

[R5768 : page 280]

APOSTOLIC INJUNCTION NEVER SO SIGNIFICANT

**"The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light."
– Romans 13:12.**

FROM a careful study of Bible chronology it seems very evident that each of the six great Days in which Jehovah prepared the earth for man, ending with man's own creation, was a period of seven thousand years. After man was created, God "rested from all His work" – as related to the earth. His rest period began with the commencement of the great Seventh Day, and has continued ever since. This Seventh Day is also to be a period of seven thousand years, ushering in at its close the glorious Jubilee of Earth, 49,000 years after the beginning of the ordering of Earth.

This great Rest Day of Jehovah has been man's Work Week, each Day of which has been a thousand years long. When the Apostle Paul wrote the words of our text, more than four of these thousand-year Days were in the past; they were then in the Fifth Day. Practically all of this time had been a reign of sin, darkness and death, due to man's fall. So St. Paul could truly say, as he looked back, that this great night of darkness was then far spent and the day was at hand. From the Old Testament prophecies and from the wonderful revelations which he himself had received from the Lord he was assured that, through the sacrifice for man which had been made by the Lord Jesus Christ, a glorious Day [R5768 : page 281] of emancipation from the bondage of Sin and Death was to come – the Seventh Day of man's great Week. It is of this glorious Sabbath Day that the Apostle here speaks.

For one-half of the long period since the fall of our first parents, there had been but a very obscure light as regarded any

deliverance of man from the curse of death pronounced upon the father of the race for his disobedience. There was the mere glimmer of a promise that God would at some future time do something for mankind. First there had been a declaration to the serpent who had brought about man's downfall, that the Seed of the woman should bruise, or crush, his *head*, while he would but bruise the *heel* of this Seed. Then the clothing by the Lord of the nakedness of Adam and Eve with the skins of slain animals suggested a future covering provided by the death of some unknown Redeemer – the Seed of the Woman. Later, God manifested His acceptance of the animal-sacrifice of Abel. A little later came a suggestion to Enoch (Jude 14-16), and still later, a promise to Abraham, that God would yet bless all the families of the earth through his Seed.

Then came a gradual working out of a feature of that Promise to Abraham, through the Hebrew people, to make of them, if they would prove worthy, a nation who would be light-bearers to all other nations and peoples. Still with all the disciplinary experiences which Israel received, when our Lord Jesus came, those who had been under such special Divine instruction were, as a nation, totally unready to receive Him as the Messiah of God. And they crucified Him. Yet they were in advance of other nations. God had not given instructions to other nations, but had given Prophets, Laws, etc., to the people of Israel. (Amos 3:2.) But while this especially favored nation was quite unready for the light, as represented in the Lord Jesus and His teachings, there were some among them who were ready to receive Him as the Sent of God, Israel's long-looked-for Messiah. These were the "Israelites indeed."

THE CALL OF THE "BRIDE" CLASS

"He came unto His own [nation], and His own received Him not." At the time of the crucifixion of Christ, after John the Baptist had done his work and after our Lord's three and a half years of

ministry among them, only a little more than five hundred had become Jesus' disciples and had remained true. Yet at Pentecost and onward a considerable number were awakened, and came into the light of Truth and accepted the Gospel Message and received the Holy Spirit. About twenty-five thousand, so far as we are able to estimate, received this transformation of heart. It is a wonderful thing that so many of that little nation were found to accept Messiah! No other nation would have made so good a showing. As history has proven, more than 1800 [R5769 : page 281] years have been required to select the remainder of the 144,000 Elect from among the Gentiles.

At that time the Message was given forth that the Gospel Call was designed to select a "Bride" class, to be associated with the Messiah in His glorious Kingdom. *It was not designed for all*, but only for those who had the ears to hear and the heart to respond. If we place ourselves back in the days of the Apostles, we can think of them as preparing themselves for their great, coming glory and as thinking that the foreordained number to constitute this honored company would soon be completed. They probably thought that these thousands gathered from all the Jews in Palestine and other countries, and especially when augmented by some from the Gentiles whom they perceived were later received, would make up the "little flock" which would compose the "Bride" of Christ. Hence the Apostles were continually speaking as if the Kingdom was at hand. They thought it imminent – were expecting it every day.

NO CLEAR CHRONOLOGY UNTIL OUR DAY

But the Apostle Paul pointed out that certain Scriptures had not yet been fulfilled, and that there must be a great falling away in the Church before the great Day of the Lord could come. The early Church probably had no particular method in which they could have reckoned definitely the number of years since Adam.

