

THOUGHTS ON JACOB'S TROUBLE

A Temcat study

"Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it." Jeremiah 30:7

The concept of Jacob's Trouble has been a perplexity to many minds. Often expressed is the question, 'Why is this necessary?' Many go even further and refuse to believe the very clear information we have been given on this and thus turn their backs on inspired counsel.

There are many lessons in this future event that we need to learn, not so much for then, as for now. One thing we must anchor our minds on right away in this study is this precious bit of information:

"Our heavenly Father does not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men. He has his purpose in the whirlwind and in the storm, in the fire and in the flood. The Lord permits calamities to come to his people to save them from greater dangers. **He desires every one to examine his own heart closely and carefully, and then draw near to God, that God may draw near to Him.** Our life is in the hands of God. He sees dangers threatening us that we can not see. He is the giver of all our blessings; the provider of all our mercies; the orderer of all our experiences. He sees the perils that we can not see." *Special Testimonies B 06.05.*

And again:

"The conflicts of earth, in the providence of God, furnish the very training necessary to develop characters fit for the courts of Heaven. We are to become members of the royal family, the sons of God, and "all things work together for good to those who love God," and submit themselves to his will. Our God is an ever-present help in every time of need. He is perfectly acquainted with the most secret thoughts of our heart, with all the intents and purposes of our souls. When we are in perplexity, even before we open to him our distress, he is making arrangements for our deliverance. Our sorrow is not unnoticed. He always knows much better than we do, just what is necessary for the good of his children, and he leads us as we would choose to be led if we could discern our own hearts and see our necessities and perils, as God sees them." *Signs of the Times. 1888-05-25*

And yet again:

"God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as co-workers with Him. Not Enoch, who was translated to heaven, not Elijah, who ascended in a chariot of fire, was greater or more honored than John the Baptist, who perished alone in the dungeon. "Unto

you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake." Phil. 1:29. And of all the gifts that Heaven can bestow upon men, fellowship with Christ in His sufferings is the most weighty trust and the highest honor." Desire of Ages, 224.

If we are to understand the truths for these times, we must bring just this kind of faith in the goodness of our Heavenly Father into our studies, or we will certainly choose paths that will cause our feet to stumble.

We must not cherish the spirit of the Israelites, who, when brought to the border of Canaan, and promised that this was to be given to them by God—and indeed it was already theirs according to His promise—refused to go forward until they had formed a committee to look into the matter and return to them a report. Then they took the lying report of the unfaithful spies and set themselves to kill the faithful, who were urging them to take God at His Word!

My word to you today is, 'It is a goodly Land, and we are more than able to possess it!' Let us take God at His Word and go forward to learn the lessons He designs these final events to teach us. Eternity lies before us, and will we turn back into unbelief merely at the sight of a few Giants? God never intended that the Israelites should have to contend and fight to obtain the land. He had already given it to them. If they would have taken Him at His Word, they could have marched into Canaan and the Giants and warriors would have fled in terror. God even said he would drive them out with hornets. Have you ever had hornets take after you? The stoutest heart quails before them!

God does not intend for us to doubt and fear and run from the idea of the times of trial that lie ahead of us. It is a fact that this is why so many throw themselves into the search for ever increasing excitement and entertainment—it is to keep from thinking about what lies ahead.

This is why they seek out preachers who pour oil into their itching ears, instead of the strait truth. This is why they want to be surrounded by 'friends' who pat them on the back and tell them sentimental nothings. I am not intending to do that here. But I want to show you the real answer—the real way out.

Now for a moment, let us look at the original 'Time of Jacob's Trouble', and see what lessons we can discern there. I want to ask a question: Why did Jacob wrestle with the angel? Now I hear some say, 'he wanted a blessing, he wanted to know his sins were forgiven'.

No, that is not at all the reason. Remember, he was by the brook and he was praying. Why was he praying? Because he knew his brother, whom he had wronged and cheated in the past, was marching with an army to kill him. He knew he had it coming to him. He knew he had done wrong. But he also knew he had deeply repented and now he was pleading that God would protect his helpless family.

He knew he did not deserve a blessing. He knew it was his own sinful past that was bringing this onto him, but he also knew that his only hope was in the mercy of a forgiving God and in the promises He had made to him. But at this point he was not wrestling.

