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## **SPIRITUAL AND ANIMAL INTOXICATION.**

– ISAIAH 28:1-13. – *NOVEMBER 27*. –

**Golden Text:** – "They also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way."

THIS date has been for years observed throughout England as "Temperance Sunday," and the International S.S. Lesson Committee of the United States has appropriated the date for the conservation of temperance interests in the United States also.

We yield to none in opposition to intoxicating beverages and in abhorrence of the terrible results they entail. We acknowledge also that the Scriptures everywhere favor temperance, and nowhere favor intemperance. We agree also that those of humanity who are entrapped by this snare are either very weak or very foolish, with the numerous evidences all about them showing the bestiality which intoxication induces and in general the evils entailed. We agree further that no saint should ever be intoxicated, and accept the Lord's word that "no drunkard shall inherit the Kingdom of God." (I Cor. 6:10.) Nevertheless, we find very little in the Scriptures addressed to the saints on this subject, and would be surprised if matters were otherwise. Why should those who have received the spirit of a sound mind, the wisdom that cometh from above – why should such require special exhortation not to be intoxicated, not to be intemperate? In harmony with [R3455 : page 332] our expectation we find the Apostle's exhortation to the Church is to be temperate in all things – in eating, in drinking, in clothing, in pleasure, in sorrow. "Let your moderation be known unto all men," says the Apostle. – Phil. 4:5.

## **THE DRUNKARDS OF EPHRAIM.**

We are aware that our lesson could be viewed with some degree of reason as a temperance lesson – as an exhortation against the use

of natural intoxicants. We agree that the Prophet might possibly have referred to the drunkards amongst the people of the ten-tribe kingdom known as Ephraim or as Israel, but we do not understand that this was the Lord's object in giving the message of which our lesson is a part. We believe that he was rather giving a lesson to us, his spiritual house of sons of this Gospel age. The lesson surely is either a literal statement respecting literal intoxication, or a figurative one respecting figurative intoxication. If literal, the whole connection should bear this out by being similarly literal; if figurative, the whole connection should bear it out as figurative.

We cannot think that the drunkards of Ephraim were so numerous or so highly esteemed as to be "the crown of pride" of that nation, nor that those drunkards lay "at the head of every fat valley," nor that the Lord paid so much more attention to those drunkards than he does to drunkards of our day as that he would make a special demonstration against them. On the contrary, we must assume that while intemperance may have been one of the faults of the people of Israel, pride was another and perhaps a greater one. They were intoxicated with pride and self-sufficiency, and did not properly appreciate their dependence upon the Lord. Hence it was that a few years after the date of this prophecy that proud people were carried captive by their enemies into Syria. It was the coming of this enemy that is figuratively referred to as a tempest of hail, a destroying storm, a flood of mighty waters that cast down the crown of pride of those people intoxicated with self-conceit.

### **THE LESSON TO NOMINAL SPIRITUAL ISRAEL.**

In previous studies we noted that, in harmony with the Apostle's words, nearly all the Old Testament prophecies were written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the ages have come, and in many instances those who uttered the prophecies and those who heard them comprehended them not. (I Pet. 1:12.) The prophecy at present under consideration we understand to be of this kind – specially applicable

to spiritual Israel, though not without a meaning to natural Israel at the time of this writing. Today we see the Christian world intoxicated, bewildered and confused with the wine of false doctrine mentioned so explicitly in our Lord's last message to his people. There it is clearly set forth that the great mother of harlots would make all the nations of Christendom drunk with the wine of her fornication. The crown of pride and the fat valleys of her possessions are easily seen from this standpoint. Churchianity today is intoxicated with its material prosperity, its increasing power and dignity in the world. It wears a crown of pride and self-sufficiency, and in a stupid and maudlin way is blinded to its real condition. Thus our Lord pictures nominal Israel of the present day as the Laodicean Church, and declares, "Thou art wretched, miserable, blind and naked," though "thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." The prosperity of Churchianity is, however, like the fading flower – its beauty and fragrance will soon pass away; it will soon be swallowed up like a first ripe fig.

But at the same time that the glory passes away from the nominal system a proportionately special blessing will come to the residue of the Lord's people who are not of this class, drunken with the wine of false doctrine, but, as the Apostle declares, "Sober, girding up the loins of their minds, and pressing along the narrow way for the prize." This will mean to this class a spirit of judgment, or what the Apostle calls the spirit of a sound mind, enabling them to comprehend the divine plan, and enabling them to be strong in the defense of the Truth and to "turn the battle to the gate;" that is to say, the citadel of Truth will be preserved notwithstanding the fall of the masses of Churchianity. This is in accord with the prophetic statement, "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand, but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked, because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation." – Psalm 91:7-10.

Where do we find ourselves, dear brethren and sisters, as we investigate this picture, so applicable to our day. Are we amongst those intoxicated with the spirit of the world, the spirit of Babylon, the spirit of Antichrist, the spirit of false doctrine, that has "a form of godliness but denies its power"? Or are we classed with the Lord and more and more being filled with the spirit of a sound mind? and are we standing faithful as good soldiers in the defense of the Truth and turning the battle at the gateway; not suffering that any false doctrine shall intrude upon us, but insisting that every doctrine shall be decided by the Word of the Lord, and be squared by the Golden Rule and by the Scriptural presentations on the subject of the Ransom? We trust that the more we examine ourselves the more we can assure ourselves that we are with the latter class.