The matter of counting years, as we have it, is comparatively a modern affair. In olden times each nation had its own chronology. They merely reckoned that it was so many years since this dynasty or that dynasty began; so many years from a certain notable event to the first year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, of Cyrus, etc.

And so with the Israelites. They would say, In such a year of the reign of David, or of Hezekiah, etc., such and such an event took place. But it was not easy to get these things connected up so as to have any accurate chain of chronology. There were certain broken links, which our Lord has since supplied for us in the New Testament, to be noted and connected up "in due time." Today we have more advantage every way than they had. The Hebrew Scriptures were written on parchment and kept in certain places. And it was difficult to handle them because they were written on great rolls. One had to roll the parchment this way and that way to get to the place where he wished to read certain prophecies, etc. Today, not only have we Bibles neatly printed, but many of them have convenient marks of reference by which we can turn from page to page. We have suggestions, also, as to chronology which enable us to get a clear, connected chain from the creation of Adam to the present year.

It is true also that the Jews have a chronology that is called Anno Mundi – the year of the world. But it was not arranged until long after the days of the Apostles. They thought it was a long, long way back to the time of Adam. The Apostle Peter declares that a day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Jews had no means by which they could accurately reckon chronology from the beginning; no means for availing themselves of information on the subject. It is not surprising, then, that they were not clearly informed. The Lord, undoubtedly by design, left matters in this uncertain condition until His own "due time" for their revelation.

THE DAY OF CHRIST NOW ON HAND

In the days of the Apostles it was truly declared by them that the Day of the Lord was "at hand." The Apostles perceived that a great Light had come into the world, that a turning-point in the history of the world had arrived. But it was not the shining of the Sunlight of the great Millennial Day. St. Paul declared that the darkness still covered the earth and gross darkness the people. The Lord Jesus Himself had explained that the light that then shone from Him was not the great "Sun of Righteousness," which would later shine out upon the whole world. Neither did the disciples of Christ shed a light as the light of the sun upon the world of mankind. Our Lord told His disciples that they should put their light upon a candlestick, that it might give light to those in the House. – Matthew 5:14-16.

But it would require the light of the "Sun of Righteousness" [R5769 : page 282] to enlighten the whole world – Christ and His Church in glory. Our Lord pointed out that this would come at the conclusion of the Age then just begun – the Gospel Age, as it is generally called, the Christian Dispensation. At the beginning of this Age He sowed the seed which would produce the "Bride" class, the class which was to reign with Him over the world in the Age to follow. But He forewarned that the enemy, Satan, would sow the seeds of error in the Lord's wheat-field, and that he would be successful in producing a large crop of tares. Our Lord also declared that at the end of this Gospel Age He would Himself be present and would, as the great Chief Reaper, gather the tares in bundles to be burned, and would gather the wheat into the garner. Speaking of that time the Master says, "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father." – Matthew 13:43.

That time has not yet fully come. But this glorious Day is now breaking. The majority of the members of Christ are now with their

Lord on the other side of the veil, and the dawning light is increasing, and the Day will soon be here in all its glorious effulgence. This dawning light draws our attention more particularly to the chronology, and helps us to see mistakes that were made in the past by those who attempted to arrange a chronology before the time was ripe for it to be seen clearly. It shows us that a mistake of a hundred and twenty years was made, and still later lesser mistakes.

Tracing the Scriptural chronology down to our day, we find that we are now living in the very dawn of the great Seventh Day of man's great Week. This is abundantly corroborated by the events now taking place about us on every hand. The Millennial Age has already begun, the Day of the Lord is now on hand – now present. So we should not sleep, but should be wide awake. Some terrible things were to occur as the Day of Christ drew on, before the full shining forth of the Sun. For instance, this present mighty war, which is truly a terrible thing, was long ago foretold. (Jeremiah 25:15-38; Joel 3:2,9-16.) Daily is it increasing in volume and intensity, and will soon merge into revolution, to be swiftly followed by the chaos of anarchy. The great Adversary is able to put darkness for light – and these warring nations verily think they are doing God service by killing one another.

Now the question is, Will the United States become involved? This may come, or this country may receive its share of retribution in the coming revolution and anarchy. We attribute all this terrible condition to the darkness that is upon the world through the Adversary's blinding delusions. But God will overrule human affairs to His own glory and to the ultimate good of man in the overthrow of the Rule of Selfishness and the establishment of His glorious Kingdom of Righteousness and Love.

