

THE WORLD'S REDEEMER PICTURED.

--ISAIAH 52:13-53:12.--JULY 16.--

Golden Text:-- "The Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all."

THIS little section of Isaiah's great prophecy is a very striking one. The original prophecy, as is well known, was without division into chapters and verses.

The preceding context points us clearly and distinctly to the second advent of our Lord and his gathering of his people to himself. It describes the present time, therefore, the harvest of this Gospel age, telling how the Lord's people would now know his name-- understand and appreciate his true character, announce the presence of the King and the beginning of his reign. (**Vs. 6-8.**) It also tells of the beginning of favor upon natural Israel, and, looking into the future, points to the Lord's glorification through that people. (**Vs. 9-10.**) It also shows the separating work of this harvest time, the gathering of the good fish into the vessels, the gathering of the wheat into the barn.

Then, pointing to the Millennial reign of Christ, the first three verses of our lesson (**13-15**) picture the high exaltation and honor of Jehovah's servant Son, our Lord Jesus, saying, "He shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and honored and shall be very high." The whole earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, which will then shine forth through the blessed and wise government of Immanuel, as has been declared, "The Desire of all Nations shall come:" they shall see that the way of righteousness is the desirable way, the blessed way, the way of true wisdom and happiness, [R3590 : page 204] and all who will refuse to come into this attitude shall be cut off from amongst the people in the second death.--Acts 3:23.

Next a contrast is instituted between how our Lord was humiliated and how by and by he shall be exalted. The prophet, so to speak, takes his seat at the cross, and beholds the Lord sadly distorted in his crucifixion, torn in an inhuman manner, his features drawn with pain. The picture of this, as given in Cheyne's translation, is written in poetic form, as was the original. It reads as follows:--

"Deeply marred was his appearance, out of all human likeness,
And his form out of all semblance to sons of men;
But as deep will be the obeisance of many.
Before him kings shall be awestruck in silence."

The thought evidently is that his glory and honor, influence and power, will be proportionate to the sufferings and ignominy which he experienced. And this is the thought everywhere held out in the Scriptures, not only as respects our Redeemer but also as respects his Church. "If we suffer with him we shall also reign with him." Present trials and sufferings work out for us a "far more and exceeding weight of glory." So in speaking of our Lord the Apostle declares that "he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. *Wherefore* God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth."--Phil. 2:8.

We cannot claim that it is a divine law that glory and honor must be preceded by sufferings and humiliations. Our heavenly Father and the holy angels, highly honored, have never been humiliated. Nevertheless we are assured that so far as God's dealings with the Church of this present Gospel age are concerned, they are along these lines. The suffering is not compulsory but granted us as a privilege, and the exaltation is held out as a reward, marking the degree of divine approval. With this thought before us how it helps us to appreciate the

sentiments of the Apostle, "Gladly, therefore, will I glory in tribulation." We glory not in the tribulations themselves, for sometimes they seem to the flesh to be grievous; but our hearts can glory in tribulations, since we know that under the divine arrangement governing our call as the Church of Christ these tribulations are working in us those elements of character pleasing and acceptable in the Father's sight, which eventually he will reward with a share in the exaltation of our Redeemer, our Bridegroom.

So grand, so glorious will be the demonstration of divine power and blessing in the Messiah that no word of dissent will be heard--unto him every knee shall bow and every tongue confess. This will be true not only of the common people, the world in general, but true also of the greatest, the princes, the kings of earth, intellectual kings, financial kings, political kings. All eyes shall be opened, all ears shall be unstopped, to the knowledge of divine goodness and mercy, justice and truth, as it will then be revealed in the Messiah.

"WHO HATH BELIEVED OUR TEACHING?"

In the *fifty-third chapter* the Prophet looks backward from our day and the coming glory, and intimates that until the glory of the Lord shall be revealed his cause will make comparatively little headway in the world. The true teaching respecting him and his mission will not be generally received--various false teachings, false gospels will have the preference. The inquiry, "Who hath believed our report?" our teaching, our presentations, implies the answer, Few. And so it has been. There were few who had the hearing ears and understanding hearts at the time of our Lord's first [R3590 : page 205] advent, and only a few all down throughout the Gospel age have really and truly appreciated the message.

True, there are large numbers to-day who are nominally Christians, who with their lips draw nigh to the Lord occasionally one day in the seven for an hour, but who are at heart far from him. The vast majority, even in the pulpits of Christendom, seem not to have given heed to the report, the doctrines, the teaching of the Lord's Word in respect to Messiah, his sufferings of this present time and his glories to follow, but rather to have hearkened to false doctrines misrepresenting the divine plan of the ages, substituting therefor many "doctrines of devils," in which a little truth is mixed with much error, to the discomfiture and spiritual sickness and weakness of many of the Lord's truly begotten ones, and to the total confusion of the world, "Christendom."

