

ZION'S TRAVAIL.

Zion is a general name for the entire nominal church. At present in the mortal, flesh and blood condition, she cannot enter into the kingdom of God; the spiritual condition must first be reached. At present God holds out to her "exceeding great and precious promises" by which (promises) some children are begotten in her to spiritual life.

We have already noticed that under various figures, as Babylon's fall – Israel's stumbling – coming through great tribulation – saved so as by fire, etc., the word of God pictures severe anguish and trials coming upon the church during "the harvest" or end of the Gospel age; and the text to which our subject refers describes it as travail. Travail is deathly anguish, and like the other figures used, is powerfully illustrative of the severity of Zion's trouble. The illustration shows too, the necessity of the trouble; without the travail Zion's children cannot all be born – delivered.

We have seen that the trouble upon the world begins by the overthrow of the nominal church, and indeed every day since 1878 where we believe the nominal church was given up to her travail [It, however, will not fully commence until the "first born" – "little flock" are born, an event expected during 1881.] seems to witness the uprising of new elements for her overthrow. Spiritualism is misleading thousands and infidelity tens of thousands. Col. Ingersol alone is doing a wonderful work in the way of sowing seeds of contempt for Zion, which already are taking root and must soon bud and blossom into open opposition to her. We believe that there is not a single person who hears his anti-religious lectures with candid and unbiased mind, who has not had his faith in the teachings of the (so called) orthodox churches unsettled forever. Those only who have seen to some extent the inconsistencies of the churches, the errors of their teachings, and

have caught a glimpse (at least) of the great loving plan of God relative to the blessing of the world in the ages to come, can come away unshaken.

The nominal church of the third century began to leave the word of God for the traditions of men, and abandoned the narrow way for the easier road of harmony with the world. This resulted in Papacy's exaltation to power, and the substituting of the churches fiat instead of the Bible as the only law of Christians, and the destruction of all Bibles known to exist – it being claimed that they were no longer necessary, but actually pernicious, as the voice of the church was the law of God.

We would not be understood as intimating that all the children of Zion have been engulfed in Papacy. No, we believe that all through those dark ages there were members of the little flock who maintained their walk in the narrow way. Some of them were known as Waldenses, Huguenots, etc. This reign of Papacy led to a sad condition of ignorance, superstition and blindness to truth, which was only partially relieved by the great work known as the Reformation. We would not be misunderstood as intimating that the work of the Reformers was little or valueless; on the contrary, we believe theirs was a grand work. Taking the Bible, neglected and prohibited for years, they boldly preached the necessity of taking it as the only rule of faith and practice, and not the creeds of the church, and the result of their preaching was evidently, the development of many noble Christians as well as a general arousing of nominal Zion. And had the work there begun, been continued, Zion would not now be in her present deplorable condition, saying: I am rich and increased in goods, knowing not that she is really wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind. [Rev. 3:17.] But, elated with the victories over some of the Romish darkness and error, the Church of the Reformation soon sat down self-complacently and at ease, evidently forgetting that though then in the light, she should walk (advance) in the light, and that if she

sat down at ease the "light which shines more and more" would go far beyond her, and she would soon "sit in darkness."

Again, Zion follows Papacy's rule of putting her creeds instead of the word of God, so that all offenders at her bar are tried by the "authorities" or "standards" of the church; by which is meant, not God's word – the Bible, but the word of the founders and lights of their church; forgetting that the one church or body of Christ which admits of no scism, has but one authority or head – the Lord Jesus – by whose written word every member's faith and practice must be judged – "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Nominal Zion recognizes no increase of light shining more and more (Prov. 4:18.) No, she is perfectly satisfied with the light of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. But there are some who cannot **[R183 : page 7]** be bound to the dim light of by-gone days, understanding that the same Bible which accomplished the Reformation work is necessary to the Christian's growth in grace and knowledge to-day.

Because the Protestant Churches have adopted methods like that of Papacy, avoiding many of the grosser sins, but, nevertheless, like her being joined to the world and seeking its favor, establishing church authorities instead of God's word, etc.; because of this likeness to her they are Scripturally reckoned as her daughters, and she is called the "Mother of harlots." These all, Protestant daughters and Papal mother, as well as the few who walk in the light, and recognize the authority and control of neither, but of God's word only – called "they that have not worshiped the beast (Papacy) nor its image" (Protestantism) – all of these are Zion, in the general sense, and include both wheat and tares. (Matt. 13.) Because she loves this present world and will not walk in the narrow way, in which the light shines, she has never been fully freed from Papal error and darkness, and the truth she holds is so

mixed with error that she is unable to defend it against the attacks of infidelity and other devices of the enemy, to accomplish her final overthrow.

