

## MEDITATIONS ON THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

(Continued from page 140.)

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*Deborah's Song.*  
(chap. v.)

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Jehovah had wrought a wonderful deliverance through the instrumentality of two weak women, and a man lacking in character; the very feebleness of His instruments serving to magnify His grace and power. The victory, as we have said, is the signal for the awakening of the people, and the Spirit of God gives expression to it by the mouth of the prophetess. Deborah and Barak relate and celebrate the blessings recovered through Israel's deliverance.

(v. 1.) "Then sang Deborah and Barak, the son of Ahinoam, on that day, saying:"

The first thing that follows the deliverance is praise; very different, doubtless, in a day of ruin, from what it was at the beginning, when they went forth out of Egypt: "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord." (Exod. xv. 1.) The whole nation joined their leader in the song of deliverance; not a voice was silent. Imagine the harmony of those 600,000 voices, blended in one celebrating, on the sea shore, the victory achieved by the Lord! "I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously." All the women, with Miriam at their head, joining in these praises, repeated the same words, "Sing

ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously." (Exod. xv. 20, 21.) What a contrast to Judges v. ! "Then sang Deborah and Barak." One woman and one man—two by themselves—two witnesses of a time of ruin ; but the Lord is present, the Spirit of God is there ; and if these two are the witnesses of the ruin, they can, nevertheless, rejoice and celebrate the greatness of the work of the Lord. Renewal of praise is the mark of a true revival, and the children of God when restored in soul feel this their first need. Deborah and Barak do not isolate themselves, even though all the people are not with them ; they acknowledge the unity of the nation, and their praise is the expression of what all Israel should have rendered.

(v. 2.) "For that the leaders took the lead in Israel, for that the people offered themselves willingly, bless ye the Lord." (Revised Version.) The motive for praise is what the grace of God has produced in the leaders, and among the people. God recognizes that, and thus encourages His own, so vacillating and weak.

(v. 3.) "Hear, O ye kings ; give ear, O ye princes ; I, even I, will sing unto the Lord ; I will sing unto the Lord ; I will sing praise to the Lord God of Israel."

Praise belongs exclusively to the saints. "I, even I," they say. Kings and princes are invited to listen, but they have no part in the song, for the deliverance of Israel is their ruin.

(vs. 4, 5.) "Lord, when thou wentest out of

Seir, when thou marchest out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water. The mountains melted from before the Lord, even that Sinai from before the Lord-God of Israel."

These words recall the commencement of Moses' song in Deut. xxxiii., to which Ps. lxxviii. 7, 8 also refers. In these we find another important principle of the revival. Souls are led back to the first blessings, seeking again what God gave at the beginning. Instead of being guided by what passed before their eyes, they ask themselves, "What hath God wrought?" This is our safeguard in a day of ruin. Let us not say, like unfaithful Christians, we should adapt ourselves to the time in which we live. At a time of which the Apostle John said, "It is the last hour" (1 John ii. 18. Revised Version), the saints had as a resource: "That which was from the beginning." (1 John i. 1.)

(vs. 6, 8.) "In the days of Shamgar, the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were unoccupied," etc.

Here we have a new principle. The faithful acknowledge the ruin in Israel. They neither attempt to palliate nor excuse the evil, but judge it according to God. Four things characterize the ruin: 1st, "The highways were unoccupied and the travellers walked through by-ways." This is the result of the enemy's yoke. The people could no longer walk safely along the highways, those

roads on which all had walked together, for it was there that they met the enemy, and the travellers chose the by-paths, each one according to the choice of his own heart. Is it not this also which characterizes the church of God in our day?

Secondly, "The inhabitants of the villages ceased." The places where the people were wont to dwell in peace, surrounded by their families, were deserted. This visible unity of the people had disappeared until the day that Deborah was raised up for the partial restoration of Israel. Is the unity of the family of God more apparent at the present day? Alas! although a faithful few may act upon it, it exists no longer in its entirety, except to faith and in the counsels of God.

Thirdly, "They chose new gods; then was war in the gates." Yes, idolatry had become the religion of the people who had forsaken God, the eternal God. Israel, having offended the Lord, was chastised by war, and by a relentless enemy.

Fourthly, "Was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?" No longer were there weapons to combat evil. Where now are the weapons? What has been done with the sword of the Spirit? Where is the power of the Word to resist the false doctrines swarming in the very midst of Christendom, eating as they do like a canker, and trampling in the dust the wondrous name of Christ? "How long," says the Psalmist, (iv. 2), "will ye turn my glory into shame?" Even the shield of faith has been cast down to the ground,

evil is in the ascendancy, and the people of God powerless to withstand it.

