

represented in the Lord's prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses," feeling sure that we have trespassed, and seeking meanwhile to minimize these trespasses, to be so faithful that these will become less and less daily in the Lord's sight.

But from our own experience we would consider the proper thought to be, "Have I lived today as best I knew how, and are the accounts right with the Lord, and is there anything that I can do better tomorrow than today, in the light of the experiences of today? Can I be wiser, can I be stronger, can I be more self-sacrificing?" When we are doing the best we can do, we are to know that the Lord does not expect more than that of us.

We remember a remark made by a brother at one of the conventions. He said, "I am doing the very best that I can, and I am trusting in the Lord." We remember our reply that we thought that a very wonderful testimony—for any one to be able to say, conscientiously, that he was doing the very best that was possible for him to do. Personally, we never know when we have done the very best possible. We always try the next day to see if we can do better; but if any one has reached the place where he has done the very best possible, he has surely done well. We feel at times that we have done the very best, yet we very rarely close a day in which we come to the conclusion that we have done the very best we could possibly do in every particular, in every item of the day; and so we try to mark those points in which we might have done better, that we may have the benefit of those experiences on the morrow.

But if our hearts have been loyal to the Lord and we have been serving him to the best of our ability, striving to bring every word and every action and every thought into full subjection to the will of God—if this has been our endeavor, then we may feel satisfied that God is pleased with us; that we are in the condition that he has declared is acceptable with him; that we are in the way to gain the great "Prize" he has to give. But we are not guaranteed this for the morrow, but only for that moment; and so the Lord wishes us to live moment by moment and to realize his blessing moment by moment, and not to think that our case is decided and ended. Our question, then, should not be, "Will we feel satisfied at some future time?" but rather, "What is my experience now, this moment?" Sufficient unto each day are its trials and difficulties.

"THROUGH MUCH TRIBULATION YE SHALL ENTER THE KINGDOM"

The question is also asked, Should we assume that none will remain on this side of the veil long after the harvest work is fully closed?

Our thought is that there will be privileges of service down quite close to the time of trouble; that there will not be a long period of waiting in which we would have no opportunities of service. Of course, this is purely conjecture; nothing that we think of in the Scriptures states so positively, but there are so many ways of service that we can hardly imagine

that all opportunities of service would be cut off. If we were cut off from public service, there would still be a great deal of service, or opportunity for service, in a private way. We can hardly imagine such a condition arising in the world as would cut us off from all service, public and private, until the time of trouble would be so thoroughly upon the world as to stop business and all else. It is our expectation that nearly all the saints will be gone by the time the trouble is so intense that there will be no opportunity for service of any kind.

Suppose, however, for illustration, that for some reason the mails would close, or some other situation should arise that would practically separate us from the world in general, we would still have opportunities of serving one another, and many of the Lord's people have found that their severest trials come in the rendering of service to those closest to them. We have known of cases where husbands found it very much easier to render service to others than to their own families, their wives and children. We have known of instances in which it was the same with the wife, and with the children. Sometimes our severest trials, therefore, may lie very close at home, and our very best opportunities for service consequently may be very close at hand. So we think that when the time comes when all opportunities of service shall be cut off it will mean that the end is close and that the time of trouble is here; and if any of us were here under these conditions, we should fear that we were going to be of the "great company" and have our share in the "time of trouble."

But, on the other hand, we do not know to what extent this trouble that will prevail upon the "great company" may be in some measure also upon the "little flock." Many of the "little flock" may go into a great deal of trouble. We do not know that all the church, the "little flock" and the "great company" will suffer great tribulation. The Scriptures say of the "little flock," "Through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom," and it will be through much tribulation that the "great company," though failing to get a place in the kingdom class, will be fitted for their position; so there will be "much tribulation" for both classes. Perhaps this will be the outward tribulation. We are not competent to say at this time; we do not see clearly what the Lord meant when he said, "Watch, ye, therefore, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape those things coming upon the world and to stand before the Son of Man." We do not know whether he meant that we should be accounted worthy to escape all this outward trouble coming upon the world in general and to literally stand before the Son of Man, in the sense of being translated, perfected new creatures beyond the veil, or whether, on the other hand, he may have meant, "Watch," in your course of life, and be so faithful to the Lord that you may be accounted worthy to stand and not fall in the day of the presence of the Son of Man, escaping those things which are coming upon the world in the sense of not having the anguish of mind that will be upon the world while being in some of the tribulation with them.