"Cast off the works of darkness," urges the Apostle. This injunction was appropriate in St. Paul's day. Those who saw Jesus

to be the Light of the world, those who became enlightened with His Light, and themselves became burning and shining lights, were able to realize that the great darkness prevailing around them was largely the result of ignorance, superstition, misunderstanding. The whole heathen world were in gross darkness. The Jewish nation were in darkness, except the minority who received the light. What darkness were the Jews in? They were in darkness in respect to God's Plan and the meaning of the Promise to Abraham and his Seed respecting the blessing of the world.

"THE WHOLE WORLD LIETH IN THE WICKED ONE"

All those who became children of the light, who received the light from the Master's teachings or from His chosen Apostles and came into Covenant relationship with God through the begetting of the Holy Spirit, became members of the special Seed of Abraham, who are to bless the world during the incoming Age. But the nation of Israel was set aside, as respects the chief favor. In the year 70 A.D., their national polity was entirely destroyed, and the Jews were scattered far and wide. What was the condition of other nations at that time? We perceive that while Israel had been in darkness, the other nations were in still deeper darkness, though many of them were "feeling after God, if haply they might find Him." The god of this world has blinded the minds of those who see not. Consequently he has blinded the minds of the majority of all nations with ignorance, superstition and "doctrines of devils."

The Devil has men in such a condition that they cannot think of God as being *good*. "The whole world lieth in the Wicked One." The only ones who are not in the Wicked One are the true Church of God, the Church of Christ. The children of the light are the only exceptions. It is from the Word of God that His true people get their light. They are to have oil in themselves – the oil of the Holy Spirit. But many of these have not been faithful to the light and are in confusion; some are merely babes in Christ; some are weak in

various ways for lack of the spiritual food which the Lord has provided.

It is God's people who have been addressed in the Scriptures all the way down these nineteen hundred years. We come down to our day and see that the light of the Word is fully corroborated by the work of the New Dispensation now beginning. The light of the Dawn is fully corroborating the Bible. St. Paul says that we should "cast off the works of darkness" and "put on the armor of light." The works of darkness are those things which are done in the dark. The works of darkness are the works of sin. These works are not [R5770 : page 282] done out in the open, as a rule. They generally hide away from the revealment which the light brings. If they are done in the open, it is when they are posing as works of light. Wherever the true light of Jesus Christ comes it reproveth these works of darkness.

The Scribes and the Pharisees of Jesus' day were money-lovers. Jesus condemned their works because these were mere pretense. While they prayed in street corners, etc., they privately devoured widows' houses – took advantage of widows and swallowed up their property. But it was true of the public in general – of the Gentiles as well as the Jews. The Apostles enumerated a number of the evils that were generally practised in his day – adultery, lasciviousness, covetousness, witchcraft, hatred, wrath, strife, heresies, evil-speaking, idolatry, etc. All these things are works of darkness, works of the flesh and of the Devil; and they are still practised everywhere today.

THE ARMOR OVER THE ROBE

We are to put on the "armor of light." Consider the light you have now received – the light of the knowledge of God, of His will, of what to live for, and of what kind of characters they are to whom the Lord will be pleased to grant the reward of eternal life, even the highest form of life. Having all this knowledge, put it on as an

armor to protect you. Knowing what God requires, put all this on, not as a robe, but as an armor [R5770 : page 283] over the robe. Put on the breastplate of righteousness covering the heart. Realize that nothing but heart-purity and absolute loyalty to God may be considered. Realize that God is *for* us. Take the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, and all the various pieces enumerated by the Apostle. These constitute the "armor of light," so called because it is obtained from the light of Truth.

In this our day it is surely as important that we should put on this armor and should put off the works of darkness as for the Church of the Apostle's day. Surely if ever the whole armor was needed, it is needed now. The Lord's dealing with us is individual – both as to the putting off of the works of darkness and as to the putting on of the armor of light. All who put on this armor will find themselves in accord with the Lord and with those who are truly His. As God's faithful children get farther and farther into this Day of the Lord, more and more will they see eye to eye. We believe there never was a time when so many of the Lord's people have seen eye to eye regarding the things to put off and the things to put on. We believe there never was a time when so many of the children of the light were wearing the whole Armor of Light. Therefore we have so much the more responsibility to "walk as children of light" and not as of the night.