In the confusion which exists, the part of the faithful is to apprehend the magnitude of the evil, and bow their heads in humiliation. It is not enough to realize our heavenly blessings, God would have us, who are His people, fully know how greatly, in the existing state of things, we have dishonoured Him, in order that we may separate from it. If we are in the testimony of God, we withdraw from evil. The most terrible characteristic of the last days is not open immorality, although the state of things is deeply corrupt, but more particularly false doctrines. 2 Timothy exhorts us especially in regard to the latter, to depart from iniquity, and to purge ourselves from vessels to dishonour. But this is not enough ; the prophetess adds :

(v. 9.) "My heart is toward the governors of Israel, that offered themselves willingly among the people." This is another principle. The soul sees what the Spirit of God has wrought, and associates itself with it. The heart of Deborah is with the faithful in Israel. She takes her place openly with those who offered themselves willingly; and, recognizing what God has wrought amidst the ruin, she says : "Bless ye the Lord !" happy to see here below this little testimony among the governors. May all our hearts appreciate it, and may we be able to say with her : "Bless ye the Lord."

(vs. 10, 11.) Then, turning to those who were

in the peaceful enjoyment of recovered blessings, the prophetess says: "Meditate, ye that ride on white asses" (margin), an indication of wealth and prosperity; the sons of noble families and of the judges possessed this privilege. (c. f. x. 4; xii. 14.) It is like an appeal to those who enjoy, without fighting, the fruit of the victory. "Ye that sit on rich carpets" (Revised Version), those who have the advantage of the rest and quiet with their attendant blessings. "Ye that walk by the way," those who enjoy the security that has been gained. Deborah, I say, addresses herself to these, and invites them to "meditate." They have done nothing in this victory but taste its fruits, for some only had fought, and their voices were heard in the division of the spoil, in the places of drawing water. It must not be forgotten, that however blessed these times were, they were not the restoration of Israel, any more than the revivals of our days are the re-establishment of the church. If the conquerors could rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord towards the unprotected cities of Israel, if the people had arisen to go down to the gates and confront the enemy, it was none the less a time of ruin and of but partial restoration. Ah! how needful it is for the people of God in our days to remember these things!

But there are still greater blessings for us. The spirit of the song becomes more and more filled with fervour, in rapidity of utterance do the words flow forth from the mouth of Deborah.

(v. 12.) "Awake, awake, Deborah : awake, awake, utter a song : arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Ahinoam." The 68th Psalm, that magnificent song, passages of which re-call that of Deborah (c. f. verses 8, 9, 13, 18), celebrates the full millennial restoration of Israel, consequent on the exaltation of the Lord. It is there said that the Lord will dwell in the midst of his people : "The Lord will dwell in it forever." . . . "The Lord is among them." Whence can this blessing come? The prophet replies, "Thou hast ascended on high, thou has led captivity captive : thou has received gifts in the man (margin) ; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." Now the words of this Psalm, which celebrates the fulness of future blessings, we hear proceeding from the lips of a weak woman in a day of ruin, when the Lord has marked Israel's forehead with the sign of lost blessings ! "Arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Ahinoam." What encouragement for us ! The highest truths of all are the special portion of faith, in the low state of the Judges, as they are now for us in the perilous times through which we are passing. The song of Moses, overflowing with the joy of a redeemed people, after the passage of the Red Sea, celebrated *deliverance by death*, to bring the people to the dwelling place of God ; and later on, to the sanctuary which His hands had established. Marvellous song, the song of a soul just delivered,

as it contemplates the victory of which the cross is the antitype ; hymn where the heart, like ointment poured forth, ascends in the praises of deliverance—a deliverance which no hymn can fully express.

It is a woman who, in a day of obscurity and ruin, sounds forth a song which rises above death, the hymn of *deliverance by resurrection*. Of whom, in "Arise, Barak," is she speaking here? Is it merely of the son of Ahinoam? For our part we do not doubt that Barak is a type, somewhat obscure it may be, of Christ ascended to God's right hand, having led captivity captive. (Eph. iv. 8.)