IS THE READING OF "SCRIPTURE STUDIES" BIBLE STUDY?

The plan of reading twelve pages of the STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES each day, tried by so many, results in more Bible study than any other way that we know of. We believe that it is not so much the time that is given to Bible study, but the amount of study done and the amount of information gained, that counts. We all know people who have spent days and weeks and years in study of the Bible and have learned little or nothing. We think the idea that Bible study is merely the time spent in handling a Bible and reading over some verses is a mistaken idea.

It is a great deal like hunting or fishing. Some people go hunting every year, and though they do a lot of hunting, it is no sure indication of how much they get. Some do a lot of fishing, but do not get many fish. Bible study is very much the same. It is not the amount of time we spend in poring over a passage, but the amount of information we secure from the Bible.

The six volumes of SCRIPTURE STUDIES are not intended to supplant the Bible. There are various methods to be pursued in the study of the Bible and these aids to Bible study are in such form that they, of themselves, contain the important elements of the Bible as well as the comments or elucidations of those Bible statements, on exactly the same principle that our Lord and the Apostles quoted from the Old Testament, and then gave elucidations of those Old Testament passages. Many of the elucidations were such that if we had not had them, had not had specific interpretations, we might never have been able to discern the proper application of them.

THE HARVEST THE DUE TIME FOR A CLEAR UNFOLDING OF THE TRUTH

The applications of the SCRIPTURE STUDIES are, of course, based upon those of the Lord and the Apostles. We do not feel that it would be in our province to give any interpretation except that which would be either already given by our Lord and the Apostles or such as would so fit and dovetail with their interpretations as to leave, in our judgment, no doubt as to the proper application of the Scriptures referred to and explained.

Those parts of the Bible which once we thought we understood well, we find that we did not understand at all. Some of the very things relative to the ransom, relative to salvation, we did not understand. Looking back over our experiences, we fully believed that there was a God and that he would reward those who diligently sought him, and that he had sent Jesus his Son, but how and why, we did not comprehend. We had wrong ideas as to what was the penalty for sin; wrong ideas as to why a Savior should come; entirely wrong ideas as to what the Savior did; wrong ideas as to what he was to do in the future, and as to what would be our relationship to the Father and the Savior. We knew, in some sense of the word, that we were called to be a son, but how to become a son and what was meant by the begetting of the holy Spirit, and kindred terms, we did not comprehend; and in our experience we have found none who ever did comprehend these things.

So we believe that the thought for us to take in this connection is that it is because we are living in this particular

time, in the ending of this age, that we are favored with such a clear unfolding of spiritual things. It is also our thought that present blessings of a temporal kind, such as the electric light, are due for similar reasons. We believe that any other explanation would confer too great honor upon the individual connected with the production. The very ablest minds in the world have examined these subjects, but now, by God's grace, we have come to the place where the veil is taken away and where we can see the real meaning of God's Word—not merely one person can see it, but hundreds, thousands, see it.

We think that we get the right conception to thus view it rather than to think that we had some great power which enabled us to put together a great system of theology, more wonderful than all other systems of theology put together—a thousand times more wonderful. Therefore, the simplest way to explain the matter is to acknowledge that the Lord's due time has come and that he has guided to the right understanding.

If, then, the Lord has provided us with something in our day that other days than those of the Apostles knew nothing about, no matter how good nor how wise they were—for us to ignore the line of teaching which has been thus developed would be, in our judgment, to ignore the Lord's providences. It is for each one to think for himself, however, and to guide his conduct in every way accordingly.

If the six volumes of SCRIPTURE STUDIES are practically the Bible topically arranged, with Bible proof-texts given, we might not improperly name the volumes—the Bible in an arranged form. That is to say, they are not merely comments on the Bible, but they are practically the Bible itself, since there is no desire to build any doctrine or thought on any individual preference or on any individual wisdom, but to present the entire matter on the lines of the Word of God. We therefore think it safe to follow this kind of reading, this kind of instruction, this kind of Bible study.

