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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

"IS COME" OR "COMING"?

Question. – Some quote 1 John 4:2 and 2 John 7 as evidence that our Lord Jesus is to return in the flesh, claiming that the verb "is come" should be "coming." Is this claim well founded?

Answer. – In reply we give, by the kindness of Bro. J. M. Blöse, a written opinion on these two texts furnished him by J. R. Rinehart, Ph.D., Professor of languages in Waynesburg College, a thorough scholar.

After quoting the above passages in Greek, Prof. Rinehart says: –

"(1) The foregoing quotations are from the *Emphatic Diaglott* of Wilson, purporting to be from the original Greek text of the New Testament. The word *elēluthota* is the accusative, singular, masculine, of the second perfect participle of the verb *erchomai*, having the same relation to this verb that any other perfect participle has to its verb. It stands with the verb *homolegei* in indirect discourse, and represents a finite, perfect tense, according to ordinary Greek syntax. – *Goodwin's Greek Grammar*, Nos. 1588, 1288.

"The following translation of the first quotation is, therefore, essentially correct. 'Every spirit that confesseth [R1993 : page 139] that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, is of God.'

"(2) The word *erchomenon* in the second quotation is the accusative, singular, masculine, of the present participle of the verb *erchomai*, and is subject to the [R1994 : page 139] same rules of syntax as the word above. Its relation to *eiselthon* through *homologountes*, as well as the context, justifies its translation as of past time. – *Ibid*, No. 1289.

"The translation of the second quotation, therefore, is properly given as follows: 'For many deceivers went forth into the world – those who do not confess that Jesus Christ did come in the flesh.'"

In our issue of March, '87, we published a report from the Professor of Greek in Rochester, N.Y., to the same effect. Indeed, we have never known a Greek *scholar* to take any other view, and do not believe that any Professor of Greek in any creditable University would hesitate for one moment to pronounce the above and our Common Version rendering correct. Only those who have first of all formed the opinion that our Lord's second advent will be in the flesh find anything whatever in these texts over which to confuse and stumble themselves and others.

TABLETS AND CHRONOLOGY.

Question. – In the TOWER for June 1, '94 (page 2), reference is made to the "Tellel-Amorna tablets" and the deductions of Rev. T. Harrison in "*Science*," that these corroborate the Bible account. – "The date fixes that of the Bible." You then cite 1 Kings 4:1; Josh. 10:3; and 11. Now my question is, – Do these tablets corroborate your chronology? Or in what way do they fix Bible *dates*?

Answer. – The word "date" is indefinite and does not indicate any particular moment, hour, day, year, or even century. It would have been better had we said, "The *record corroborates* that of the Bible." Read the references cited and you will see that none of them give *dates*. Nor do the "tablets" mentioned give *dates*. As already pointed out in MILLENNIAL DAWN, VOL. II., Chap. 2, and again in the WATCH TOWER of May 15, '96 (pages 104-106), dates were not attached to ancient records (sacred or secular), – "The first effort to bring time-order into the world's general history was in the second century of the Christian era." The hitching together of the broken pieces of the world's history is mere guess-work back of the first year of Cyrus, B.C. 536. The Bible chronology which we present, and for which we give chapter and verse, connects from Adam down to Cyrus, 536 B.C., and thus we

get the chronology which we present but which is not *ours* more than *yours*. God's Word is for us all.

Keeping these *facts* in memory we should understand Rev. T. Harrison to mean that these "tablets" mention the names of certain prominent generals and kings in Israel and the surrounding nations. These corroborate accounts and names mentioned in the Bible and thus corroborate Bible records (rather than fix Bible dates).

SERVANTS RENDER SERVICE.

