

No.

39.

"IF YE THEN BE RISEN WITH CHRIST, SEEK THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE ABOVE, WHERE CHRIST SITTETH ON THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD." COL. 3. 1.

Extract from Address Entitled

"THE LAST SECTION OF THE SECOND GOSPEL"

An Address (revised) at

St. Mary Axe, E.C.

5th Dec. 1912.

by

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Scriptural literature for Believers

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"THE LAST SECTION OF THE SECOND GOSPEL".

By Mr. P. W. Howard,

At St. Mary Axe, E.C.

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We now approach verses 17 and 18 which were the special verses as to which a brother asked. They read thus, literally, "But signs, these ones, to those that believe shall follow. In My Name demons they will cast out, with tongues that are new they will speak, serpents they will take up, and if anything deadly they have drunken, it shall in no wise injure them. On to helpless ones they will place hands, and they will be well". Here we have some distinct promises concerning the Name of the Lord Jesus. In MY NAME they will do this. Five definite statements are made - concerning the casting out of demons, the speaking with tongues, the taking up of serpents, the drinking of anything deadly, and the laying hands upon the sick. Did these signs follow those that believed? Does Scripture mean that every one who believes should still have these signs following? It does not say so. Not every one laid hands on the sick. Scripture particularly says "To ONE" was given gifts of healing, not "To ALL". Ah, then there is Divine warrant for a limitation. Not to all but to certain of the believers were these signs given. The Scriptures tell us they took place. I suppose by the grace of God we believe that

demons were cast out as Acts 19 shows; we believe that there was a speaking with tongues as Acts 2 makes clear; we believe that they did take up venomous beasts as Acts 28 illustrates; we believe that they did drink deadly things through attempts to poison them, yet injury was prevented; we are equally certain that oftentimes hands were laid upon the sick. But we do not universalise in all or any of these promises. Now if we cannot universalize them in sphere, can we universalize them in time? Can we say they MUST exist now? There are many evidences that God has often withdrawn gifts. Do not misunderstand me - God is the Same, and He may grant isolated exceptions and the most extraordinary things to prove that He is the same Living God, but in days of ruin He does not manifest Himself in the same way as in the early days of the Church. We have sinned, and we see in the later Epistles of Scripture the loss of the unity and the loss of the power that characterized the early Church. Not that God had failed or has failed, but that He has ever brought before His people their failure. They used the tongues at Corinth for the glorification of self - is it surprising that the Lord withdrew those tongues? As the shekinah glory went gradually from Israel's temple of old, so has it been in the present dispensation. God has in measure withdrawn His manifestation, though He is the same Living One, as our hearts rejoice to own. Hence we cannot put down the absence of these signs to-day merely to the absence of individual faith, though undoubtedly we do falter much in the important matter of

individual faith, and if we only trusted our God more, more mountains would be removed. But there is something beyond individual faith, there is collective faith, and in the absence of a collective unity, collective faith is hindered. God is pleased to chasten His people by the withdrawing of many of the gifts, but inasmuch as He did fulfil these words and never said they would go on to the end of the age, HE HAS KEPT HIS WORD, YET RIGHTEOUSLY CHASTENED HIS PEOPLE. He put the promise so as to imply that His people ought to have received His blessings continuously, but He never put it to show that He would be compelled to give them continuously. Thus He used words that would not suggest the ruin till after the ruin had come, so perfect is His wisdom! All is arranged that Scripture may never encourage sin. We may ask ourselves, "Why the ruin?" - sin, sin, sin has brought ruin. We may ask ourselves why the tares are among the wheat - "An enemy hath done this", but it was "while men slept", and men have often slept since, and the enemy has done many more things! But if we are humbled, what shall we do NOW unto the glory of God? Shall we not obey the Scriptures individually, and collectively as far as we are enabled? I say "as far as we are enabled" for there are certain commands addressed to those who were INSPIRED, when the Lord gave prophets. We cannot pretend to obey those commands to the glory of God; we cannot assume we are prophets. It is serious to boast of a false gift. Moreover, even the command to go into all the world and preach the gospel, cannot be carried out

so fully as we would like it, till we are more united as a people of God bowing before Him. There are many things that have to be obeyed in the RIGHT order, but it is for us to START obedience and to manifest that spiritual obedience within, that will soon lead to obedience without. We cannot ignore the ruin; we cannot substitute man's idea for God's arrangement, but we can obey, and we can plead with our Heavenly Father that He will "in the midst of the years" (aye, and before the midst of those years of Antichrist) revive His work and manifest His Name, that His people may see oncemore some further signs and tokens of His presence by the Holy Spirit with them unitedly, that His people may be encouraged to continue their witness, for though our faith rests not upon signs, and though we depend not upon circumstances, still it is a blessing to behold God's gracious answers to faith, and His gracious stimulus to prayer when by His Holy Spirit's working He binds His people, teaches His people, enables His people, saves poor lost sinners, and grants those wondrous workings which, though not exactly as the ones brought before us here, make evident that God is in us of a truth.

We might just notice in closing, the last two verses of the Gospel which show how the Lord fulfilled what He promised. Lest any should say "Where is the proof?", "How is it we do not see these signs now?" we are at once told they did have the signs THEN, for it reads "On the one hand therefore the Lord, after He had spoken to them, was received up into heaven, and

He sat "out from" (literally) the right hand of God (as if suggesting His working out from, or His preparing to come back again). "ON THE OTHER HAND" there is a Divine contrast.

Verse 19 really begins with "ON THE ONE HAND the Lord"; then we have His people's responsibility, "On the other hand those having gone out heralded everywhere, the Lord working together, and confirming THE WORD (He will not confirm men's notions, but He will confirm THE WORD), confirming the Word through the following signs" (or "the signs that kept on following"). THEY preached the Word, THE LORD WORKED together. He could have worked without, but He was pleased to work together, and confirm the word through the signs that followed. Hebrews 2 alludes to this passage, "Because of this it is necessary for us more abundantly to be attending to the things that were heard, lest at any time we should be gliding aside, or if the Word spoken through angels became confirmed, and every stepping aside and hearing aside received a giving back of reward in judgment (righteous judgment) how shall we flee out, being careless as to so great a salvation? which having received a beginning to be being spoken by the Lord to those who heard, unto us was confirmed, God bearing witness TOGETHER UPON (the TOGETHER and UPON both occurring in Mark 16) both with signs and wonders and divers powers and distributions of the Holy Spirit according to His own will".