Furthermore, not only do we find that people cannot see the divine plan in studying the Bible by itself, but we see, also, that if anyone lays the SCRIPTURE STUDIES aside, even after he has used them, after he has become familiar with them, after he has read them for ten years—if he then lays them aside and ignores them and goes to the Bible alone, though he has understood his Bible for ten years, our experience shows that within two years he goes into darkness. On the other hand, if he had merely read the SCRIPTURE STUDIES with their references, and had not read a page of the Bible, as such, he would be in the light at the end of the two years, because he would have the light of the Scriptures.

Our thought, therefore, is that these SCRIPTURE STUDIES are a great assistance, a very valuable help, in the understanding of God's Word. If these books are to be of any value to us it must be because we see in them loyalty to the Word of God, and as far as our judgment goes, see them to be in full harmony with the Word and not antagonistic to it. Therefore, in reading them the first time, and perhaps the second time, and before we would accept anything as being our own personal faith and conviction, we should say, "I will not take it because these studies say so; I wish to see what the Bible says." And so we would study the Scriptures in the light of these SCRIPTURE STUDIES; we would prove every point, or disprove it, as the case might be. We would be satisfied with nothing less than a thorough investigation of the Bible from this standpoint.

If, after doing that, we should find the books to be in accord with the Bible, then we would think we were logical in saying, "I will not need to go through that process now every time that I read the SCRIPTURE STUDIES, for I have looked up those texts of Scripture and know certainly that the New Testament proves all those points." If, at the same time, in any future reading, we should come to a place where something did not seem clear to us and we thought of some Scripture which seemed not as harmonious with it as we had previously thought, we would think it our duty to refer at once to the Scriptures, because the Scriptures are the standard, and in that reference to the Scripture it would be with a view to discerning whether or not we had been mistaken in our previous examinations.

"THEY SHALL BE ALL TAUGHT OF GOD"

We would conclude, practically, that we could not understand anything about the Bible except as it was revealed. We would, therefore, not waste a great deal of time doing what we know some people do, reading chapter after chapter, to no profit. We would not think of doing it. We would not think we were studying the Scriptures at all. We would think we were following the course that had been anything but profitable to ourselves and many others in the past—merely reading over the Scriptures. We would say that the same Heavenly

Father who had guided us to this truth, to this understanding of the Scriptures as his children, if he had some further information for us he would bring it to our attention in some manner; and therefore we would not see the necessity of reading the New Testament every day or every year; we would not consider that necessary. We would consider that the Scripture which says, "They shall be all taught of God," would imply that in his own appointed way God would bring to our attention whatever feature of divine truth would be "meat in due season for the household of faith."

Further, we would say that now, having satisfied ourselves respecting what the Divine Plan is, we would understand that we had reached the place that the Apostle speaks of as being a qualified ambassador of God, a qualified minister of the New Covenant, and that, as a servant or minister of the New Covenant, we now had a responsibility in making known these things that we had learned; that we were not put here primarily to read the Bible, but primarily to serve the Lord and his Truth. It was quite proper, however, that before we came to a knowledge of the Truth, and when we were in measurable discontent of mind as to what was the Truth, that we should refrain from telling anybody else.

We remember very well in our own personal experience that after we had tried some street preaching, etc., we came to the conclusion that there was something wrong; that we did not understand what we were trying to tell to others; that we did not understand with sufficient clearness to properly present it and make sure that we were representing the Lord and his message aright, and we said to ourself, "I will stop any endeavor to teach others until I know what I believe."

We think that should be the attitude of every one of us. Why should we attempt to preach or teach anything that we do not understand? So, after God favors us in this time with an understanding of Present Truth, he has given us a knowledge of more truth than we could have gained in a thousand years if we had read and studied unaided; and now we can attempt to present it to others. Why has he given us a knowledge of this Truth? He wishes us to be "thoroughly furnished unto every good word and work." Therefore, we should study that we may be able to speak the word of the Lord freely and know that we are not misrepresenting the divine purpose and plan and character; and we ought therefore to give the more earnest heed to the opportunities for service and consider that the information which has been given us has been given for the very purpose that we may impart it to others—to those brethren and sisters of the Lord's family, some of whom are in Babylon yet, honest at heart, perhaps, and very desirous of knowing the truth, though perhaps very much blinded as we once were.