Question. – In the WATCH TOWER for March 1, '96, in the treatment of the Sunday School lesson for March 22d, you pointed out "that servant," "his fellow-servants" and the Lord's general "household" in what seems to me an orderly manner; but you failed to particularize whom you understand to be represented by the three parties mentioned – "that servant," "his fellow-servants" and the "household." I can readily recognize the "household" as meaning the believers of this time; and his "fellow-servants" would seem to be associated servants engaged in serving truth to the household; but who is "that servant?" Your article does not say who "that servant" is, and I am somewhat puzzled over it. Could it refer to ZION'S WATCH TOWER? or to the Tract Society?

My second query is, – Should we understand that "that servant" must be divinely inspired, so as to be infallible; and that "his fellow servants" and the "household" would be cut off by his service from fellowship with the Lord through the Scriptures?

Answer. – (1) We purposely avoided making an application of "that servant." We merely corrected a former too careless criticism of the lesson; and showed that the language of the Scripture was so carefully chosen as to leave no room to question its reference to some *one* servant (animate or inanimate) whom the Lord would specially use in the present time to dispense the present truth to "*his* fellow servants" as well as to the "household."

The account contains no suggestion of either the inspiration or infallibility of "that servant." This distinction belongs only to the Lord, the Apostles and the prophets. The whole force of the statement shows "that servant" to be merely a special channel for *distributing* the truth. His business is not to *make* truth, but to *circulate* it; – to put it into the hands of "his fellow servants" and the truth-hungry "household." There certainly is no intimation that the "household" is cut off from access to, or feeding on, the Word of God; neither by "that servant" nor by "his fellow servants." *None* of the "servants" are to come between the "household" of faith and God's Word. On the contrary, each one of the "household" is to *prove* all that he accepts as spiritual food, whether he gets it from the Bible himself or from "that servant" or from "his fellow servants." None of these servants are "lords over God's heritage"; their highest privilege will be to *serve*, and the only difference between [R1994 : page 140] "that servant" and "his fellow servants" will be that his service will be more general, a wider service.

More perhaps than any other servant, ZION'S WATCH TOWER has opposed the thought that the Church of Christ is composed of a clerical class commissioned to teach, and a lay class not commissioned to teach the divine Word: it specially has held up the inspired words, "all ye are brethren" and "one is your Master"; and has pointed out that all consecrated believers are of the "royal priesthood" each fully commissioned, not to "lord it" over others, but to sacrifice himself in the service of the truth, doing good unto all, especially to the household of faith. So with the servants of Matt. 24:49; *service* is their only commission, not lordship or self-appointment.

All the members of the "body" are "anointed to preach" the gospel, and instructed to search the Scriptures, as we have heretofore clearly shown. This has been true ever since Pentecost, and is as true as ever to-day. But the plan of the ages, as a general arrangement and "feast," provided by God for his people, was not provided until its due time. Each one who is served with the present truth may invite others to sit down while he joins the servants in ministering to them. There is

abundant opportunity for all who desire to be "servants"; for the majority of the household of faith have as yet barely "tasted that the Lord is gracious" – not yet tasted of "the *riches* of his grace in Christ Jesus our Lord."

IS INTEREST USURY?

Question. – A brother desires your views on Rom. 14:23. Does this apply to other acts of this life? For instance, the brother had a small sum left him, invested and bearing interest. This interest he has collected and used, the principal not being available. Now, from Ezek. 18:8; Psa. 15:5, and other Scriptures, he is inclined to think he should not receive interest or increase, but not being fully persuaded, he is in doubt. He wishes to know if it is sin to him, as it is not of faith. Please answer privately or through the TOWER.

Answer. – No: we would not think that the brother's case comes under Rom. 14:23. His mind is merely in a quandary. He is merely questioning the subject with a view to doing whatever he considers to be the Lord's will. If he is using reasonable energy to reach a decision, it is not to be considered that meantime he is in the condition of the doubter of Rom. 14:23. But if after he has reached a conclusion in his mind, he violate his conscience, and does not act in accordance with his belief, he will then be under condemnation as a violator of his conscience.