When did he start wrestling? Well let's watch the scene in the mind's eye. It is dark; he is alone and pouring out his desperate need before the Lord. All at once a hand is laid on his shoulder. He whirls to fight off what he believes to be an attacker. He is sure that he is fighting for his life against an enemy, maybe even one of Esau's men of war.

In desperation he struggles on, he must win, he must protect his family! His heart, you can be sure, is crying out to God for victory over this unknown foe. The hours wear away as he fights on. Finally, just at dawn, the Lord, for He it is that Jacob is grappling with, puts forth a finger and touches Jacob's thigh and instantly he is crippled and in great pain.

As suddenly as the pain that hit him, comes the realization that he has been wrestling with the Lord Himself! Now he falls helpless on the breast of his Lord and clings to him with a different kind of intensity. He needs a blessing; he must have it or perish!

Now look for a moment at the situation Jacob has been in. All night he thought he was in the hands of an enemy. He thought he must put forth all the power he had to save his own life from this terrible attacker. But in actuality, he has been in the safest place in the whole universe! He has been all night in the arms of his Saviour!

Oh friend, I want you to really wrap your mind around this fact: Jacob thought he was in the hands of the enemy, given up to perish, unless he could somehow save himself. Then he learned two great things; the first one was that he could not save himself by his own efforts and the second was that all along, he had been in the arms of God.

How many times do we fight the 'enemy', desperate to save ourselves by our own efforts, but if our eyes were opened, we would find we were in the safest place in the universe, the arms of our loving Redeemer?

So it is with the scenes of the Last Days. Before I began to understand a bit about the workings of the Lord, I felt that the Time of Trouble was the doing of Satan and his followers. It seemed the faithful were in the hands of the enemy. But a closer look and deeper understanding reveals they are in the hands of God, who is refining and purifying them like fine gold.

What is the purpose of the 'Time of Jacob's Trouble'? Well, what did Jacob's trouble do for him? It settled him forever in his faith in his merciful Heavenly Father. Never again would he doubt God's marvelous, forgiving grace.

What will this experience do for the saints?

"Said the angel: "Look ye!" My attention was turned to the wicked, or unbelievers. They were all astir. The zeal and power with the people of God had aroused and enraged them. Confusion, confusion was on every side. I saw measures taken against this company, who had the power and light of God. Darkness thickened around them, yet there they stood, approved of God, and trusting in Him. I saw them perplexed. Next I heard them crying unto God earnestly. Through the day and night their cry ceased not. I heard these words: **"Thy will, O God, be done! If it can glorify Thy name, make a way of escape for Thy people! Deliver us from the heathen round about us! They have appointed us unto death; but Thine arm can bring salvation."** These are all the words that I can bring to mind. All seemed to have a deep sense of their unworthiness, and manifested entire submission to the will of God. Yet like Jacob, every one, without an exception, was earnestly pleading and wrestling for deliverance.

"Soon after they had commenced their earnest cry, the angels, in sympathy, would have gone to their deliverance. But a tall, commanding angel suffered them not. Said he: "The will of God is not yet fulfilled. They must drink of the cup. They must be baptized with the baptism." 1 Testimonies.183.

Doesn't this sound a little like Gethsemane? What does the Bible tell us that Gethsemane did for Jesus? "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;" Hebrews 5:8,9

What? Wasn't Jesus already obedient? Yes, He most certainly was. But Gethsemane perfected His obedience to the highest level. So will this experience also do for the people of God in the final times; their obedience and faith will be perfected and brought up to a level from which it will never fall.

"Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?" James 2:22

Just as Jacob finally realized that what he thought were the hands of an enemy, were really the hands of God, so God's people at the end will finally realize that they are safe in the arms of Jesus. They will finally see clearly just who is the real enemy, and Who is their friend. Their faith will cling to Jesus and His Word like the crippled Jacob finally clung to the Lord, and at last they will learn that the whole time that they were pleading and crying to be delivered for the honor of God's Name, they were already safe in His arms.