A dark and sorrowful state of things had supervened since the song in Exodus, but here the prophetic intelligence of a woman directs us heavenward, in the type of a risen Christ. She awakes ; her eyes are opened to contemplate a glorious scene, Barak rising up to lead the vanquished captivity, faint image of that liberty into which a victorious Christ introduces us to enjoy eternally with Himself. If the things spoken of at the beginning of this chapter characterize the awakening of the present time, one at least of them should especially predominate, and that is, the knowledge of a glorified Man ascended to the right hand of God, One whom our eyes and our hearts follow in that heavenly scene, into which He, as victor, has entered, after having delivered us by His death and resurrection. Once more, beloved, far from



being discouraged, have we not cause to repeat with Deborah, "Praise ye the Lord"?

(v. 13.) "Then came down a remnant of the nobles and the people; the Lord came down for me against the mighty." (Revised Version.)

Now Israel is called to come down to the place she was in at the beginning, to fight and to bear testimony in the midst of a scene where God is still leaving her. We cannot expect, even in a time of religious awakening, to see all the people come down. It will never be but "a remnant of the nobles," but how great the privilege, for God reckons this remnant "as His people," for it is in His eyes the blessed representation of them. What joy of heart should it not be to the faithful to see even one witness separated to God from the mass, which, like Reuben, "abode among the sheepfolds." However much we may desire it, we must not expect more, for otherwise it would not be a day of ruin. And, moreover, what a portion is ours! "The Lord came down for me against the mighty." Brethren, should not that suffice us? He who has ascended on high, is the same who comes down with us to give us the victory in every fresh conflict.

(vs. 14-18.) God notes those who have been for Him, and those who, for one motive or another, have remained behind. Ephraim, Benjamin, Zebulun, and Issachar came down, with undivided hearts, in the Lord's path. But, lo! Reuben hesitates at the frontier to consider.

Wherefore this indecision? "Why abodest thou among the sheepfolds, to hear the bleating of the flocks?" The trumpet calling the people together had no voice for the heart of Reuben. His prosperity was such, that he preferred remaining in the peaceful enjoyment of his acquired wealth, resting among the sheepfolds, stopping at the water-courses (Revised Version), which formed his boundary. Fellow Christians of the present day, is that our position? Have we followed the nobles who have shown us the way? Have we been content with "great searchings of heart?" Are we lacking in decision in testimony for Christ?

"Gilead abode beyond Jordan." Those days were past when Gilead, equipped for war, accompanied his brethren in their conquests of Canaan. Now, satisfied with his worldly position—shall I say, worldly religion?—outside the limits of the land strictly speaking, beyond Jordan, he is unconscious of any further need, and remains where he is. "Asher continued on the sea shore, and abode in his breaches." When it was a question of fighting, where was Asher to be found? Occupied with his own concerns, his business. He had not made the least sacrifice in these in order to take part in the Lord's battle. However, Deborah does not linger in the recital of evil. Full of joy, she delights in relating every instance of devotedness to the Lord. (v. 18.) "Zebulun and Naphthali were a people that

jeopardied their lives unto the death in the high places of the field."

Then in verses 19-22, we have another characteristic of faithfulness. They do not glory in, nor think of, themselves; but the victory was attributed to God only, in the proclamation of its heavenly character.

"They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera." This part of the song closes with an unqualified malediction on Meroz. "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." Those who in these troublous times do not take sides with Christ; those who identify themselves with His name and that of God's people, and whose hearts are at the same time indifferent to Himself, let them be cursed. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha." (1 Cor. xvi. 22.)

Now (verses 24-27) Jael is honoured, that which has a little strength is blessed. "He asked water, and she gave him milk; she brought forth butter in a lordly dish." When the enemy of the people of God comes to her, this woman shows grace. Bringing forth the best thing she has in her tent in recognition of Sisera's rank, she hands him the refreshment in a lordly dish. Is not this the very opposite of contempt? Is it not thus that we should act towards the enemies of God,

giving them for their thirst and their nourishment even more than they ask? God's witnesses go on with grace beyond the worst enemies of Christ.

Jael is celebrated because she acted thus; but let us read what follows: "She put her hand to the nail and her right hand to the workman's hammer; and with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote off his head, when she had pierced and stricken through his temples." Ah! the heart of Jael was unreservedly with the God of Israel, with the Israel of God: when it became a question of the truth, and of treating the enemy as such, she displayed the greatest energy. This woman is, at this juncture, in the contracted sphere of the house, the real leader of the armies of Jehovah. She is in the foremost rank, honoured of God to gain the victory, for she has an undivided heart for His people. Curse ye, Meroz; but blessed be Jael.