We have already seen that the trouble upon the world is spoken of as the seven last plagues, which intimates that some preceded these last. We saw by looking at the types – the plagues upon Egypt, that there were three first and seven last, which first three we understand to be the trouble or travail of Zion, during which three plagues or travail, all of the wheat will be separated from the tares – all of God's real children will be separated from the nominal Church in obedience to **[R184 : page 7]** the call. "Come out of her, my people, etc.;" and consequently these will be protected during the seven last plagues.

We have learned that two classes of Children of God are to be born of Zion. We understand that our present condition is that of begotten, embryo children, and that our resurrection or change to spiritual conditions will be the birth into the perfection of our new nature, to which we are now begotten. The first-born of Zion's children is, the Christ – Jesus and "the church (ecclesia-body) of the first-born" – these, with Him, constituting the "little flock," to whom "it is the Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom." The after-born children of Zion constitute the "great multitude that no man can number," who "wash their robes" and "come up out of great tribulation," who with palms stand "before the throne," in which the first-born, overcomers sit crowned. Christ (head and body), the first fruits, (first-born,) afterwards they that are Christ's at His [parousia] presence (1 Cor. 15:23) – the day of wrath. Those gathered during that day are the "many brethren" of the "household of faith."

If, now, we have Zion, her children and her travail before our minds, let us notice some scriptures which bear directly on the birth of Zion's children. Isaiah, (66:7-8,) referring to the matter, says: "Before she travailed she brought forth; before her pain came she was delivered

of a man child. Who hath heard such a thing? Who hath seen such things?"

Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? Shall a nation be born at once? For, as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.

What a clear picture is this: The "great multitude" of Zion's children will be born after her travail – come up to glory through great tribulation. But her first born is an exception to this rule; it – Christ Jesus the head, and the members of the body – will be born, come into the perfect spiritual condition "like unto Christ's glorious body" before the travail. Yes, before she travailed she brought forth, before her pain came she was delivered of a man child. How much this is in harmony with Jesus' instructions; while intimating that the time of trouble would come upon nearly all, he says: "Watch ye that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all those things coming upon the world." The overcomers escape all the travail of Zion and the wrath on the world, share the kingdom with their Lord, and as members of His body, are "joint heirs" with him and "inherit all things." This is the seed of the woman that shall crush the serpent's head. This is "the seed of Abraham" (Gal. 3:29) that shall bless all the families of the earth.

This is the one body whose head Jesus was "The first born from the dead" eighteen centuries ago, whose body will also be born before Zion's travail. These are the "Kings and priests unto God," who, during the present age have at the same time been, both the household of Priests typified by Aaron's sons, and also the members of the High Priest's body. These during the millennial age will be, with their head "a priest upon his throne." – Thou "hast made us (the body) unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth." (Rev. 5:10.) – their reign in the exercise of this double office, being typified by Melchisadec – "King of Salem (peace) and priest of the most high God." This is the company that follow the Lamb here, and will do so

hereafter, to whom he said, "Fear not little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

These two companies, the few before, and the many after travail, are the only children ever born to Zion. (The type shows that she dies in travail) i.e., the gospel age here ending, the gospel church will no longer exist as an earthly institution, and thereafter exist only as the glorified, spiritual city or church. These two companies, as heretofore shown, are the only ones to whom the high calling of becoming sons of God on the spiritual plane is offered; the only ones begotten of the Spirit, consequently, the only ones who could be born of the Spirit.

The blessing which comes to the world is never called a begetting to newness of life – or a new kind of life, but a restitution (restoring) of the old life, which is forfeited by reason of disobedience and sin. For there shall be a restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began. (Acts 3:21.) The church, on the contrary, are begotten to a new nature, which implies new powers, and a new form, for "as we have borne the image of the earthly (natural) we shall also bear the image heavenly" (spiritual.)

The grandeur of our high calling, is but imperfectly seen until we realize that it shall be our pleasurable work during the Millennial age when joined with our head to restore the human family to all the perfections of mind and body, lost through Adam, brought back by Christ's death. Beloved, let us more highly appreciate "our high calling, which is of God, in Christ Jesus."
