearts proves them to be trampling upon the divine precepts.

The prophet thus points out the ordinance which has been forsaken: "Thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, the repairer of the breach, the restorer of paths to dwell in. If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord." This prophecy also applies in our time. The breach was made in the law of God when the Sabbath was changed by the Romish power. But the time has come for that divine institution to be restored. The breach is to be repaired and the foundation of many generations to be raised up.

Hallowed by the Creator's rest and blessing, the Sabbath was kept by Adam in his innocence in holy Eden; by Adam, fallen yet repentant, when he was driven from his happy estate. It was kept by all the patriarchs, from Abel to righteous Noah, to Abraham, to Jacob. When the chosen people were in bondage in Egypt, many in the midst of prevailing idolatry, lost their knowledge of God's law; but when the Lord delivered Israel, He proclaimed His law in awful grandeur to

the assembled multitude, that they might know His will, and fear and obey Him forever.

From that day to the present, the knowledge of God's law has been preserved in the earth, and the Sabbath of the fourth commandment has been kept. Though the "man of sin" succeeded in trampling under foot God's holy day, yet even in the period of his supremacy there were, hidden in secret places, faithful souls who paid it honor. Since the reformation, there have been some in every generation to maintain its observance. Though often in the midst of reproach and persecution, a constant testimony has been borne to the perpetuity of the law of God, and the sacred obligation of the creation Sabbath.

These truths, as presented in Revelation 14, in connection with the "everlasting gospel," will distinguish the church of Christ at the time of his appearing. For as the result of the threefold message it is announced, "Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." And this message is the last to be given before the coming of the Lord. Immediately following its proclamation, the Son of man is seen by the prophet, coming in glory to reap the harvest of the earth.

Those who received the light concerning the sanctuary and the immutability of the law of God, were filled with joy and wonder, as they saw the beauty and harmony of the system of truth that opened to their understanding. They desired that the light which appeared to them so precious might be imparted to all Christians; and they could not but believe that it would be joyfully accepted. But truths that would place them at variance with the world were not welcome to many who claimed to be followers of Christ. Obedience to the fourth commandment required a sacrifice from which the majority drew back.

As the claims of the Sabbath were presented, many reasoned from the worldling's standpoint. Said they: "We have always kept Sunday, our fathers kept it, and many good and

pious men have died happy while keeping it. If they were right, so are we. The keeping of this new Sabbath would throw us out of harmony with the world, and we would have no influence with them. What can a little company keeping the seventh day hope to accomplish against all the world who are keeping Sunday?" It was by similar arguments that the Jews endeavored to justify their rejection of Christ. Their fathers had been accepted of God in presenting the sacrificial offerings, and why could not the children find salvation in pursuing the same course? So, in the time of Luther, papists reasoned that true Christians had died in the Catholic faith, and therefore that religion was sufficient for salvation. Such reasoning would prove an effectual barrier to all advancement in religious faith or practice.

Many urged that Sunday keeping had been an established doctrine and a widespread custom for many centuries. Against this argument it was shown that the Sabbath and its observance were more ancient and widespread, even as old as the world itself, and bearing the sanction both of angels and God. When the foundations of the earth were laid, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy, then was laid the foundation of the Sabbath. Well may this institution demand our reverence: it was ordained by no human authority, and rests upon no human traditions; it was established by the Ancient of Days, and commanded by His eternal word. As the attention of the people was called to the subject of Sabbath reform, popular ministers perverted the Word of God, placing such interpretations upon its testimony as would best quiet inquiring minds. And those who did not search the Scriptures for themselves were content to accept conclusions that were in accordance with their desires. By argument, sophistry, the traditions of the fathers, and the authority of the church, many endeavored to overthrow the truth. Its advocates were driven to their Bibles to defend the

validity of the fourth commandment. Humble men armed with the Word of Truth alone, withstood the attacks of men of learning, who with surprise and anger, found their eloquent sophistry powerless against the simple, straightforward reasoning of men who were versed in the Scriptures rather than in the subtleties of the schools. In the absence of Bible testimony in their favor, many with unwearied persistence urged,—forgetting how the same reasoning had been employed against Christ and His apostles,—“Why do not our great men understand this Sabbath question? But few believe as you do. It cannot be that you are right, and that all the men of learning in the world are wrong.” To refute such arguments it was needful only to cite the teachings of the Scriptures and the history of the Lord's dealings with His people in all ages. God works through those who hear and obey His voice, those who will, if need be, speak unpalatable truths, those who do not fear to reprove popular sins. The reason why He does not oftener choose men of learning and high position to lead out in reform movements is that they trust to their creeds, theories, and theological systems, and feel no need to be taught of God. Only those who have personal connection with the source of wisdom are able to understand or to explain the Scriptures. Men who have little of the learning of the schools are sometimes called to declare the truth, not because they are unlearned, but because they are not too self-sufficient to be taught of God. They learn in the school of Christ, and their humility and obedience make them great. In committing to them a knowledge of His truth, God confers upon them an honor, in comparison with which earthly honor and human greatness sink into insignificance.