"To whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" cried the prophet. Alas, it is so that few, very few, see in our Lord Jesus the powerful arm, the omnipotence of Jehovah, stretched down for the aid of our fallen race. Few realize that the work finished at Calvary is the foundation, the basis, upon which the great Jehovah will ultimately establish the Millennial Kingdom for the blessing and uplifting of all the families of the earth. The majority see Jesus as merely the finger of the Lord, doing a comparatively small work for a comparatively small class. As our eyes open we behold to our joy that Messiah, Head and body, will yet constitute the arm of Jehovah, that all-powerful force which shall overthrow evil and establish righteousness and bless all the families of the earth through the seed of Abraham. "If ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."--Gal. 3:29.

GOD'S WAYS NOT MAN'S WAYS.

The prophet proceeds to point out why the report, the teaching, of God's Word and the power of his omnipotent arm for man's salvation have not been discerned by mankind. It is largely because the Lord's way of accomplishing matters is the very reverse of what mankind would have naturally expected. With our mental tendencies, our natural expectations would have been that the Son of the Highest at his first advent would have been manifested in glory and not in humiliation-- that the heavenly Father would have sent him in glory and not in humiliation. Even in his taking of the human form and nature we would have expected it to be under such conditions and with such environments as would have shown forth strikingly and forcefully amongst the members of the human race.

It was a disappointment, especially to the Jews, who were expecting a glorious and powerful king, that our Lord came as the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. To them he appeared too tender a plant to ever prosper. They acknowledged him to be of the Davidic line, but esteemed him to be from one of the roots of David which had lost its virility, its life. They thought him a root out of dry ground, from which they could never hope for a sprout of power and glory and dignity and honor such as they had anticipated Messiah would have. In him they saw not the form of the soldier, the general, which to their conception was the grand, the comely form that Messiah would have, boasting of his power, his strength, his divine support, etc.

No wonder the poor Jews were disappointed, no wonder they considered him undesirable as material for a king, no wonder that they had no hope that he would ever be the great Messiah, the great deliverer. We sympathize with them deeply in their disappointments and in their failure to recognize him as Immanuel. He was despised and rejected of men, even of the men of his own nation, who for sixteen centuries had hoped and waited for his coming. They were ashamed of him, hid their faces from him. He was despised of the Romans and counted unworthy of particular notice, whether he claimed to be king of the Jews or what not, and the Jews esteemed him not--except the few who, because they were Israelites indeed, were guided to an appreciation of him with a wisdom from on high.

What meant all this? Why should the King of glory, the Sent of God, the heir of all the promises, be thus the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief? Ah! says the prophet, I perceive surely that it was our griefs that he bore, our sorrows that he carried, not his own. We thought that he was stricken of God, that he was afflicted by the Almighty, and that this was an evidence that he was not in divine favor. We misunderstood the entire matter. Now we see that his wounds were for our transgressions, that his bruises were for our iniquities, that our peace with God was secured by the stripes, the chastisements, the penalties of the divine law inflicted upon him. We perceive that by his stripes we are healed,--that the punishment or stripes due to us were laid upon him, that the death sentence that was against us he bore, dying the Just for the unjust that he might bring us to God.

"BY HIS STRIPES WE ARE HEALED"

Yes, yes, continues the prophet, we all went astray like sheep, following one another into wrong paths. We, even of the seed of Abraham, brought nigh to God's favor through the Law Covenant under Moses, have failed to retain our position as proper sheep of his fold, and the penalty of divine justice has been borne by the Shepherd for his sheep, Jehovah hath laid on him-- charged up to him, accepted of him--the iniquity of us all. How gracious is this message! Those who received it first from Isaiah, having the guidance and enlightenment of the holy Spirit, could not appreciate his words to the full, but, nevertheless, must have to some extent appreciated them--must have drawn some blessing and hope from them. But now, we of this Gospel age, living since the redemption price was paid, and since it was accepted by the Father on our behalf when our Master ascended on high, and since the Pentecostal blessing evidencing our forgiveness has reached every member of the consecrated class to enlighten the eyes of our understanding, to enable us to see the deep things of God and his gracious promises, we may now rejoice in these things so hard for the Jew to understand, and equally impossible for the natural man of the Gentiles to comprehend. Truly our Lord's words are refreshing and explanatory-- "To you it is given to know of the mysteries of the Kingdom of God;" to all others these things are "spoken in parables and dark sayings."--[Luke 8:10](#); [Mat. 13:10-15,35](#).

