

## A PROPHECY NEARING FULFILMENT

**"Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." – HAB. 3:17,18.**

HABAKKUK'S entire prayer, recorded in this chapter of his prophecy, is so symbolical that it would be scarcely in keeping with it for us to give the words of our text the plain, simple interpretation that we would be otherwise inclined to give. This simple interpretation would be that although the conditions were such that famine stalked everywhere, and there was nothing of earthly hope, nevertheless God's people at any time and in any place would rejoice in God and give Him the glory.

It would seem very strange, however, if the Prophet should wind up the whole chapter, so highly symbolical, with anything so plain and literal as we have suggested. With so much imagery in his mind, it would seem but reasonable that the words should be interpreted in keeping with their context, and that we should regard it as the Prophet's expression of some deep truths. Much of the language of the Bible is figurative; and in our common conversation we also use many figures. For instance, in the Scriptures a vine is a figure used for the Church: As our Lord said, "I am the Vine; ye are the branches." – John 15:5.

The flock of God – the sheep – are common figurative expressions for the same class. Our Lord speaks of the Little Flock. We are His sheep. The Jews were also referred to as God's sheep, by the Psalmist David, in Psalm 74:1; 79:13, etc.

So with the word olive. The olive tree is mentioned by St. Paul in referring to the special people of God, His peculiar people – those

in relationship with Him. He speaks of the natural olive tree – shows that the Promise applied originally to the Jewish nation: "In thee [Abraham] and in thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." He says that because of unbelief the natural branches were broken off. Thus we locate the vine and the olive both as representing the Church of Christ, from different points of view.

When the Little Flock shall have passed beyond the veil, there will still be the Great Company of the Lord's people left here. Many of these will apparently continue in Babylon until the time of trouble shall cause Babylon to fall. And by the fall of Babylon these will be set free. Before all this is made plain to them, they may use the language of our text, and later come to see clearly. In the 19th of Revelation this company are spoken of as rejoicing in the fall of Babylon and saying, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him; for the Marriage of the Lamb is come, and His Wife hath made Herself ready." (Vs.7.) All things had seemed to them to be failures; and now they see that God's Plan has not failed, but has been fulfilled.

## **EARTHLY GOVERNMENTS A FAILURE**

The Church has not yet blessed the world. The fruit of the Vine will feed the world in the coming Age. Neither the olive nor the vine will give life to the world at the present time. This will come in the New Dispensation, during the Messianic reign.

The Lord has used the word *field* to represent the world: "The field is the world." The world have been hoping to better their affairs. They have been hoping to manage matters successfully. And so the various universal empires have sprung up. First the Babylonians tried to give the world a better government, but their efforts were of no avail. Then the Medes and Persians tried, and also failed. Next the Greeks and later the Romans took the reins of universal government, and likewise failed. Finally Papacy came forward, claiming to be the Kingdom of Christ that would rule the

world. She failed. Of late years Socialism has come to the front, saying that it can better the world, but the prospects for social improvement are no better.

### **"NO HERD IN THE STALLS"**

The expression, "herd in the stalls," seems a little obscure. The Scriptures liken our Lord Jesus to a bullock – and in the coming Age mankind, on reaching perfection, will be symbolically represented by a bullock. The suggestion of the Prophet David is that mankind then shall offer *bullocks* on God's altar. (Psa. 51:19.) This cannot refer to the Church in the present time; for in the Atonement Day *type* the Church is represented by a *goat*, and our Lord – a perfect Man when His sacrifice was made – is represented by a bullock. But in the end of the next Age, when the world shall be *perfected*, they shall offer *bullocks* on the altar. This represents how mankind will make a full consecration of themselves, their *perfect powers*.

We know nothing better in the application of the bullock than that suggested by the Psalmist. At the close of this Gospel Age, when all the Church shall have passed beyond the veil, there will be no perfect men. In **[R5383 : page 20]** other words, there will be a point of time when the Church will be glorified and when the Ancient Worthies will not yet have appeared. The people will stand amazed, not seeing any way out of their troubles. Only those who have the light of the Lord's Word will be able to appreciate the condition at all.