The majority of Adventists rejected the truths concerning the sanctuary and the law of God, and many also renounced their faith in the Advent movement, and adopted unsound and conflicting views of the prophe-

cies which applied to that work. Some were led into the error of repeatedly fixing upon a definite time for the coming of Christ. The light which was now shining on the subject of the sanctuary mould have shown them that no prophetic period extends to the second advent; that the exact time of this event is not foretold. But, turning from the light, they continued to set time after time for the Lord to come, and as often they were disappointed.

When the Thessalonian church received erroneous views concerning the coming of Christ, the Apostle Paul counseled them to carefully test their hopes and anticipations by the Word of God. He cited them to prophecies revealing the events to take place before Christ should come, and showed that they had no ground to expect him in their day. "Let no man deceive you by any means," are His words of warning. Should they indulge expectations that were not sanctioned by the Scriptures, they would be led to a mistaken course of action; disappointment would expose them to the derision of unbelievers, and they would be in danger of yielding to discouragement, and would be tempted to doubt the truths essential for their salvation. The apostle's admonition to the Thessalonians contains an important lesson for those who live in the last days. Many Adventists have felt that unless they could fix their faith upon a definite time for the Lord's coming, they could not be zealous and diligent in the work of preparation. But as their hopes are again and again excited, only to be destroyed, their faith receives such a shock that it becomes well-nigh impossible for them to be impressed by the great truths of prophecy. The preaching of a definite time for the Judgment, in the giving of the first message, was ordered of God. The computation of the prophetic period on which that message was based, placing the close of the 2,300 days in the autumn of 1844, stands without impeachment. The repeated efforts to find new date for the beginning

and close of the prophetic periods, and the unsound reasoning necessary to sustain these positions, not only lead minds away from the present truth, but throw contempt upon all efforts to explain the prophecies. The more frequently a definite time is set for the second advent, and the more widely it is taught, the better it suits the purpose of Satan. After the time has passed, he excites ridicule and contempt of its advocates, and thus casts reproach upon the great Advent movement of 1843 and 1844. Those who persist in this error will at last fix upon a date too far in the future for the coming of Christ. Thus they will be led to rest in a false security, and many will not be undeceived until it is too late.

The history of ancient Israel is a striking illustration of the past experience of the Adventist body. God led His people in the Advent movement, even as He led the children of Israel from Egypt. In the great disappointment their faith was tested as was that of the Hebrews at the Red Sea. Had they still trusted to the guiding hand that had been with them in their past experience, they would have seen of the salvation of God. If all who had labored unitedly in the work of 1844 had received the third angel's message, and proclaimed it in the power of the Holy Spirit, the Lord would have wrought mightily with their efforts. A flood of light would have been shed upon the world. Years ago the inhabitants of the earth would have been warned, the closing work completed, and Christ would have come for the redemption of His people.

It was not the will of God that Israel should wander forty years in the wilderness; He desired to lead them directly to the land of Canaan, and establish them there, a holy, happy people. But "they could not enter in because of unbelief." Because of their backsliding and apostasy, they perished in the desert, and others were raised up to enter the promised land. In like manner, it was not the will of God that the coming of Christ should be so

long delayed, and His people should remain so many years in this world of sin and sorrow. But unbelief separated them from God. As they refused to do the work which He had appointed them, others were raised up to proclaim the message. In mercy to the world, Jesus delays His coming, that sinners may have an opportunity to hear the warning, and find in Him a shelter before the wrath of God shall be poured out.

Now, as in former ages, the presentation of a truth that reproves the sins and errors of the times, will excite opposition. "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." As men see that they cannot maintain their position by the Scriptures, many determine to maintain it by all hazards, and with a malicious spirit they assail the character and motives of those who stand in defense of unpopular truth. It is the same policy which has been pursued in all ages. Elijah was declared to be a troubler of Israel, Jeremiah a traitor, Paul a polluter of the temple. From that day to this, those who would be loyal to truth have been denounced as seditious, heretical, or schismatic. Multitudes who are too unbelieving to accept the sure word of prophecy, will receive with unquestioning credulity an accusation against those who dare to reprove fashionable sins. This spirit will increase more and more. And the Bible plainly teaches that a time is approaching when the laws of the State shall so conflict with the law of God that whoever would obey all the divine precepts must brave reproach and punishment as an evil-doer.

That man is great, and he alone,
Who serves a greatness not his
own,

For neither praise nor pelf!
Content to know and be un-
known:

Whole in himself.

—Owen Meredith.

"In all history of the church, no reformation has been carried forward without encountering serious obstacles."