"SCRIPTURE STUDIES" NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR THE BIBLE

This is not, therefore, putting the SCRIPTURE STUDIES as a substitute for the Bible, because so far as substituting for the Bible, the STUDIES, on the contrary, continually refer to the Bible; and if one has any doubt as to a reference or if one's recollection should lapse in any degree, one should refresh his memory, and, in fact, should see that his every thought is in harmony with the Bible—not merely in accord with the SCRIPTURE STUDIES, but in accord with the Bible.

We might remark that quite a number of the friends in the Truth are making it a rule to read twelve pages of the SCRIPTURE STUDIES a day, and that we do not know one who has been following this course and making use of the various means of grace the Lord has provided (Dawn and testimony meetings and Sunday meetings and Pilgrim meetings and the Berean lessons, Manna text, etc.), who has gone out of the truth. We know a great many who, on the contrary, have been of the opinion that they knew these things long ago, while in fact they do not know half of what they did know—they have forgotten more than half of what they read and they are those who are now stumbling—going into outer darkness.

We are not wishing in this to say anything against one's poring over chapters that he does not understand and others do not understand, hoping that he might light on some truth. We have no objection to this. He has a perfect right to do so if he wishes. He has a right to spend weeks and years in this way if he chooses, but the chances even then are that when he does light on something he will have it all wrong.

Furthermore, we would suggest that merely reading twelve pages of the SCRIPTURE STUDIES would not be studying in the proper sense of the word—neither studying the Bible nor studying the SCRIPTURE STUDIES. A proper study would be to think of the meaning of every word and every sentence. The thought is, it is not to see how much one can read, but to make sure that one goes no further than he comprehends or understands, whether that means one page or twenty pages. We should not

consider it a Scripture study in any sense of the word unless our thought has grasped the matter from the standpoint of seeking to know what the Scriptures teach and seeking to call to mind these Scriptures that are being explained and to call to mind other texts, perhaps, that are not cited, or of which only a small portion is cited.

If one will do all this it will not be merely a reading but a study; and from this standpoint, whoever reads two pages of SCRIPTURE STUDIES each day with the suggested passages con-

nected with those two pages, would do more Scripture studying in that time than he could do by any other method. Whenever he reads these pages and calls the corresponding or connecting Scriptures to mind he is drawing from the whole Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, with practically every page he reads. Now is it possible to find any other Bible study that would accomplish so much for us in the same time as this would do? If there is we ought to take it. If there is not, then we have our opinion.

WAS JACOB'S COURSE WITH ESAU DISHONORABLE?

The question has been asked, Why did Jacob take from his brother Esau the birthright and blessing? Why did he not give him the pottage when he was hungry, instead of selling it to him? We think it fair to infer that both Esau and Jacob were hungry. The proof that Jacob was hungry was that he had prepared the pottage. We also have proof that Esau was hungry; but we have no evidence as to which was the more hungry. We will suppose that they were about alike hungry and that there was not enough for two to get a meal. Esau made it known that he wanted something to eat and Jacob thought this a proper time for him to secure something which Esau had, but which Esau did not really want.

It is also reasonable to suppose that the whole life of Esau was careless of religious matters and interests. He married into families of surrounding heathen people, entirely in disregard of the promise made to Abraham, getting several worthless wives, according to his mother's statement. This being true, it seems quite likely that he and Jacob had many talks about God's promise to their grandfather Abraham, and how the fulfillment of the promise would come about, and that Esau had all along been an unbeliever; and now, when the opportune time came and they were both hungry and the food was there, Jacob said, "You don't care for your birthright, Esau, and you do not appreciate this promise made to Abraham; it does not count for anything to you; I will tell you what we will do. You may have the supper and I the birthright. Is it a bargain?" Esau said, "It is a bargain, for I am more desirous of the supper than the birthright."

It was a fair transaction. If one buys a house at a bargain and both buyer and seller are satisfied with the transaction, we would not say that it was cheating or robbery; and so with Jacob. The Abrahamic promise, so far as Esau's expectation was concerned, was not worth anything. He had no confidence in the promise. The Apostle Paul calls our attention to the matter and says that Esau was profane; that is, he did not count the promise of God as worth anything; he was willing to sell it for a mess of pottage, as though he was getting the better of the bargain, probably saying to himself, "That poor brother of mine does not know what life is; if he would only take a few lessons from me he would begin to live. Here he is believing something that God said to grandfather Abraham, and he thinks he will get something wonderful out of it some day. I do not think it worth considering." And so Esau doubtless thought he was the gainer over Jacob in getting the supper.