Verse 7 seemingly pictures these drunkards of Ephraim as the leaders of the people, their priests and prophets, their religious instructors, who have all been misled through the strong drink, the false doctrine of the dark ages, and who are all erring in vision and stumbling in their judgment respecting the Truth, the Divine Plan.

### **TABLES FULL OF VOMIT.**

The statement in verse 8 that all their tables are full of vomit and filthiness so that there is no place clean could **[R3455 : page 333]** hardly be understood to apply literally to the millions of Israelites of Isaiah's day, but it does apply spiritually to the millions of nominal Israel of our day. We need scarcely say that the table of the Lord's people signifies their spiritual supply of food, nourishment; and as we look about us we find in Churchianity many such tables, one to each denomination – its creed. The creed of each denomination represents what it claims God has set before it as the truth for its spiritual nourishment and refreshment; and for centuries each denomination has been busily inviting each other and the world to come to its table. Now, however, these tables are measurably

deserted. Very few want to talk about the doctrine or creed of their sect; they generally prefer to ignore creeds.

Why? Because creeds are nauseating; they are spread with doctrines which the preachers and laity have rejected – "vomit"; they are full of filthiness; there is no place clean, as the Prophet describes. Not a solitary creed in Christendom will stand examination in the light of common sense; not a preacher in any "orthodox denomination" – that is, in any denomination that is recognized by the Evangelical Alliance – would be willing to discuss the church creed which he accepted and outwardly professes and vowed to teach.

On the contrary, how is it with the remnant mentioned in verses 5 and 6? Have they any table? Yes, indeed! They have a table spread with divine bounties, and it is referred to prophetically in the 23d Psalm, "My table thou hast furnished in the presence of mine enemies." Having gotten free from the wine of the false doctrine of Babylon, these have sought the Truth of the Divine Word unadulterated, and have drawn nigh unto the Lord with their hearts and not with their lips merely; they have gotten mercy and found grace to help in time of great need. The Lord has bountifully supplied their wants with truths both new and old, and thus he fulfilled the promise he made when leaving us, saying to those servants who would be ready to hear the knock, indicating his "presence" at his second coming, that he would open the door, enter in and sup with them. Furthermore, he promised that he would gird himself and become our servant, and bring forth to his faithful ones things new and old from the larder, from the treasure house of truth and grace. We found it so! We have a table spread with the most wonderful bounties, "riches of grace, mercy and truth."

Taking up the matter from a little different standpoint, verse 9 throws out a suggestive inquiry in full harmony with the foregoing, – "Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to

understand [pure] doctrine?" Here is the key for the foregoing. The difficulty with Churchianity is a superabundance of mysticism, ignorance and superstition and a dearth of knowledge – "My people perish for lack of knowledge." The question is asked in order to suggest something in connection with the answer, as though the question were, Why does not the Lord instruct those who are drunken with ignorance and error? Why does he not teach them the Truth?

The answer is that those who will be ready for the pure doctrine must first be weaned from the milk and drawn from the breasts. So long as the Lord's people are babes to the extent that is here indicated, they will be dependent upon the systems and sects and false doctrines with which the Adversary has so much to do in developing. Those who are the Lord's true people in these various sects must get strong enough to be weaned from them before they can be in the proper attitude of mind to receive the Lord's instructions from another quarter. To all who are thus weaned from Churchianity the Lord will very graciously grant precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little, and there a little, that they may grow thereby, that they may become strong in the Lord and able to partake eventually of the strong meat which he so abundantly supplies to those of *His* table – *His* Word. [R3456 : page 333]

### **WITH STAMMERING LIPS.**

Verse 11 tells of the stammering lips with which the message is being told, little by little, line upon line. Is it not so? Those who are proclaiming Present Truth by the printed page and orally are for the most part quite unqualified for the work from the standpoint of the world. Just as in the Jewish harvest the Lord's people were mostly from common people as now – not many great, not many wise, not many learned has God chosen, but chiefly the poor of this world, – but rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom.

Through these stammering lips of the Lord's consecrated humble ones a proclamation is made throughout Christianity, saying,

"This is the rest wherewith you may rest, and this is the refreshing." There is no doubt at all that this brief description of the harvest message is very appropriate to the divine plan of the ages. It is indeed to those who can receive it a message of rest and refreshment, but, as the Prophet pointed out, the majority will not hear. Nevertheless, the message of the Lord is to be sent forth, line upon line, precept upon precept, tract upon tract, here a little and there a little, that every true child of God may be reached and be gathered out of Babylon. "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and receive not of her plagues."

The Prophet points out that the result will be that the nominal system will go and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken. We see that this is already approaching. Higher Criticism and Evolutionism is undermining the faith of the great body of Christendom; unbelief is ensnaring them, and their fall backward is near at hand. How appropriate it is that those who have the privilege of being the Lord's mouth-pieces now shall cry aloud, not with the view of awakening or converting, or reforming Churchianity as a whole, but to arouse the few – all amongst them who are the Lord's true sheep. **[R3456 : page 334]**

It will be remembered that the Apostle quoted the last verse of our lesson and applied it also in the end of the Jewish age – pointing out that because of unbelief the nation of Israel stumbled and fell from divine favor. We have already seen on previous occasions the parallel between the Jewish and Gospel dispensations, and are therefore to expect in nominal spiritual Israel something to correspond to the stumbling and falling which took place in nominal natural Israel in the end of their age.

Who shall be able to stand? Let us abide under the shadow of the Almighty, and stand firmly for the righteousness of Christ, the standard that the Lord has set up; and let us put on the whole armor of God, and having done all, stand.

