

"AN ANSWER TO EVERY MAN."

"Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear."

Let us notice in this passage some things in connection with our hope. And while we give our principal attention to things relating to it, let us not overlook the importance of sanctifying the Lord God in our hearts, that is, set apart and "make the means of holiness." Let Him be the sacred presence to whom we shall, bring all the issues of the heart, and the pattern to which we shall make our whole life and character conform. As we are reasonable beings, we should use our reason for God-given purposes, notwithstanding that the "wise and prudent" assume to monopolize the freedom of its use.

It is but reasonable to suppose that men will ask us a reason of the hope that is in us, especially as we are supposed by many, to have such a peculiar hope. It may not be amiss, then, first to state what hope in general is, and then what our hope in particular is; after which we will give a reason for entertaining such a hope.

Hope, in general, looks to the future for some good, with, at least, some expectation of attaining it, or with the belief that it is attainable. It presupposes that the present position, condition, or whatever, is undesirable.

For our present purpose, we will assume what is an obvious fact, that the condition of the world and of man is one that it is not desirable to have continue forever. The pains, and groans, and tears, and dying struggles, the separation and estrangement of friends, the sufferings caused by ignorance and wickedness; all are good and sufficient reasons for dissatisfactions and causes of unrest. But we have hope.

When we look about us and see how selfish man is, without the knowledge and love of God, as the majority are; when we see human beings come into the world diseased from the first, physically and morally, and environed with evil influences, borne down with a load of woe too great to stand upright under, and finally sinking under its weight and disappearing in death; when, on account of this accumulation of individual distress and misery society becomes foul and corrupt, breeding moral pestilence, and growing "worse and worse;" when, on account of all this aggregated evil, governments become weak and tottering, when wide-spread ruin seems to be inevitable and certain, when all hearts fail and all cheeks pale, when skeptics speculate, and many professing Christians doubt, and all, most all, are perplexed; when the "whole creation groaneth" under the effects of the curse of sin we have hope.

Our hope is that the curse of sin will be removed, that the reign of [R349 : page 4] evil will come to an end; that governments now under the control of the powers of darkness, shall be brought under the sway of the Prince of Peace; that where evil, in all its hideous forms now holds carnival, righteousness and peace shall have dominion; that all hearts shall be made glad; that the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places smooth.

We have hope that not only the living of this or the succeeding age shall see this condition of things, but that all who have ever lived shall see it together.

That a great jubilee shall come, and all men shall be set free from the captivity of death.

We have hope that the earth itself shall feel the change, and that instead of thorns and thistles and poisonous plants, healthful productions and life-giving fruits shall take their place.

We have a hope that to insure all that and make it permanent and lasting, God will establish a government in the heavens which shall rule over all in truth and righteousness, that this government shall so thoroughly bring under subjection every hitherto evil and turbulent element, in fact melt them, that men will have no use for instruments of death, but shall fashion them into instruments of agriculture and the useful arts.

We believe that the ministers of that government are being disciplined and educated for this high and important work now, and that this is the principal work which the Almighty is accomplishing in this world or age; that this special work is about complete, and that soon the new arrangement and order of things will commence, and that when fully inaugurated, all men will know what is duty and be able to perform it, having all hindrances, such as hereditary taint, and evil surroundings removed; man will be free to do the will of God, and from past experience with evil, willing to do it, that this will be the rule at least; that the rulers in this government will be composed of such as have been men, but who through sanctification of the spirit, and knowledge of, and belief of the truth, came into the possession of power, or privilege to become "SONS OF GOD," "NEW CREATURES," proper instruments with which God is to accomplish His grand and glorious designs for the sons of men in the ages to come.

Now we know this is hoping a great deal, but we are "ready always" to give "a reason" of this hope "with meekness and fear," (fear lest we become a castaway).

First, then, we will give briefly our reason for believing the Bible to be the word of God, for upon it all our other reason of hope is based.