"The path to freedom from sin is through crucifixion of self, and conflict with the powers of darkness. Let none be discouraged in view of the severe trials to be met in the time of Jacob's trouble, which is yet before them. They are to work earnestly, anxiously, not for that time, but for to-day. What we want is to have a knowledge of the truth as it is in Christ now, and a personal experience now. In these precious closing hours of probation, we have a deep and living experience to gain. We shall thus form characters that will insure our deliverance in the time of trouble.

"The time of trouble is the crucible that is to bring out Christ-like characters. It is designed to lead the people of God to renounce Satan and his temptations. The last conflict will reveal Satan to them in his true character, that of a cruel tyrant, and it will do for them what nothing else could do, up-root him entirely from their affections. For to love and cherish sin, is to love and cherish its author, that deadly foe of Christ. When they excuse sin and cling to perversity of character, they give Satan a place in their affections, and pay him homage." *Review & Herald. 1884-08-12.*

Yes, it is now that we must be willing to look the truth square in the eye and fasten our faith on the word of God. It is now that we are to develop the faith of a Caleb and say, 'be not afraid of the people of that land, for they are bread for us!' Friends if God be for us...who can stand against us?

"November 20, 1857, I was shown the people of God, and saw them mightily shaken. Some, with strong faith and agonizing cries, were pleading with God. Their countenances were pale, and marked with deep anxiety, expressive of their internal struggle. Firmness and great earnestness were expressed in their countenances, while large drops of perspiration fell from their foreheads. Now and then their faces would light up with the marks of God's approbation, and again the same solemn, earnest, anxious look would settle upon them.

"Evil angels crowded around them, pressing their darkness upon them, to shut out Jesus from their view, that their eyes might be drawn to the darkness that surrounded them, and they distrust God and next murmur against Him. Their only safety was in keeping their eyes directed upward. Angels of God had charge over His people, and as the poisonous atmosphere from the evil angels was pressed around these anxious ones, the heavenly angels were continually wafting their wings over them, to scatter the thick darkness.

"Some, I saw, did not participate in this work of agonizing and pleading. They seemed indifferent and careless. They were not resisting the darkness around them, and it shut them in like a thick cloud. The angels of God left these, and I saw them hastening to the assistance of those who were struggling with all their energies to resist the evil angels, and trying to help themselves by calling upon God with perseverance. But the angels left those who made no effort to help themselves, and I lost sight of them. As the praying ones continued their earnest cries, a ray of light from Jesus would at times come to them, to encourage their hearts, and light up their countenances." 1 Testimonies.179-180

The above account is where we are now! It is not the time of trouble in the future, it is where we are at today. It is now as the angels hold the four winds that we are given time to plead with God and co-operate with Him in the work of putting away self and sin and getting ready to take Him at His word, though the heavens fall and the earth be removed.

How are we using these precious hours? Sure everyone has activities of daily living that we have to do. Life goes on and with it the daily chores.

"While engaged in our daily work, we should lift the soul to heaven in prayer. These silent petitions rise like incense before the throne of grace; and the enemy is baffled. The Christian whose heart is thus stayed upon God cannot be overcome. No evil arts can destroy his peace. All the promises of God's word, all the power of divine grace, all the resources of Jehovah, are pledged to secure his deliverance. It was thus that Enoch walked with God. And God was with him, a present help in every time of need." *Gospel Workers, pg.254.*

The life of Enoch is of special interest to us in these days. He was translated without seeing death. The final generation has this hope, that they will be translated without seeing death. This requires a special preparation. The righteous dead have gone through their 'Time of Jacob's Trouble' in various ways on their death-beds. But the final group are going to have no death-beds.

We are told to prepare and strive to be among that group. It is God of course, who will make the decision of who will make up this group, but still, the preparation to stand in the testing time that is hastening upon us is the same. If we are striving to walk as Enoch walked, we need have no worries regarding the time of trouble. God will see to it that we have all the grace we need to carry us through.

Many among us have so much fear in their hearts regarding trial. But I am not here to preach teddy bears and lollypops to you or to comfort you with, "Oh, don't worry, nothing bad will ever happen." But I am saying that if you take shelter in the Word of God and seek Him while He may be found, and believe His promises, really believe them, you need have no worry about the time of trouble.

