

The increase of God's spiritual Israel is always hateful to the world. The greater its growth in spiritual life, and numbers the more deadly is the world's opposition.

The new king's policy was to crush Israel. He made them serfs of the lowest kind. He put them to the hardest work and drove them to it under the supervision of taskmasters, Egyptian of course, who carried sticks which they doubtless freely used to coerce and punish them. We know that the public and royal buildings of ancient Egypt were built by captives. Inscriptions still remain on some which bear that they were not built by free citizens. Two treasure or store houses, Pithom and Rameses were built for Pharaoh by his Israelitish serfs.

God was left out of his calculations. God had His designs which must be carried out. But Pharaoh thought not of God. All carnal policy, however sagacious it may appear to be, is sure to end in disaster. We only act wisely when we take God into all our plans.

Vv. 12-14.—Bitter bondage served however, to augment the numbers of Israel. This again led to still more cruel oppression. Life was made as bitter as possible to the poor serfs. Traces of their hard labour in mortar and brick yet remain. Ruins of massive brick buildings, made of crude brick baked in the sun are found in all parts of Egypt. More bricks bearing the name of Thothmes III., supposed to have been king of Egypt at the time of the Exodus, have been discovered than of any other period. On ancient monuments parties of brickmakers are depicted with taskmasters sitting or standing near them with uplifted sticks in their hands. God has thus left in ancient monuments, in old documents, ruins and inscriptions many silent but powerful witnesses to His word.

The world has always hated and persecuted the Church. Christians have been slighted, scorned, imprisoned, banished, burnt. All that live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution.

The more Israel was crushed the more rapidly she grew. In the lengthened period of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, a time of liberty and peace, she only grew to 70 souls. A small growth in 200 years. Now under the severest oppression she grew rapidly into a great nation. Times of worldly comfort do not bring much spiritual prosperity. Days of hardship, energetic service, even of persecution and martyrdom, are the healthiest seasons in the spiritual world; e. g., persecution in early apostolic age—at the Reformation—in the British islands at different times—in Madagascar recently.

We should learn to look not at things seen but at things unseen. Had Israel looked only at things seen, now hopeless their case. Hard bondage, stern taskmasters, mortar and brick, harder work, less pay, no hope. But what were the things unseen? God's care of and deep compassion for them—their escape from Egypt—the green fields and vine-clad hills of Canaan. We should have faith in the things unseen—God's presence and blessing with us in trouble, and in the future a glorious rest.

The sinner's bondage under sin and Satan is here typified. Satan over-driven and grinds down his slaves. A little surface comfort and fool's laughter he may allow like the drunkard's grin, but the way in which he drives transgressors is hard.

SECOND SABBATH.

SUBJECT:—*The Birth of Moses, Ex. 2-10. Golden Text, Luke 2 10.*

Vv. 1-2.—The names of Moses' parents were Amram and Jochebed, Numb. 26 59. Miriam was at least 10 years, and Aaron 3 years older than Moses. The infanticidal edict was probably issued after Aaron's birth as his life does not appear to have been imperilled. The action of Moses' parents in hiding him for 3 months was prompted by faith. Heb. 11 23.

Vv. 3-9.—Their faith and love led to a most ingenious plan. The mother took an ark of bulrushes—the papyrus, a thick, strong, and tough reed. She daubed it with slime, the mud of the Nile, which is very tenacious. Boats are seen daily floating in the Nile with no other caulking but the Nile mud and perfectly watertight, and *with pitch*, mineral tar. Into this simple ark she put her child, and laid it in the flags by the river's brink, stationing the youthful Miriam within sight of the spot to see what would occur. As she doubtless expected, Pharaoh's daughter came down to wash herself at the river. She saw the ark and sent her *maid* (immediate attendant—the word is different from that translated *maidens* in the same verse), to fetch it. She opened the ark, and lo! a child weeping—fit representative of the sad and helpless state of Israel at the time. She had compassion on him. She knew him at once to be a Hebrew child. Miriam, having drawn near, suggested in question form that a Hebrew woman might be called to nurse the child. This was done, and Moses' mother became his nurse. Beautiful instance of God's wise and loving over-ruling of the free agency of several persons, Moses mother, Miriam, Pharaoh's daughter for the accomplishment of His purposes.