Certain Jews, called prophets, without knowing what was in the future, undertook to tell a long time beforehand what would come to

pass. If they had been disposed to gratify a selfish or ambitious feeling, of course (supposing that they could prophecy at all, with such a nature) their prophecies would be the foretelling of events which they wished to have come to pass; whereas, much of the burden of prophecy is of a nature not at all in accord with the spirit of the Jew, and of such a nature that when it did come to pass it was rejected by the Jews.

That their utterances, many, many years before were strikingly fulfilled, we shall presently show. We believe and assume that the general character of these men was good, as men, that "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." – 2 Peter 1:21. But God, knowing "what was in man," and how liable poor human nature is to warp and distort things to conform to its own understanding, did not commit all these sacred things to their understanding, for they did not understand their own utterances at the time, see Dan. 12:8; Zech. 4:5, and 1 Peter 1:10,11,12.

Then, too many of their prophecies, not being in accord with the hope of the Jews, could not have been written to gratify their ambition. If the prophecies had been uttered in accord with the spirit and expectation of the Jews, nothing, we [R350 : page 4] may well assume, would have been said about the humiliation of Christ, nothing about the ignominious character of His sufferings and death.

One thing is certain, Christ was rejected by the Jews when he did come, and this was also foretold. – Isaiah 53:2,3; John 1:10,11. – and put to death by them because he was not acceptable to them.

That such a man did live and die, that such a man was "born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king;" that He did strikingly fulfill the predictions made hundreds of years before concerning such a character, we think very few, if any, will be found, who are informed on the subject, that will deny it.

How marvelously he fills the picture drawn in the 53d chapter of Isaiah, and in the latter part of the 9th chapter of Daniel, also in Isaiah 7:14, and 61:1; and in Jeremiah 31:22, and Hosea 6:2. This last we understand to have, like many of the prophecies (and that is evidently one reason why they were not better understood by the prophets themselves and by the Jews) a double signification, that one phase of this prophecy applied to Christ in person, and that has been fulfilled in His resurrection, and is the pledge that the other phase of it will be fulfilled in subsequent resurrections. These passages referred to, we believe to have been fulfilled already, and are a reason for our hope, in that we believe the Bible.

Now, let us notice, briefly, how signally prophecy has been fulfilled in regard to the Jews themselves. From the 15th to the 68th verse of the 28th chapter of Isaiah, is one of the most marvelous pictures of the condition of the Jews which has had and is having its fulfillment, that the mind can conceive. Also in Jer. 34:17.

These, with many other prophecies relating to the Jews, have had their fulfillment, and so wonderful are they that the Jews, some of them at least, acknowledge it now – they have done so in conversation we have had. We understand that nearly all the prophecies relating to the downfall of the Jews have been fulfilled, and that those relating to their rise and establishment remain to be fulfilled, and really are beginning to be fulfilled.

Thus far we see, and it is "the substance (foundation) of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Without dwelling further upon the truth of the Bible we shall assume that it is the word of God, and found our hope upon it; this we are satisfied to do. Let us examine our hope then that the condition of the world of mankind will be improved. But first, there must be a universal desire for a change. Many have that desire now, but many have no such desire, they are satisfied with it as it is; "their eyes stand out with fatness," they have

all they wish, but the oppressed of all nations now long for a change; but we understand from the Word, that the present governing power will become so burdensome, and so inefficient, and incapable of promoting the happiness of mankind, and really so conducive to evil that all men will clamor for its overthrow and desire its removal. Already this condition of things begins to be manifest. Already, agencies for the overthrow of governments are taking on organized forms and making themselves felt, to the dismay of kings and peoples. But the agencies which are being put in such active operation for the overthrow of the present governing power, are themselves so full of evil, that instead of bettering the condition of mankind, they will only make it worse, until the whole world will be satisfied that the wisdom of man is folly, and will long for a king who shall reign in righteousness.

We think that the rapid increase of moral corruption (now so apparent to those who are "looking") will quickly ripen the harvest of iniquity that is now so nearly matured, and culminate the general ruin in a comparatively short time, and that then "the desire of all nations shall come." – Hag. 2:7.