Let us look at some more passages that mention Enoch and how he lived:

"The Christian must be much in prayer. Prayer takes hold upon Omnipotence, and gains us the victory. It was thus that Enoch walked with God. And those who thus make Christ their daily companion and familiar friend will feel that the powers of an unseen world are all around them, and by looking unto Jesus they will become assimilated to his image." *BE. 1889-10-01*

"It was thus that Enoch walked with God. It was no easier for Enoch to live a righteous life than it is for us at the present time. The world in his time was no more favorable to growth in grace and holiness than it is now. It was by prayer and communion with God that Enoch was enabled to escape the corruption that is in the world through lust. We are living in the perils of the last days, and we must receive our strength from the same source. We must walk with God. A separation from the world is required of us; for we cannot remain free from its pollution unless we follow the example of faithful Enoch. But how many are slaves to the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." *Southern Work. 1908-03-10.*

There is something to be done; something to strive for, to seek for. and something to separate from. Basically the task is to take God at His Word! The Children of Israel turned back towards Egypt when they saw giants in their paths,

even though God had assured them He was willing and able to take them through.

What was their problem? They refused to trust God even after they had seen more miracles in a shorter time than any who had ever lived. If you read carefully the accounts in Patriarchs and Prophets of the Exodus, you will see there were several times that God gave them quiet periods in which they were to meditate on Him and turn their hearts towards Him. But in each case they idled or frittered them away on trivia, and so each new test found them unprepared, and over and over they fell into Satan's snares. It is the quiet times, the daily routine that we are to use wisely:

"Day by day we are to fight the good fight of faith. Day by day God will give us our work; and though we cannot see the end from the beginning, we are to examine ourselves daily to see if we are in the path of righteousness. We must strive to overcome, looking unto Jesus; for in every temptation he will be at our side to give us the victory. Every day should come to us as the last day in which we may be privileged to work for God, and much of it must be given to prayer that we may work in the strength of Christ. This is the way in which Enoch walked with God, warning and condemning the world by manifesting before them a righteous character." *Review & Herald*.1891-08-18.

Friends, this is the answer. If we live like this and prepare like this, we need not, and we will not fear the future.

"As the members of the body of Christ approach the period of their last conflict, "the time of Jacob's trouble," they will grow up into Christ, and will partake largely of his Spirit. As the third message swells to a loud cry, and as great power and glory attends the closing work, the faithful people of God will partake of that glory. It is the latter rain which revives and strengthens them to pass through the time of trouble. Their faces will shine with the glory of that light which attends the third angel.

"I saw that God would in a wonderful manner preserve his people through the time of trouble. As Jesus poured out his soul in agony in the garden, they will earnestly cry and agonize with him day and night for deliverance. The decree will go forth that they must disregard the Sabbath of the fourth commandment, and honor the first day, or lose their lives; but they will not yield, and trample under their feet the Sabbath of the Lord, and honor an institution of Papacy. Satan's host, and wicked men, will surround them, and exult over them, because there will seem to be no way of escape for them. But in the midst of their revelry and triumph, there is peal upon peal of the loudest thunder. The heavens have gathered blackness, and are only illuminated by the blazing light and terrible glory from heaven, as God utters his voice from his holy habitation." *Review & Herald*.1862-05-27

Friends, it is a goodly land, and we are more than able to take it—IF we take God at His Word. If we do, then He will take the responsibility to ensure that we stand and are kept in His arms and carried through to victory.

But if we spend most of our time in selfish indulgence and then refuse to hear any but the smoothest whipped-cream, cherry on top messages, then we have reason to fear. Our fear may be the only way God has, to try and persuade us to run to Him and take shelter in those arms and cling to our Redeemer as our only hope. For assuredly, He is! Trouble is coming—but the shelter is sure!

"But when tribulation comes upon us, **how many of us are like Jacob! We think it the hand of an enemy;** and in the darkness we wrestle blindly until our strength is spent, and we find no comfort or deliverance. To Jacob the divine touch at break of day revealed the One with whom he had been contending-- the Angel of the covenant; and, weeping and helpless, he fell upon the breast of Infinite Love, to receive the blessing for which his soul longed. We also need to learn that trials mean benefit, and not to despise the chastening of the Lord nor faint when we are rebuked of Him." *Mount of Blessing pg. 11*