

Which Glory?

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MAY/JUNE 1965

It is an undisputed fact that the world-system is becoming increasingly lawless and godless — "There is no fear of God before their eyes," and there is little or no regard for those features which should characterize every proper relationship — "For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemous, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection . . . traitors . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." Never was any prophecy more literally fulfilled!

The apostle John tells us that "the whole world lieth in wickedness," or, it might read "in the wicked one," he who animated the first action of hatred and murder in this world (cf. 1 John 3: 10). The verb "lieth" indicates a position of utter prostration — lying outstretched in the embrace of Satan. Thus the world-system is completely dominated by the "wicked one" whom the Lord three times in John's gospel refers to as the "prince (ruler) of this world."

Perhaps the most outstanding feature of this world-system is its opposition to God, and its challenge to His glory. This is what Shinar signifies. The plain of Shinar is the seat of idolatry, whilst we see from Zechariah 5 that "wickedness" finds its home there. Genesis 10 and 11 show its intimate connection with Babel, that system of idolatrous confusion the features of which have persisted throughout the ages, and will persist in opposition to God until finally judged and overthrown (Revelation 17). Idolatry alienates man from God; this is plainly seen in Romans 1, and as thus separated in affection from God he becomes engulfed in moral darkness and every depravity.

God is not without an adequate answer to Shinar's challenge, and so we find Him asserting His own glory in calling Abraham out from that system of idolatry (Joshua 24: 2). "The *God of glory* appeared unto our father Abraham . . . Then came he out" (Acts 7: 2-4).

In Galatians 1 we read that "our Lord Jesus Christ . . . gave *Himself* that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." Again we have the twice repeated words of Jesus in John 17, "they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." As we meditate upon the tremendous sacrifice, and the deeply precious love which these Scriptures reveal, shall we not readily and affectionately obey the exhortation "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." In recent years the "ruler of this world" has introduced many things which powerfully appeal to the minds and affections of men — the wonders of scientific discoveries; the speed of travel; probing into space; the attraction of television, etc., all of which may contain the principle of idolatry as stimulating "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." The voice of the God of glory sounding in our hearts, calling attention to the One in whom *His* delight is centred, our Lord Jesus Christ, the *Lord of glory*, would deliver us *morally* from the world even now, as the voice of Christ Himself will call us from it in actuality in a quickly coming day (1 Thessalonians 4).

In Joshua 7 we see the sorrowful result of the introduction of Shinar principles into the company of God's people. Achan (troubler) "saw among the spoils a beautiful mantle of Shinar" (v. 21 New Trans.). He saw silver and gold also, but apparently that which he coveted most was something which would give him a personal distinction, something marked by Shinar's glory. He belonged to the tribe of Judah, and the names of his forbears suggest that he had been brought up in an atmosphere where the service and praise of God was valued. John in his first epistle sounds a warning note to those who in

our day are privileged to belong to the family of God. In 1 John 2: 13 he writes to the "young men" stating that which characterizes them as such — they had "overcome the wicked one." There had been progress in the things of God, and in the following verses the apostle addresses them again stressing the special dangers of the word-system with its appeal to the flesh, to the eyes and to pride, closing with the encouraging words "he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." Peter speaks of those who no longer live as controlled by the "lusts of men, but to the will of God."

How happy to turn our gaze to the One who, dwelling in the bosom of the Father's love from before the foundation of the world (John 17: 24) came forth from that scene of glory and affection to a world marked by man's flagrant opposition to the will of God, and at the end of His pathway here, a path of unswerving devotion to that will, could say — "I have glorified *Thee* on the earth." "All the kingdoms of this world, and their *glory*" as offered to Him in the temptations by Satan only elicited the answer — "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." Perfect, holy manhood, the delight of the Father's heart!

In Daniel 1 we read that "Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon" carried "part of the vessels of the house of God . . . into the land of Shinar to the house of *his* god." That which should have been used in the service of God is thus seen as in the power of an idolatrous system marked by the pride and glory of man. Is there not a measure of encouragement in noticing the words "*part* of the vessels"? We may thank God that in our day, as in Daniel's day, there have been those marked by faithfulness to God although surrounded by features of failure and apostasy. Hananiah ("God is gracious"), Mishael ("who is there like God"), and Azariah ("whom God helps"), were overcomers in very truth. They had no appetite for the "king's meat," and were not overwhelmed by the king's threats. Knowing their God, strengthened by His grace and help, they refused the idolatrous demand of Nebuchadnezzar — "we will not . . . worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

We live in a day in which God has been revealed in all the blessedness of His name of Father; a day in which we may "come boldly unto the throne of grace" and in which we may also say "the Lord is my helper, . . . what will man do unto me? With such resources available to us may we refuse the appeal of man's world with its challenge to the glory of God.

God's answer to Shinar's city and tower was to call out a man by His glory; the man who would seek the prominence of Shinar's mantle must make room for the man whose distinction and influence was noted in the heavens (see Joshua 10: 12-14), and the arrogance of Nebuchadnezzar is turned into an ascription of praise to the God of Israel (Daniel 3: 28) through the faithfulness of men who, unmoved by Shinar's glory, would at all costs honour their God.

When the history books of this world have been closed for ever, its glory forgotten, then God will open *His* "book of remembrance," and those who have been marked by the fear of God and who have "thought upon His name" will be seen as His "peculiar treasure." Babylon with all its glory will fall in "one hour," but "he that doeth the will of God abides for eternity."