That the condition of things generally will grow more distressful and appalling until the world shall be tired out, "dissolved," (be "burned up") with the legitimate result of sinful rule. (God permits the "fire of his jealousy," to turn the hearts of men to himself.)

That Satan is now permitted to rule, see John 14:30; Eph. 6:12, and 2:2, also Joel 3:9-16. "Proclaim ye this among the gentiles (nations) prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near, let them come up, beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning-hooks into spears," &c. "My determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger, (the natural result of sin,)

for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy." – Zeph. 3:8.

See Isa. 13:6-12 and Zeph. 1:14-18. Read carefully, and may the Lord give thee understanding. Should some one say: "But these prophecies are concerning Judah and Israel," &c., we should answer: God's "wrath is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men," and it is evident that when the prophetic eye was opened, the prophet saw in rapid succession God's dealings with sin and iniquity clear through to the end of his indignation, and recorded it in that mystic way: and it requires the same spirit in the minds of the readers to understand that rested upon the minds of those who wrote. The light that shines out from prophetic utterances is only recognized by the eye of faith; for "none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise (but not according to the wisdom of this world) shall understand." Dan. 12:10.

This is some of our "scriptural reasons" for believing that a time of trouble will precede a time of righteous rule and restoration (regeneration). Matt. 19:28. Now, we know this is not the teaching of the "wise and prudent" (of this world or age), but God says he will "bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent, and these things are hid "from the wise and prudent." 1 Cor. 1:19; Matt. 11:25. We know that we who hold these views are nothing, according to the wisdom of this world, not having "even a name," but God has said he will take the "things which are not to bring to naught things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence." 1 Cor. 1:28,29.

Now, the wise (of this world) say the world is growing better and better. Let us look at that for a moment and see if there are no indications of storm.

We will ask the questions, and you can answer them for yourselves. Can men leave their buildings open now more safely than formerly? Are there less locks and safes sold? Is there less murder and

bloodshed than usual? Are there fewer prisons and convicts, less theft and arson? Are the instruments of war fewer and less formidable, are there less revolvers sold? Do men, by their actions, show that they love each other better than formerly? Do they legislate to benefit the poor more? Do capitalists make it easier for the laborer? Do they love the laborer (or his labor) and give him a nice, large slice from their loaf? Does the laborer love the capitalist, and do they work for each other's interest? Are the churches purer and better and less worldly, plainer and more simple, and true and good, so that the worldly man is rebuked by their good works, and has he confidence more than formerly in church members? Are there no grasping monopolies; if so, are there less of them, and are they working for the general good of mankind? Is it real easy to get honest, self-sacrificing men to hold the reins of government and stand at the helm of state? Are there less "election frauds" than when we were boys? Is purity and chastity – but we will go no further now in the slimy catalogue. Let those who think the world is growing better wade on through the sickening pool. Now, let us notice the scriptural reasons for hoping that there will be a better condition of things to succeed this. In Isaiah, second chapter, we read – but, says one, that was "concerning Judah and Jerusalem;" yes, we know it did concern them, and concerns them yet, and concerns us, too, now. May the Lord give thee understanding: "And it shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain (government) of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills (will be the ruling power), and all nations shall flow unto it, and many people shall say, Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His way, and we will walk in his paths, for out of Zion (glorified) shall go forth THE LAW, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem," and "He shall judge among many nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks, nation shall not lift up sword

against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." "In that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground; and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will [R350 : page 5] make them to lie down safely." Hosea 2:18. See also Isa. 11:6-16.

"And I will come near to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow and the fatherless and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me saith the Lord." Mal. 3:5. Then through the judgment (swift retribution of this ruling power) abroad in the earth, they will "learn righteousness." Isaiah 26:9.

Does some one say, "I wish I could live when that time comes?" You will, my friend, according to our hope; for "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Isa. 40:5. Yes, we hope for the World's "restitution," and why not when it is so [R351 : page 5] desirable and is spoken of "by the mouth of His Holy Prophets, from of old." Acts 3:21 E.D.; Eze. 16:44,63; Matt. 11:24,25.

