

COST OF LIGHTING, AND SCARCITY OF FUEL

By H. S. Dow

"Ye are the light of the world." Mat. 5:14.

The foregoing are the words of Jesus who had recently made his public appearance.

"Then cometh Jesus," Mat. 3:13. Just three words, but oh, what words! Let us stop and read them slowly, then meditate, and listen attentively. "Then cometh Jesus." What forceful words, what soul-stirring, beautiful, precious words, how they claim our attention! Where else can we find three words which comprehend so much, that mean so much? Who was He that came? What did He come for? How long did He stay? What did He do? Who can answer these questions? No mortal man, for they comprehend eternal things, which reach from everlasting to everlasting.

Our Lord had just been baptized of John in the Jordan, where He had received the approbation of the Father, when the Holy Spirit descended upon Him, and also the voice from heaven saying: "this is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Then was Jesus led of the Spirit into the wilderness, where He had the mighty combat with satan, and conquered our mighty foe.

Then He turns His attention to His disciples, and began to teach, and in the words of our text He confers a great honor, and also lays a great responsibility upon all who become true followers of Him: "Ye are the light of the world." John tells us that in Jesus was life, and the life was the light of men, and in the words of our text he seems to transfer that light to His church, and compares it to a city set on a hill which cannot be hid.

When Jesus came He found Israel and Juda, who claimed to be God's people, as well as all the inhabitants of the world, in great darkness. (By darkness we mean ignorance of spiritual things.)

In Isaiah's prophecy of the birth of Jesus, the prophet makes mention of this fact. He wrote: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light, they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." Isa. 9:2.

Four hundred years had passed since Malachi, the last prophet of the old dispensation had spoken, and during all those years God had not sent another to speak to His people, until John the Baptist appeared on the banks of the Jordan preaching salvation by repentance, and faith in Jesus' Name. And while the Jews were still trying to keep up the outward ceremonies of the law of Moses, our Lord told those Scribes and Pharisees that they were like dead men's graves, they appeared beautiful outwardly, but inwardly were full of all uncleanness, horribly backslidden, and in gross darkness. They had not lived in obedience to God's will nor walked in the light. Hence as Jesus said, the light that was in them became darkness, and great was that darkness.

A normal person who has eye-sight needs light, and wants it. Of course if he is blind light is of no use to him. Jesus said when men love darkness rather than light it is because their deeds are evil. Light is costly, even the artificial light that we use to light our dwellings and business places. We have to pay for fuel oil, gas, electricity, etc., and some would have better light if they could afford it. But all men may have spiritual light, for Jesus the

source of true light has come, and John says, "He is the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." John 1:9. For "the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth."

Spiritual light is costly. When our Lord said "ye are the light of the world" and placed this great responsibility on the church, he knew, and meant that it would be costly, and judging from what we read we fear that the so-called church is making very slow progress in its God-given mission of lighting the world. An article by Oswald Smith, of Toronto, which appeared recently says: "We know that there are yet over 1000 tribes, and we know where they are, who are still without any missionaries or gospel teaching, and those tribes contain millions of people yet in heathen darkness. They are in Africa, China, India, South America and in the islands of the sea. And notwithstanding there are nearly 3,000 languages and dialects being spoken in the world today the Bible has been translated into less than 1200 of them." Surely statements such as these should give every lover of Jesus, and of souls for which He died, cause for serious thought, and self-inspection regarding what we are doing to get the gospel to those in darkness.

Another article by T. M. Olson in the Reader's Digest calls New York "a pagan city" and says there are at least 3,650,000 people in New York, above fourteen years of age, who have no connection with any religious organization in the city. He says this is the report of Dr. K. D. Miller, president of New York City Missions. Conditions like these force any serious thinker to the conclusion that the light of the so-called church is not shining very brightly. And why not? Jesus said of John the Baptist: "He was a burning and shining light." It takes fuel to make lights burn and shine, and that fuel is costly. This gospel age was ushered in accompanied by the spirit of sacrifice and suffering. Jesus suffered for us "leaving us an example that ye should follow in His steps." I Pet. 1:21. And millions of his followers sacrificed their natural lives in their efforts to get the gospel to others.

Nero who lived and ruled only a few years after Christ, carried on a terrible persecution, against the Christians, and many thousands of them were burned, and put to death in various ways. He thought he would stamp out the Christian religion but all his persecutions and burnings only made the gospel light shine brighter while the faithful martyrs were furnishing the fuel to make the light burn.

And it was in those days of awful persecution that the fires of gospel truth spread, and the church grew exceedingly, and multitudes were added to the Lord and they said "the blood of martyrs is the seed of truth." When one man died for the faith many others came forward to take his place.

We read that when Latimer and Ridley were burned to the stake in England less than four hundred years ago by order of bloody Mary, because they embraced the Protestant faith, when the fire was kindled, Ridley called out: "Have courage brother Latimer, and we will kindle a fire in old England today that never will be quenched." The fuel that makes the gospel light to burn is costly. When Henry Martin the missionary, went to India with the gospel, and was warned that he would have a hard time of suffering, he wrote in his diary: "I desire to burn out for Jesus." I fear friends

that the fuel that God can use to make His fire burn, and light shine, is getting very scarce. Hence the lukewarmness in our churches and the dimness of the light.

Jesus said let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven. A light shines by contrast, it is in contrast with the elements around it, which is darkness. I fear that the contrast between our churches, and the world today is not very distinct. There is not enough

(Continued on Page 7)

TOO BUSY TO DO HIS WORK

By J. B. Chapman

In the twentieth chapter of I Kings is the story of a soldier who was left in charge of a prisoner taken in battle. His superior told the soldier that he must keep this prisoner safely, and that if he escaped, then the soldier must pay a large sum of money or forfeit his own life in penalty. No other special duty seems to have been assigned the soldier—he was just to keep his prisoner securely. But the prisoner escaped, and when the soldier reported to his superior, his shallow explanation was, "I was busy here and there and he was gone." The soldier was so occupied with secondary matters that he let his important service pass. This is one of the easiest things in the world to do. To the average Christian there is more danger that he shall become occupied with the insignificant than that he shall be swamped with outbroken wickedness.

We have been told that "an idle brain is the devil's workshop," and we do know that leisure of itself is no handmaiden of faith and spirituality. One should be employed, if possible, and he should not be just triflingly employed. And yet one can get so busy with his secular affairs that he will not have time for prayer meeting and the services of the church. A parent can be so occupied with the effort to furnish food and clothing and housing and education for his children that he will forget to have family prayer and look after the spiritual welfare of those who have been committed to his care. A man can become so occupied with his friends that he has no time for communion with the Lord. He may be so taken up with newspapers and magazines that he crowds out the Bible and literature dealing with the interests of the soul. When a man is so busy he cannot look after the very things for which he was created and redeemed, he is just too busy.

It is even possible for one to become so busy with the work of the Lord that he does not have time for the Lord himself. Luther found that the more work the day demanded, the more time he must have for prayer. Thus instead of allowing secondary interests to take the place of first line concerns, this man of marvelous spiritual strength made the increase of secondary duties reasons for increasing attention to the principal things.

Think of a soldier who was just "busy here and there"—at nothing in particular, and let his prisoner get away! But before you pass judgment on his carelessness and folly, think of the man who is so busy about the things of the body that he lets his soul go on unsaved. Think of the man who is so busy about preparing to meet his social, political or financial demands that he must give no time to preparing for the judgment bar of God. Do not let any of us get so busy that we cannot find time to do our work.