We do not understand the taking of a reasonable interest to be usury. The laws of God under which the Jews were placed left very little room for judgment on their part in any sense. It was decided for them beforehand what they should eat and should not eat, what they should do and what they should not do, and their consciences and judgments of right and wrong were ignored. In the present age, in God's dealing with the Christian Church, it is wholly different. Everything is left to the judgment and nothing is particularized. Upon them that are in Christ Jesus and who are walking not after the flesh but after the spirit, God imposes no special regulations concerning their financial

dealings, their food, etc., except such as are implied in the general principles of the New Covenant; namely, truth, righteousness and love.

Under our covenant (according to our understanding) it might sometimes become our duty as well as our privilege entirely to give something away, principal *and* interest, where love and righteousness would seem to our judgment so to dictate. In another instance it might be entirely proper to loan to another for use and for profit money which we could not use as advantageously ourselves, and it would be proper also to stipulate for a share of the profit, and that share might be either a larger or a smaller share, depending upon the amount of risk involved and the amount of profit made by the user. A reasonable proportion of the profits made would not be "usury" in the sense of oppressive interest or extortion.

On the other hand there might be circumstances under which the acceptance of even a small interest might mean oppression and injury to the neighbor.

If the brother is loaning his money at a high rate of interest, taking advantage of the necessities of the borrower (as pawnbrokers are represented to do), then it would be in the nature of injury. But if the party using the money is making something out of it, and paying a portion of that profit to the brother, it is not usury in the sense of oppressive charge, but interest in [R1995 : page 140] the sense of reasonable profit. This is the sense that our Lord commended in the parable of the pounds and talents, when he said to the servant, "Thou oughtest to have put my money to the exchangers, that at my coming I might have received mine own with usury."

The meaning of the English word "usury" has somewhat changed from early times, and now is always used to indicate oppressive interest. Formerly its meaning was simply *interest*.

ARE SOME SPARED TO COMPLETE THEIR TRIAL?

Question. – The recent death of a relative has set me thinking. I do not know how it is with the truly consecrated in other places; that is, those of them who have accepted the present truth, whether or not they pass away as rapidly as those who are not fully consecrated. I notice that among the denominations frequently [R1995 : page 141] their best and most faithful workers are taken (die), while the faithful and physically weak among us are spared. Would this mean that we will all go together?

Answer. – We have ourselves noticed and remarked what you mention. It would seem that the testing of those who have come unto the "harvest" light is to be specially severe and prolonged. The test of endurance is one of the severest; but we have the assurance, though "the love of many shall wax cold, because iniquity shall abound," yet "he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." (Matt. 24:12,13.) If we are together approaching some crisis, so much more necessary is it that we improve the present favorable opportunity to put on the *whole armor* of God that when the "fiery darts" come we shall be able to quench them and to stand. Note the Apostle's very explicit direction as to the articles constituting this armor (Eph. 6:10-18), not forgetting that they cannot be put on at all until the body be washed and clothed in the garment of Christ's imputed righteousness. – 2 Cor. 7:1; Rom. 4:7,8,24,25.

However, we do not think it probable that all the living faithful will die and be "changed" together. [R2458 : page 141]

"A CUP OF COLD WATER"

The Lord of the harvest walked forth one day
Where the fields were white with the ripening wheat,
Where those he had sent in the early morn
Were reaping the grain in the noonday heat.
He had chosen a place for every one,

And bidden them work till the day was done.

Apart from the others, with troubled voice,
Spoke one who had gathered no golden grain:
"The Master has given no work to me,
And my coming hither has been in vain.
The reapers with gladness and song will come,
But no sheaves will be mine in the harvest home."

He heard the complaint and he called her name:
"Dear child why standest thou idle here?
Go fill the cup from the hillside stream,
And bring it to those who are toiling near;
I will bless thy labor, and it shall be
Kept in remembrance as done for me."

'Twas a little service, but grateful hearts
Thanked God for the water so cold and clear;
And some who were fainting with thirst and heat
Went forth with new strength to the work so dear;
And many a weary soul looked up,
Revived and cheered by the little cup.

– *Selected.*