We can come to no other conclusion from these scriptures referred to, than that the nations of earth, including Sodom, are to live again, and that when restored will profit by past experience, and be ashamed of it; that it is the design of our Heavenly Father to restore, through Christ, all that was lost in Adam; that hence "there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust," Acts 24:15; that this is the age of generation, and that the one to follow is the age of regeneration: – Matt. 19:28 – that this generation all die on account of Adam's sin, but will all live again on account of Christ's righteousness. 1 Cor. 15:22; – Rom. 5:18,19. But not that all will be

brought to the same kind of life finally, for those who will give up the natural with Christ and fill up the afflictions which are behind, shall be made "partakers of the divine nature." That there is clearly a difference we can but conclude from 1 Cor. 15:23,48. Here Paul is evidently speaking of both resurrections; that is, of the dead, and of those "from among the dead," though we distinguish the former from the latter by the term restoration, and that is the word used in the revised N.T., and in the Diaglott in Acts 3:21.

We have hope that as Christ came to lighten "EVERY MAN that cometh into the world," so every man will be enlightened; not one in a hundred or thousand, but EVERY ONE. John 1:9; that Sodom and Tyre, who did not have as good an opportunity as Capernaum and Bethsaida, will, in the regeneration, find their condition even better than theirs. If any one disbelieves this we shall have to differ, for we would sooner believe Christ's words: Matt. 11:21,22,23,24,25.

This is a part of the "reason" of our hope, and this hope grows stronger the more we examine the subject and see the evidence brought in. Christ was raised from the dead, according to the Scriptures, and so we have the "first fruits of the spirit."

Some, who are in the light, told us that if our reckoning was correct, favor would begin to be shown to the Jews in the spring of 1878. This was told as early as 1876, though no one at that time dreamed of the source from whence it was to come; but it came at the expected time through the "Berlin treaty." The strangeness of the matter (according to human reason) was that just at the proper time a Jew was PREMIER of England, a government upon whose dominions the sun never sets; and "who knoweth whether" he, like Esther, had "come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Esther 4:14. And now the Jews, for the first time since the destruction of Jerusalem, are

permitted to return to their "sacred city" and worship as they please, and now we are told the temple is being rebuilt!

But some one may say: "But they are not shown much favor in Russia and Germany." No; but that is also according to Scripture. – Jer. 49:5,6: "Behold, I will bring a fear upon thee, saith the Lord God of hosts, from all those that be about thee; and ye shall be driven out from men right forth, and none shall gather up him that wandereth. And afterward I will bring again the captivity of the children of Ammon, saith the Lord." Again, in Micah 4:6,7: "In that day, saith the Lord (and we think that day is dawning), will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted; and I will make her that halteth a remnant, and her that was cast off a strong nation, and the LORD shall reign over them in Mount Zion from henceforth, even forever." These are but a few of the Scriptures bearing upon this point. We cannot, in an article like this, consider but a small portion of the evidence.

But we have a still greater and more glorious hope, and that is the one in which all the others center and are bound up. It is the hope of being made perfect in Christ, of being made partakers of the divine nature. It is the hope of completing our adoption as sons of God. Eph. 4:5,6,7; John 1:12; 1 John 3:1. For this hope the world is anxiously waiting. Rom. 8:19. It is nothing less than the hope of "obtaining the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Thes. 2:14. But before we can come into the possession of this hope there is much suffering and trial to be endured; there is the "dying daily" until we are dead with Christ.

But we are willing, and do count all things but vile refuse, so that we may gain Christ and be found in Him. Eph. 3:8,11 E.D. Now, the following passage will enable us to test ourselves with regard to this hope, for it is a high calling, a glorious hope, and we must examine ourselves closely:

"He that hath THIS hope in him purifieth himself even as He is pure." 1 John 3:3. The fine linen must not be mingled with other material, and must be kept clean and white.

May we hold fast this hope till it shall be lost in full fruition.

J. C. SUNDERLIN.