Those who will then understand – the Great Company – will rejoice in the Lord. They will be able to trust in God, even though conditions in the world are distressing, and the Ancient Worthies not yet here to take hold of matters. They will see that the conditions are really leading up to the great blessing – that the great Time of Trouble is the necessary preparation for blessing. And they will say, Let us rejoice and give glory to the Lord, for the Bride hath made

herself ready! We see in this glorification of the Church the beginning of the great blessing. Soon we may expect to see the Ancient Worthies here. Then will come the fulfilment of all God's gracious promises. So we will not lose heart, but will trust in the Lord.

Our Lord Jesus spoke of the Great Company – the foolish virgin class – in His Sermon on the Mount. (Matt. 7:21-23.) After the last member of the Little Flock has gone beyond the veil, the Great Company will be thoroughly awakened and will say, "Lord, Lord, may we not come in? We are ready now, dear Lord; we see where we have made our mistake. We see matters differently; we realize what privileges and opportunities for sacrifice we once enjoyed, but missed. May we not enter even now?" But the Lord will answer, "Depart from Me. I do not recognize you." This word *depart* does not mean that they will depart into eternal torment, as we once thought. The Lord does not say, "Depart, ye cursed," for *cursed* means to be set apart for punishment. He merely says, "Depart from Me."

The Kingdom of Heaven is elsewhere (Matt. 25:1-12) likened unto ten virgins who took their lamps and went forth to meet the Bridegroom. Five of them were wise and took oil in their vessels with their lamps; but five were foolish virgins and took no oil with them. When the Bridegroom came, the foolish virgins said to the wise ones, "Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out." But they could not do so, they had enough only for their own lamps. After the wise virgins had entered with the Bridegroom, the door was shut. Then came the other virgins saying, "Lord, Lord, open unto us!" But he answered, "Verily I say unto you, I know you not."

These words of our Lord, "I know you not," do not mean that these were not virgins. What do they mean? He means that, having recognized His Bride, He does not know any other woman. These were desiring to be recognized as a part of the Bride. And the Lord

says, I do not recognize you. My Bride is complete. So the foolish virgin class are rejected from a place in the Bride class, but they are received as associates and assistants. Their rejection will give them cause for grief. Realizing that the *door of opportunity* is closed to them, they will cry, Oh, we have lost the great prize! They may become despondent. We do not know.

## **SORROW TURNED INTO JOY**

But this Great Company are afterward pictured as saying, Let us be glad! Let us rejoice! Let us glorify God, because the Bride has been taken! Should any one say to them, But *you* are not of the Bride class, their reply might be: Nevertheless, the blessings are coming to all – *even* to us! The Bride class are the First-fruits of God's people. It is our own fault that we failed to get into the Bride class. If we had seen a while ago as we now see, we would have striven harder and we should not have failed. We would not have listened to what Babylon had to say, We would have "run with patience the race set before us." We were stupefied by the "doctrines of demons." (1 Timothy 4:1.) We are glad that we are now awakened. We rejoice that God's Plan is being so gloriously outworked. Our lamps are burning now. We are blessed as never before. Let us be glad and rejoice in that the Bride is glorified. **[R5384 : page 20]**

## **"CUT OFF FROM THE FOLD"**

"The flock shall be cut off from the fold." As applied to the elect Church, this is viewed from the earthly standpoint. There is an earthly fold and a Heavenly fold. We are now in the fold on earth. We must die in order to enter into the glory that is promised us – to enter into the Heavenly fold.

Our Lord Jesus was cut off from the earthly fold when He died. And as with our Lord, so with us. We must be cut off from the fold here before we can enter into the fold above. It may appear to the

Great Company for a time as though all things are failing, and not coming to pass; but from God's standpoint the fig tree will be budding and the olive will be bringing forth her fruit. There will be no miscarriage of God's purposes. The Church will reach her full glorification, and then the vine will bear glorious, ripe fruitage for all mankind.