(Verses 28, 30.) Another scene is taking place in the palace of Sisera's mother, whose pride is humbled to the very dust.\*

The song of Deborah closes with these words: "So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord; but let them that love Him be as the sun when he goeth

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\*N. B.—It may be observed in passing, that in spite of the eminent position given her of God, Deborah maintains her character of a mother in Israel, and manifests remarkable intelligence as to what comes within the province of her sex, celebrating that which honours Jael, the woman of faith, and proclaiming what draws down judgment on the haughty woman. Later on, another woman, the Queen of Sheba, welcomed by Solomon, did not review the armies of that king, but gave her attention to "the house that he had built, and the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the Lord." (1 Kings x. 4, 5.) Showing an intelligent appreciation of what belonged to that sphere.

forth in his might. (v. 31.) Here we have one more recovered blessing which characterizes the awakening: Deborah proclaims her hope. She looks on to that glorious day, when the Lord having executed judgment, the saints in Israel shall shine forth as the sun itself, like Him whose countenance was, in the eyes of the prophet, "as the sun shineth in his strength." (Rev. i. 16, c. f. Matt. xiii. 43.)

Amid the darkness of this world's night we have too, beloved brethren, but far better than Deborah, this hope very near. Already the morning star has arisen in our hearts, already the eye of faith, piercing the veil, rejoices in the wondrous scene that is still concealed, but which is summed up in the ineffable words, "So shall we ever be with the Lord."

"For ever with the Lord!"

Amen! so let it be:

Life from the dead is in that word,  
'Tis immortality.

Here in the body pent,  
Absent from Him we roam,  
Yet nightly pitch our moving tent  
A day's march nearer home.

Our Father's house on high,  
Home to our souls how dear,  
E'en now, to faith's transpiercing eye  
Thy golden gates appear!

Our thirsty spirits faint  
 To reach the home we love ;  
 The bright inheritance of saints,  
 Jerusalem above.

And though there intervene  
 Rough seas and stormy skies ;  
 Though by no mortal vision seen,  
 Thy glory fills our eyes.

There shall all clouds depart,  
 The wilderness shall cease ;  
 And sweetly shall each gladden'd heart  
 Enjoy eternal peace.

*( To be continued, D.V. )*

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### WHO HAS CHARGE OF YOUR MONEY-BOX ?

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“ There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth ;  
 and there is that withholdeth more than is meet,  
 but it tendeth to poverty.”—PROV. xi. 24.

I fancy I hear the reader exclaim, “ What a  
 funny title ! Whatever can it mean ? ”

Just listen to me while I relate an incident that  
 happened in England some years ago. A Christian  
 father had in his keeping the money-boxes of his  
 two little children. They were kept locked, and  
 the children didn't know how much was in them.  
 One of them came to his father one day and said  
 that he would like to get a present for his mother  
 on her birthday, which was drawing near. His  
 father explained to him that it would not be a  
 present from him unless he paid for it out of his

own money. The child was quite willing to do so. Soon after, the father took the boy into a shop to buy the present. They looked around, and at last the little fellow selected an article. On hearing the price, the father told him that he had not enough money to pay for it, and that he must choose something else. In a short time he did so. When the price was known, the father told the child that he would be able to pay for that, but that it would take the most of his money. The dear little fellow didn't mind that in the least, but said he would like to get that for mama. It was bought, paid for out of the boy's money, and given to the mother on her birthday.

The father was so much pleased with the unselfishness shown in the matter and at the affection manifested by the boy for his mother, that he determined that the child should not be a loser. From time to time the father slipped into his money-box a penny, sometimes a sixpence, and so on, till, without the child's knowing it, the amount was more than replaced.

Dear fellow-believer, is there no lesson in the foregoing for you and for me?

If the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and (through grace) *our* God and *our* Father (John xx. 17) sees us spending on ourselves and our own interests, the most of what He has entrusted us with (1 Cor. iv. 2), will He not very likely do what He did as recorded in Haggai i. 3-11; ii. 15-17? Now Haggai i. 12-14 and ii. 18, 19 show us

the result of the word of the Lord having taken effect in the hearts and consciences of the people.