ESAU CARED ONLY FOR THE EARTHLY PART OF THE BIRTHRIGHT

It has also been asked, "Why did Jacob attempt to deceive his father?" Jacob was trying to obtain that which he had bought and which he saw the seller would not deliver. Jacob knew his brother was a dishonest man to start with. All the arrangements were made for Esau to receive the blessing that he had sold, and now he was about to steal it. Jacob must have reasoned, "I will try to prevent his stealing it; I have bought the birthright; I have a right to represent Esau in this matter; I shall merely try to have justice done, to get my father to do that which is right and proper, that which I know is God's will, because God told our mother about the matter at the time of our birth—that the blessing was to come to me; and here in God's providence it has come to me in a legitimate way by my brother's not caring for it and my caring a great deal for it. Now it is only a question as to how I shall get it. As a matter of fact, Esau does not value the birthright except from the earthly standpoint. I know he

does not care a whit for the promise made to father; he has no confidence in it. All he thinks about is the property that will go to me if I am recognized as the elder son."

Jacob knew that he would be in trouble if he would try to get the blessing, and yet he was so in love with the promise that a great blessing would come out of it, that he was willing to forego everything. He was willing to become an outcast from his home if he might only have the spiritual part of the promise, and so he left his home with the distinct understanding that he was losing his father's earthly possessions and getting only the spiritual blessing which Esau did not desire. He did not attempt to take from Esau the portion that Esau wanted.

Some one might query, If Jacob knew that the Lord promised him this blessing through his mother, was it not a lack of faith for him not to recognize that the Lord would give it to him without any deceit or misrepresentation? We suppose that if Jacob had lived in our day and had all the advantages that we have, the instructions of the Old and New Testaments and the begetting of the holy Spirit, he might have learned to exercise his faith, which was already a strong faith as respects God's promise; he might have learned to wait on the Lord. We have many advantages over him in all these respects. He had very few examples before him respecting the waiting on the Lord or anything of that kind, and he did at least show his zeal and energy and confidence in God in the course that he took; and for a person not begotten of the holy Spirit we think he did wonderfully well.

JACOB WAS NOT REPROVED OF THE LORD

We think it well for us to remember in this connection that we should measure all of our ideas according to the divine standard, and if we do not do so we make a mistake. The divine standard rules. Now, according to the record, there was not a word said by the Lord against Jacob in this whole procedure, and if God had nothing to say against him, who are we that we should have?

When Jacob fled to Padan-aram for fear of his brother, forsaking his home and all the property that was his according to his purchase, willing to let it remain permanently in the hands of Esau, as he had intended to do anyway—when he fled from home and had nothing but a stone for his pillow, that very night the Lord appeared to him in a dream; a vision or picture was given him of the blessing that was his. This indicated that God's favor was with him. Now to think that God could and would conspire with an evil person is not our way of reasoning on the matter. We do not object to others reasoning differently. We will reason according to the standard the Lord raised, and say, "Thus it is written."

It may be that there was something not written in the record that might give a different view of the matter, one more easy to comprehend. The Apostle Paul commends Jacob's faith, but counts Esau's selling his birthright as reprehensible, and tells us that we should not be like the "profane person who sold his birthright." (Heb. 12:16) In this Paul seems to intimate that there may be some who wish to sell their birthright and others who may wish to buy the birthright.

The Jews in our Lord's day who failed to accept the invitation of the Lord and who were not Israelites indeed, these sold, for the "mess of pottage" of earthly blessings and earthly favor, their heavenly, their spiritual rights; and we who are Gentiles and to whom this right did not appertain by nature, have been invited in to see if we will appreciate the privileges and win the prize—and we will win the prize; we will get the birthright of Esau and the Esau class will not get it.

THREE TEMPTING QUESTIONS

MATTHEW 22:15-22; 34:46.—SEPTEMBER 18.

GOLDEN TEXT:—"Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's."

The Pharisees and Sadducees of our Lord's day were the leaders of religion. They had rarely made an attack upon each other, although their doctrines were directly opposed. The Pharisees acknowledged God and the prophets and the Law, and

believed in a future life by a resurrection from the dead, and believed in a coming Messiah to exalt their nation and through it to bless the world. The Sadducees believed nothing of the kind—they were agnostics, Higher Critics. They were making