"HE OPENED NOT HIS MOUTH"

He was oppressed, as a lamb he was led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before her shearers is dumb; yet he opened not his mouth. The fulfilment of this we see in the case of our Lord. Had he chosen to open his mouth, to argue his case, to defend himself, we may well suppose that the Scribes and Pharisees, high [R3591 : page 206] priests and doctors of the Law, Pilate and his soldiers and the Jewish rabble, would have succumbed to the eloquence of him who spoke as never man spoke. Thus he might merely have defended

himself with his tongue, and righteously, too, without ever moving a finger in his own defence or exercising any of the divine powers deposited in him, or calling for any of the legions of angels who would have responded to his prayer. He did indeed reply to a question of the High Priest and also to a question by Pilate, but he was dumb so far as making any plea or endeavoring in any manner to deliver himself from the death which he perceived was upon him and which he knew was permitted of the Father. As he himself expressed it--"The cup which the Father hath poured for me, shall I not drink it?"

We must not lose sight of the fact that our dear Redeemer is also our pattern and that we are to walk in his steps. The lesson to us, then, is full submission to divine providence in respect to all of our affairs--those which we see clearly and understand and those also which are obscure to us, some of which at times may seem unnecessary. Our faith must triumph; we must learn that our Father is too wise to err, and that he loves us too much to cause a needless tear, a needless pang. But if he permitted severe afflictions to come upon his Son, his well beloved and only one, that he might be tested and proven in respect to his loyalty to the last degree, shall we wonder that in calling us to be associates of that Son in glory, he should require of us also that we should learn obedience by the things we suffer? Gladly then, says the Apostle, will we suffer; gladly will we take this as an evidence that we are in the hands of the Lord and that he is shaping and fashioning us according to the glorious pattern, that we may ultimately be participants also of the heavenly glories and joys and immortality promised to his faithful.

"By oppression and judgment he was taken away," cut off from life--oppression or injustice so far as those who condemned him were concerned, by divine justice and judgment so far as God was concerned, because he had consecrated himself unto death as man's Redeemer, and the Father had accepted him as such.

"WITH THE WICKED AND THE RICH"

"And who shall declare his generation, for he was cut off out of the land of the living." Who could suppose that he would have offspring, children--that he would be ultimately the Everlasting Father to the world of mankind? Who could have seen any prospect, any hope, for the race through his death? Who could have foreseen that as all in Adam die, even so all in Christ shall be made alive? To have discerned these things would have been impossible, and the poor Jews and the world in general are not to be blamed for not discerning them. Rather those who have come into relationship to the Lord through faith and through obedience unto consecration, and who have been begotten of the Spirit to newness of nature, and through the Spirit's enlightenment are able to comprehend these wonderful things of the divine plan--these highly favored of God may rejoice in their blessings without condemning those who do not enjoy to the full the same blessings and opportunities in this present time. Yes, the entire secret of the matter lies in our perception that Jesus was the Redeemer, the one who bought the world with his own precious blood, the one who was stricken by the Father, not for his own sins but for our transgressions --for the transgressions of the people, "for the sins of the whole world."

Although he had done no violence he was numbered with the transgressors, with the wicked, in his death, being crucified between two thieves, although there was no deceit in his mouth and he had gained no riches by deceiving or overreaching his neighbor; yet he was buried in the tomb of the rich Joseph of Arimathea. Thus does the prophet mark certain incidents connected with our Lord's death, that our Redeemer's identity might be the more clearly established.

"IT PLEASED JEHOVAH"

All these things, apparently so unjust and so unreasonable and so contrary to anything mankind could have expected, Jehovah was pleased to permit. To have exacted such sufferings from Jesus as our penalty would have been an injustice, and this would have been an impossibility to God; but it did please him to allow his only-begotten one to demonstrate his loyalty and faith even unto death, even the death of the cross. It pleased

him that the Son should thus be temporarily injured and put to grief because he foresaw the glorious results both to Jesus and to mankind. To his Son he would give more than compensating honor and glory and dignity and power, yea, eternal life, when to his hands would be committed all the remaining features of the divine plan.

Well did the Father know that his Son's faith and obedience would be abundantly rewarded. Well did he know that the soul of Jesus, his being, would constitute the sin offering for Adam and his race, and well he knew that ultimately the Son should see a reward from this travail of his soul which would satisfy him, which would more than compensate every trial, every tear, every pain. And is it not wonderful that in God's providence the called ones of this Gospel age may apply these same consolations and assurances each to his own heart, and know that all things are working together for good to them that love God--to the called ones according to his purpose? Is it not wonderful that we also have the assurance that if we suffer with him we shall also reign with him, that if we experience travail of soul in following in the footsteps of our Redeemer we shall have more than compensating satisfaction, and that the Word of the Lord so guarantees it? To all who accept the Lord's promises in faith, the matter becomes a certainty--"Faith can firmly trust him, come what may."

Although when he was cut off from the land of the living none could have declared his generation, his seed, his posterity, yet he shall see his seed--the redeemed and restored of mankind, who at the close of the Millennial age shall be privileged to inherit all the earthly things lost by father Adam, redeemed by Jesus, restored by the Second Adam.

THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWLEDGE

The declaration that it was by his knowledge that our Lord Jesus, as the righteous servant of Jehovah, justified many and bore their iniquities, is an important item in this lesson. We see that it was from lack of knowledge of God that the first Adam in his perfection was weak. Not knowing the power of God, not realizing his gracious and merciful character, father Adam considered that all hope of comfort, joy and pleasure in life had gone from him when mother Eve transgressed the divine regulation respecting the forbidden fruit and [R3591 : page 207] came under the divine sentence of death. Being unacquainted with the divine character he was without hope respecting her recovery and his own future happiness, and therefore deliberately shared the death penalty with his wife--suicided, so to speak. On the contrary our Lord Jesus, knowing the Father, remembering the glory he had with him before the world was, trusting the Father implicitly, was able to be obedient to the Father's requirements, even unto death, even the death of the cross.

Thus did knowledge serve him in good stead and enable him to pass through the most trying experiences victoriously. It was his knowledge, then, in conjunction with his mental and moral and physical perfection, that enabled our Lord Jesus to fully meet all the requirements of his consecration and thus enabled him to justify many, to redeem Adam and his race--enabled him to bear their iniquities cheerfully, joyfully, delighting to do the Father's will, and for the joy that was set before him enduring the cross, despising the shame.

No wonder, then, that the Scriptures everywhere set forth the thought that knowledge is important to the followers of Jesus; no wonder that they urge upon us that we grow in grace and in knowledge, assuring us that to know God is eternal life. To attain to that relationship to God which will permit us to fully know him and appreciate his just and reasonable and loving commands would signify that we were in the condition which he would be pleased to bless everlastingly, and signify also that, possessing this knowledge, we should be able to fulfil all the reasonable requirements imposed upon us. Let none of us, then, despise knowledge.

Nevertheless, while heartily appreciating it, let us not forget that it is not merely knowledge about his plan, nor knowledge of the various so-called earthly sciences, but the knowledge or acquaintanceship of God

himself. Thus the Apostle also declares of our Lord Jesus, "that we may know him," be acquainted with him, be intimate with him. Whoever has this intimate relationship with the Father and the Son has therein the power of God, which will work in him to will and to do the Lord's good pleasure, and ultimately bring him to a glorious inheritance under the divine arrangement. But, as the Apostle points out, to have knowledge of earthly things or of the divine plan without having the heart obedience and the heart acquaintanceship with the Lord, might leave us still poor and wretched and miserable, sounding brass and tinkling cymbals.

THE "GREAT" AND THE "STRONG"

Therefore, because of his faithfulness as God's righteous servant, because guided by his knowledge in his obedience to the Father, because faithful in bearing [R3592 : page 207] the iniquities of the many, therefore "God will divide him a portion with the great." How great a portion is not here stated. Other Scriptures inform us that the Father has given him a portion with himself--he overcame and sat down with the Father in his throne. He has indeed been granted a portion with the great--the great Jehovah. In turn he shall divide the spoil with the strong, the spoil of his great conquest over sin and death at the cost of his own life, the spoil of victory, the reward of his own high exaltation far above angels, principalities and powers, and every name that is named--the reward of his high relationship with the Father, the reward of his Millennial Kingdom and its opportunities and privileges of blessing the whole groaning creation, the reward of the Father's smile and favor eternally.

This "spoil," which all came to the dear Redeemer as the one who kept the Law and redeemed the world with his own precious blood, this spoil he proposes to share with the faithful of his followers, the overcomers, here called "the strong." O, what a thought! In all our weaknesses and imperfections we are by the Lord's grace enabled to come off conquerors and more than conquerors through him who loved us and bought us with his precious blood.

With the Apostle we can say, "When I am weak, then am I strong;" when I realize my own imperfections and shortcomings then, by faith realizing the strength and perfection of my dear Redeemer and his provision for all who are his, I can be strong in faith and trust and love, and realize that the exceeding great and precious promises of God's Word are yea and amen to me. In the present life, then, by faith we have a portion with the Lord, and may reckon ourselves as having passed from death unto life, as heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord. But the attainment of all these things, their fulness and completeness, lies beyond the grave, beyond the resurrection, when all the faithful shall be with him and, like him, share his glory, for "he will divide the spoil with the strong."

THE CAUSE OF THE MATTER

Our lesson closes with a reiteration of the general facts stated. All of this greatness given to our Lord and shared with his faithful followers is *because* he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors, and bore the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. How emphatically the Scriptures point out to us that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins, that without the ransom price being paid there could have been no release of Adam and his race from the sentence of death, no hope of any of them attaining life everlasting. As we appreciate this great central thought of the divine plan, let us reverence our dear Master the more as the author of our faith, who, by and by, will be the finisher of it, and let us seek more and more to be faithful to him and to walk in his steps and to lay down our lives for the brethren.