If our God and Father sees you and me diligent in caring for the interests of His beloved Son—JESUS—our Lord, will it not delight His heart more than that of the father in the incident referred to above? and do you think we shall be losers by it? Read 2 Cor. ix. 6-8; but also 2 Cor. viii. 9 and 12, and weigh the matter over before the Lord; but be careful that you do not do something to get something. Let it be: "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live *unto themselves*, but *unto Him* which died for them, and rose again." (2 Cor. v. 14, 15.)

O what a debt I owe  
To Him who shed His blood,  
And cleans'd my soul and gave me power  
To stand before His God.

Saviour and Lord, I own  
The riches of Thy grace;  
For I can call Thy God, my God—  
Can bow before His face.

Thy Father, too, above;  
I worship as my own;  
Who gave with Thee the Spirit's cry,  
To me a son foreknown.

Again, just ponder over this magnificent verse:  
"My God shall abundantly supply all your need



according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." (Phil. iv. 19. New Translation.) What an inexhaustible amount, in such safe keeping and in such a money-box!

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### SAMUEL'S REPLY TO SAUL.

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*Read 1 Samuel xv.*

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There is immense power in Samuel's brief but pointed reply to Saul, "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." (1 Sam. xv. 22.) Saul's word was "*Sacrifice.*" Samuel's word was "*Obedience.*" No doubt, the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen were most exciting. They would be looked upon as substantial proofs that something was being done; while on the other hand, the path of obedience seemed narrow, silent, lonely, and fruitless. But oh! those pungent words of Samuel! "*To obey is oetter than sacrifice.*" What a triumphant answer to the most eloquent advocates of expediency! They are most conclusive—most commanding words. They teach us that it is better, if it must be so, to stand, like a marble statue, on the pathway of obedience, than to reach the most desirable ends by transgressing a plain precept of the word of God.

But let none suppose that one must be like a statue on the path of obedience. Far from it. There are rare and precious services to be rendered by the obedient one—services which can only be rendered by such, and which owe all their preciousness to their being the fruit of simple obedience. True, they may not find a place in the public records of man's bustling activity; but they are recorded on high, and they will be published at the right time. As a dear friend has often said to us, "Heaven will be the safest and happiest place to hear all about our work down here." May we remember this, and pursue our way, in all simplicity, looking to Christ for guidance, power, and blessing. May His smile be enough for us. May we not be found looking askance to catch the approving look of a poor mortal whose breath is in his nostrils, nor sigh to find our names amid the glittering record of the great men of the age. The servant of Christ should look far beyond all such things. The grand business of the servant is to obey. His object should not be to do a great deal, but simply to do what he is told. This makes all plain; and, moreover, it will make the Bible precious as the depository of the Master's will to which he must continually betake himself to know what he is to do, and how he is to do it. Neither tradition, nor expediency will do for the servant of Christ. The all-important inquiry is, "What saith the scriptures?" This settles everything. From

the decision of the word of God there must be no appeal. When God speaks, man must bow. It is not by any means a question of obstinate adherence to a man's own notions. Quite the opposite. It is a reverent adherence to the word of God. Let the reader distinctly mark this. It often happens that, when one is determined, through grace, to abide by scripture, he will be pronounced dogmatic, intolerant and imperious; and, no doubt, one has to watch over his temper, spirit, and style, even when seeking to abide by the word of God. But, be it well remembered that obedience to Christ's commandments is the opposite of imperiousness, dogmatism, and intolerance. It is not a little strange that when a man tamely consents to place his conscience in the keeping of his fellow, and to bow down his understanding to the opinions of men, he is considered meek, modest, and liberal; but let him reverently bow to the authority of holy scripture, and he will be looked upon as self-confident, dogmatic, and narrow-minded. Be it so. The time is rapidly approaching when obedience shall be called by its right name, and meet its recognition and reward. For that moment the faithful must be content to wait, and, while waiting for it, be quite satisfied to let men call them whatever they please. "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity." (Psalms xciv. 11.)

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."—  
2 Tim. ii. 15.

## JOHN I, AND PROVERBS VIII.

Open the veil into eternity, and the mysterious existence of God is revealed. In John, the majesty of the two Persons; in Prov., the delights, and joys of the two Persons of the Godhead—self-sufficiency. From all eternity the Father and the Son co-existed, and the corresponding relationship existed and was enjoyed by both. But, in time, the Son entered into that relationship as man (see Luke i. 35), into the divine and eternal relationship of Son with the Father. But He was the only-begotten Son in eternity. God so loved the world, that He gave His Only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.



“Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight. All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him. Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”—  
MATT. XI. 25-30.