DANGER TO EVEN THE FULLY CONSECRATED

It is possible that some, even of the fully consecrated children of God, surrounded with the cares of this life, or weary of the struggle against sin and evil, or somewhat beguiled by the present things of time and sense, may have become more or less drowsy, and so stand in special need of the stirring exhortation which the Apostle in this connection gives to the Church – particularly appropriate today: "It is now high time to awake out of sleep!" It is time for earnest, searching self-examination, for a more diligent

watching to see that we do not allow the things of this "present evil world" to absorb our thoughts and energies to the imperiling of our Heavenly hopes, so soon to be realized if we remain wholly faithful to the end. It is highly important that we seek for a still closer walk with God, a more intimate fellowship with Him, a more thorough self-abnegation, a more diligent cross-bearing, a more faithful conformity in every respect to the whole will of the Lord concerning us. And this will of the Lord, we know, is not unreasonable, and His grace sufficient is promised for every day, every hour, every moment!

A careful, prayerful searching of our hearts will make plain wherein we lack in conformity to the perfect will of God. And if we discover in ourselves any perverse way, we shall correct it. Thus we more and more "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" – the mind or disposition of Christ, the spirit of love and loyalty which characterized Him. How important it is, in the very short time which yet remains to us, that we fully awake and apply ourselves most diligently to the cultivation of the Godlike, Christlike disposition of Love, the love which seeks above all else the glory of God, which is kindly-affectioned toward the brethren, which rests in the precious promises, which trusts fully in the dark as well as in the light, and which has no shadow of doubt that all the good things promised in God's Word shall be fulfilled!

LET US "WALK AS BECOMETH SAINTS"

In the context St. Paul urges, "Let us walk honestly, as in the day." He was speaking of certain vile practises then common – drunkenness, rioting, chambering, wantonness. We are not necessarily to suppose that he meant this as a reproof to the Christian believers at Rome, but as a pastoral exhortation that they should be on guard against these sins, and as a reminder that the principles which they had adopted as Christians were in direct contrast to those which generally prevailed. Very different

standards of morality were current among the heathen. Quite a large number of the believers at Rome had been heathen and accustomed to immoralities. Hence the Apostle's words were words of caution; for we would not suppose that *saints* would be guilty of these things.

The Apostle's words above shed a warning light in saying, "Let us walk honestly, as in the day." Most of the rioting and drunkenness is done at night – such is the custom even to this day. Works of darkness and sin thrive best at night, for some reason. People have other things to attend to in the day-time, and evil-doers take the night for frivolity or carousing or crime. Vice then stalks abroad. Darkness seems to favor such works, by hiding them more or less. The Apostle points out that this is the great night of darkness, sin, but that those in Christ are not in darkness; for they have been brought into the light of God. We are looking for the full dawning of the Morning of the New Dispensation – we are seeking to live in harmony with it. So here he says, Let us walk honestly, above-board, so that everybody will see and know our lives – let us be honest in every way, not be preaching one thing and practising another.

Considering the day here mentioned to be the Millennial Day, we may well say that nothing in the nature of sin will then be allowed. "For out of Zion shall go forth the Law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem." (Micah 4:2.) "Judgment also will I lay to the line," says Jehovah, "and righteousness to the plummet; and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the water shall overflow the hiding-place." (Isaiah 28:17.) Whoever in that Day shall attempt to live riotously and in drunkenness or in any sin will be promptly punished. The Apostle's exhortation is that we, as saints of the Lord, should live as those will be living when the Day shall have fully come – when the Sun of Righteousness will be shedding its beams over the whole earth.

It is a part of our overcoming to live as though the Day were fully ushered in, as though everything had been fully *manifested*. Whoever will take the Apostle's advice in this matter will certainly have a rich blessing. In fact any other course would be sure to be disastrous to us as New Creatures in Christ! **page 283**

ONLY A LITTLE WHILE

"Only a little while to walk with weary feet,
Only a little while the storms of life to meet,
Only a little while to tread the thorny way,
Only a little while, then comes the perfect Day.

"Only a little while to spread the *truth* abroad.
Only a little while to testify for God,
Only a little while, the time is fleeting fast,
Only a little while, earth's sorrows all are past.

"Only a little while, then let us do our best,
Only a little while, then comes the promised rest.
Only a little while, oh, what a word is this!
Only a little while, then comes the perfect bliss."

